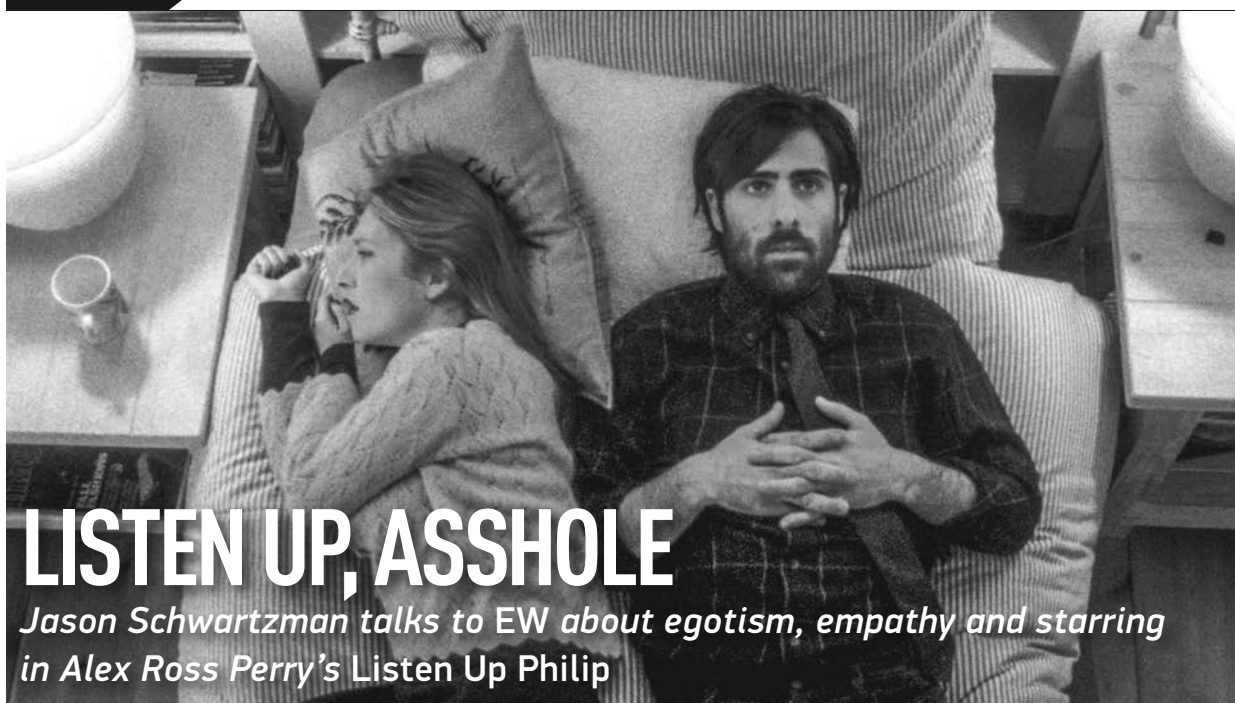




LISTEN UP, ASSHOLE

Jason Schwartzman talks to EW about egotism, empathy and starring in Alex Ross Perry's *Listen Up Philip*

One peek at the trailer for *Listen Up Philip* and you'd think it was another painfully indie, pseudo-intellectual film in which nothing happens — and, for the most part, this is accurate. The movie follows the despicably self-centered mind of aberrant Jewish novelist Philip Lewis Friedman, played by Jason Schwartzman (no stranger to neurotic roles, or even neurotic Jewish novelist roles). Philip, after enjoying the tepid success garnered by his first book, finds himself caught in the space between his fantasy of himself as a gifted writer and the less glamorous reality of his life and relationships.

In short, the slightest drop of literary validation turns Philip into a real asshole, but one who believes he's only being selfish and indifferent for the sake of his art.

All the minutiae of the film, down to its title typeface

(appropriately identical to that of Portnoy's *Complaint* by acerbic Jewish novelist Philip Roth) reflect this suffocating, hyper-cultured headspace. In fact, Philip's egotism permeates the movie so thoroughly that it shouldn't be much of a comedy — or even an enjoyable watch at all. But the whole thing is salvaged and inexplicably humanized by one fact: Schwartzman, in all his wry candor, is impossible to hate.

"We didn't really try to make him likeable," Schwartzman tells EW, describing Philip as "a guy who's in a real miserable period of his life and is kind of just handling all of it." Leave it to Schwartzman to have this much gentle empathy for a character who, when ditching his girlfriend without warning to focus on his writing, says to her matter-of-factly, "I hope this will be good for us, but especially for me."

Schwartzman says that he and writer-director Alex Ross Perry agreed that Philip's laughably vile lines should be delivered as just that: vile to the point of discomfort and parody, and not at all tainted by morality.

"It was funny," Schwartzman says, "because sometimes, in our earlier discussions about it, we talked about sympathy." But, he says, "it just made him seem passive-aggressive. It undermined the whole thing."

There is an excess of themes that "the whole thing" in *Listen Up Philip* could refer to, most of them unabashedly Philip Rothian: self-examination versus interpersonal enjoyment, money and success versus personal self-worth. Each of these is explored with all the dazzling grace and humor of classic '70s Woody Allen, and they would quickly come unglued if Schwartzman didn't bring such shaggy charm to the role.

But Schwartzman doesn't achieve this effect single-handedly; the movie, shot in 16-mm stock by a small crew, has an inherent intimacy to it, even when acidic.

