



## ISLE OF DOGS

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Wallace Black Elk, Sioux Indian Medicine man, described to me forty years ago in a dog ceremony, how dogs were man's best friend: As the earth split open between man and the animal world, the dog pitied man for being disconnected, and so dog leapt across the chasm to be with man so that he would not be alone. Ever since he has been "Man's best friend." Dog would give its life for man in order to make sure man would never forget his connection to the animal world.

Enter comic cult filmmaker Wes Anderson (Rushmore, The Royal Tenenbaums, Fantastic Mr. Fox), who creates his own world of quirky creation myths, and gives us his latest cult-classic in four chapters under the title "The Isle of Dogs." Does that sound like "I love dogs?"

Using the head-on filmmaking style of Akira Kurosawa, the famous Japanese filmmaker, and a cast of stop-motion dogs quarantined on Trash Island with a cast of celebrities lending their voices, we are introduced to Chief top dog (Bryan Cranston), Rex (Edward Norton), King (Bob Balaban), Boss (Bill Murray) and Duke (Jeff Goldblum). Scarlett Johansson plays the one "Dame Dog," Nutmeg, who has been trained to do tricks and somehow maintains her grace, her clean fur and her audience by staying atop the trash around her. As Anderson loves to do with large casts and characters rendering long, complicated and comical monologues about themselves, you can only imagine the giggles that erupt when the dogs start pontificating about their state of affairs like old english gentlemen retired in a cigar room gone bad.

In this dystopian world the Mayor Kobayashi (voice Kunichi Nomura) quarantines all dogs to be removed to Trash Island because they all have "snout fever." Spots (Liev Schreiber), is one of them, the pet/bodyguard of Kobayashi's orphaned nephew Atari (Koyu Rankin). When Atari crashes his puddle-jumping aircraft on the island in search of his beloved pet, a journey on Trash Island begins, introducing us to the trials and tribulations of dogs maintaining order without humans. The Little Pilot comes off sounding like Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's Little Prince. Nelson (Frances McDormand) is our interpreter on this escapade, reminding us of the human connection: "Whatever became of man's best friend?" What could Anderson be commenting on? Have we lost touch with the animal world? Are we now left with a quarantined animal world on a landfill?

Wes Anderson doesn't weave a simple tale, but layers plot lines on top of plot lines masterfully making the situation comically over-complicated just for the fun of it as he did in The Grand Budapest Hotel.

Many star cameos make this film a possible cult piece - Gret Gerwig plays Tracy Walker the teeny-bopper turned activist who's goal is to incite a riot to save her beloved dogs. In the end she succeeds with the help of Assistant-Scientist played by Yoko Ono who has created a cure for snout fever. Two of the wisest dogs Jupiter (F. Murray Abraham) and Oracle (Tilda Swinton) appear to give us a prophetic outlay of the future of this search, which turns out to be simply visions borrowed from TV.

In the end, these dogs do not find integrity in being someone's pet. They do, however, sit loyally, expecting purpose, comfort and a stroke of recognition behind their ears.

