

Moonrise Kingdom at Cornerhouse

Screened at [Cornerhouse, Manchester](http://www.cornerhouse.org/)

Reviewed by [Anne Ryan](#) May 2012

At a time when the American dream seems further away than ever for the majority of its citizens, Wes Anderson harks back to an America that never was, a world of small town eccentrics whose lives are characterised by an almost Capraesque decency and sweetness.

Anderson's style may be an acquired taste, yet his films are instantly recognisable for their quirkiness and singularity. His latest, **Moonrise Kingdom** is set on a small island off the coast of New England threatened by an imminent storm. Within the context of a stylised mid-60s of primary colours and an emerging and developing culture, this a story of two 12 year old runaways and the effect of their attempted elopement on the strange adults who surround them.

The cast is led by two unknowns, Kara Hayward is a depressed bookworm who is loved by Jared Gilman, an orphan who plans their journey to find happiness together. They are surrounded by a cast of well-known faces, who, as in Anderson's **The Royal Tenenbaums** are given free rein to create strange and memorable characters. Suzy's parents, Bill Murray and Frances McDormand, are old hands at playing the profoundly weird. Edward Norton is less familiar in this type of role as Sam's dignified scout leader. But it is Bruce Willis who is the revelation playing the town's sherrif - a decent and profoundly lonely man.

Anderson has been criticised for a concentration on the superficial, for the triumph of a cutesy aesthetic. But this is refreshing in a world dominated by Hollywood's shallow values, where conformity outweighs intelligence and morality. Where the latest big screen comedy is a series of sketches starring the screen's most glamorous women acting out a pregnancy guide, complete with prosthetic 'bumps'. Anderson portrays a better world in which the plain, the odd, the troubled, the weird, even the intellectual can find happiness and love. This is a gentle and charming film and shows Anderson back on form in his world of the deadpan and dysfunctional.

If this film has a message it is the one that Suzy's parents would give her the attention she needed, if they were not so absorbed in their own misery, that spending your childhood in your bedroom reading and listening to Françoise Hardy does not mean that you are a loser, just that you are an individual, beginning the life long journey to find yourself. This is a film in praise of nerds and as we can now see the nerds will inherit the earth.