Schwartzman describes the shooting process as "all of us dancing a little bit together in these smaller spaces." This compactness made for greater authenticity; if an actor happened to leave the room, "the camera could follow him, and there wouldn't be, like, a cooler of Diet Cokes and a bunch of cables in there. Everything had the possibility of being on film at any time. Everything is in the movie."

Above all, though, Schwartzman credits Perry's quick-witted scriptwriting as being the film's most powerful force. "Rarely do you find a script that someone has taken the time to write well ... it was great, this time around, to read a script that even if it wasn't a movie, it was a great way to spend an afternoon — just reading it," Schwartzman says.

Listen Up Philip might not be a Philip Roth novel, but in film form, it's just about as close as you can get. ■

Listen Up Philip opens Friday, Nov. 7, at the Bijou Metro.

BIJOU Showtimes Nov 7 - 13
492 E. 13th Ave.
bijou-cinemas.com

DEAR WHITE PEOPLE (one week only!) Fri-Sun 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00
PRIDE (final week!) Fri-Sun 2:10, 4:50, 7:30
Mo-We 4:50, 7:30
Thu 4:50

THE LAST UNICORN Thu 7:30 (w/Peter S. Beagle)

BIJOU METRO Showtimes and info: 541-686-2458
43 W. Broadway
bijou-cinemas.com

KILL THE MESSENGER (final week!) Fri 2:00, 4:30, 7:00
Sat 12:25, 7:00
Sun 7:00, 9:25
Mo-Thu 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:25

LISTEN UP PHILIP (one week only!) Fri-Tues 1:45, 4:15, 6:45, 9:15
Wed 4:15, 6:45, 9:15
Thu 1:45, 4:15, 6:45, 9:15

THE BLUE ROOM (one week only!) Fri-Sun 12:05, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00
7:50, 9:40
Mo-Thu 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 7:50, 9:40

THE SKELETON TWINS (final week!) Fri 12:45, 3:00, 9:30
Sat 3:00, 5:00, 9:30
Sun 12:45, 3:00, 5:10, 7:20, 9:30
Mo-Thu 3:00, 5:10, 7:20, 9:30

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BIG APPLE CIRCUS: METAMORPHOSIS Sat. 12:30 PM

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BIG HERO 6 [CC,DV] ★ Fri. (10:55 1:40) 4:20 4:50 7:00 7:30 9:45
Sat. (10:55 1:40) 4:20 5:10 7:00 7:50 9:45

BIG HERO 6 3D [CC,DV] (PG) ★ Fri. (11:25 AM 2:10 PM) 10:15 PM
Sat. (11:45 AM 2:30 PM) 10:35 PM

NIGHTCRAWLER [CC,DV] (R) Fri. - Sat. (12:10) 4:00 7:15 10:10

JOHN WICK [CC,DV] (R) Fri. - Sat. (11:45 2:15) 4:45 7:10 9:40

OUIJA [CC,DV] (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (11:50 2:20) 4:40 7:35 10:25

ST. VINCENT [CC,DV] (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (12:05 3:30) 6:35 9:50

BOOK OF LIFE [CC,DV] (PG) Fri. (11:15 AM) 4:30 PM
Sat. 4:30 PM

BOOK OF LIFE 3D [CC,DV] (PG) ★ Fri. (2:00 PM) 6:55 PM
Sat. 6:55 PM

FURY [CC,DV] (R) Fri. - Sat. (12:15 3:20) 6:45 9:55

ALEXANDER AND THE TERRIBLE, HORRIBLE, NO [CC,DV] (PG) Fri. - Sat. (11:20 AM 1:50 PM) 6:40 PM

DRACULA UNTOLD [CC,DV] (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. 9:30 PM

GONE GIRL [CC,DV] (R) ★ Fri. - Sat. (12:20 3:45) 7:05 10:20

THE MAZE RUNNER [CC,DV] (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (3:55 PM) 9:35 PM

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BIG HERO 6 3D [CC,DV] (PG) ★ Fri. - Sat. 4:35 PM 10:05 PM

NIGHTCRAWLER [CC,DV] (R) Fri. - Sat. (12:00) 4:00 7:25 10:10

JOHN WICK [CC,DV] (R) Fri. - Sat. (12:10 3:45) 6:45 10:20

OUIJA [CC,DV] (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (12:15 3:30) 7:35 10:35

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BOOK OF LIFE (DIG) (PG)
11:40, 2:15, 5:00, 7:35, 10:30

THE BOXTROLLS (DIG) (PG)
10:15, 11:35, 2:25, 4:55, 7:25, 9:55

DRACULA UNTOLD (DIG) (PG-13)
10:25, 12:50, 10:25

FURY (DIG) (R)
12:45, 3:50, 7:00, 10:05

GONE GIRL (DIG) (R)
12:00, 3:30, 7:00, 10:20

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY (DIG) (PG-13)
11:45, 3:45, 7:15, 10:10

INTERSTELLAR (DIG) (PG-13)
10:35, 11:50, 1:05, 2:20, 3:35, 4:50, 6:05, 7:20, 8:40, 9:50

JOHN WICK (DIG) (R)
11:05, 1:45, 4:30, 7:45, 10:20

THE JUDGE (DIG) (R)
3:40, 7:05

THE MAZE RUNNER (DIG) (PG-13)
11:10, 1:55, 4:40, 7:40, 10:25

NIGHTCRAWLER (DIG) (R)
10:20, 1:10, 4:10, 7:10, 10:00

OUIJA (DIG) (PG-13)
11:20, 1:50, 4:45, 7:55, 10:15

ST. VINCENT (DIG) (PG-13)
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