

Jason Schwartzman
Elisabeth Moss
Jonathan Pryce
Krysten Ritter
Joséphine de La Baume

Listen Up Philip

a film by
Alex Ross Perry

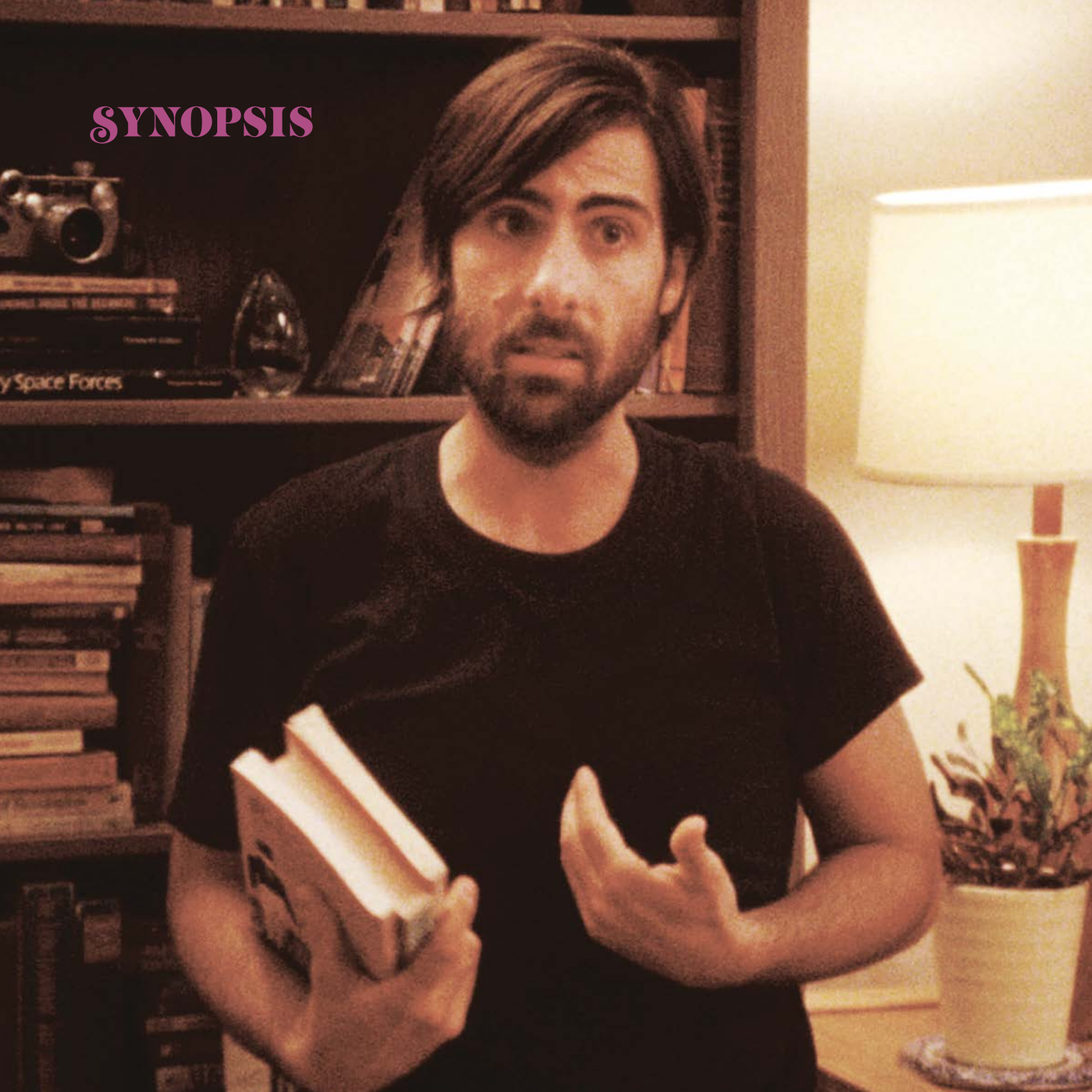


Festival del film Locarno
Concorso internazionale





SYNOPSIS



Anger rages in Philip (*Jason Schwartzman*) as he awaits the publication of his sure-to-succeed second novel. He feels pushed out of his adopted home city by the constant crowds and noise, a deteriorating relationship with his photographer girlfriend Ashley (*Elisabeth Moss*), and his own indifference to promoting the novel. When Philip's idol Ike Zimmerman (*Jonathan Pryce*) offers his isolated summer home as a refuge, he finally gets the peace and quiet to focus on his favorite subject – himself. Philip faces mistakes and miseries affecting those around him, including his girlfriend, her sister, his idol, his idol's daughter, and all the ex-girlfriends and enemies that lie in wait on the open streets of New York.



ALEX ROSS PERRY

Writer & Director

Alex Ross Perry was born in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania in 1984. He attended the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University and worked at Kim's Video in Manhattan. His second film, *The Color Wheel* was distributed theatrically in America and France in 2012 and nominated for an Independent Spirit Award. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.

FILMOGRAPHY:

Impolex (2009), *The Color Wheel* (2011),
Listen Up Philip (2014)





I have lived in New York for over a decade and feel that films attempting to portray life in the city fail to represent experiences I am in any way familiar with. There is negativity here, as well as hostility and struggle that are often depicted as charming setbacks and easily solved problems. I wanted to make a film that spoke to the brutality of the city, to the painful conflict that comes from living in a highly competitive and anxiety inducing place.

The script began with a character based on the types I had gotten to know: the brilliant miscreant whose personality flaws are overlooked in favor of their talent. From there it was necessary to do as any honest New York movie would, create a fully realized world of characters for Philip to interact with. No story belongs to one person, least of all

in a city where people are constantly interacting, where isolation is non-existent. Philip's world, and the world that exists independent of him, is comprised of women both strong and weak, heroes whose behavior should be studied but not emulated, enemies and sycophants. This is what my New York looks like, and it is one I seldom see depicted with any honesty in cinema.

LISTEN UP PHILIP is a summation of all I've observed, lived through, laughed at, narrowly avoided and absently longed for during my time in New York. The characters are unfailingly honest to a fault and there are no easy answers or simple solutions.



ORIGINS

Alex Ross Perry has injected a particular strain of vitality into the New York independent film scene, having made two idiosyncratic features that beat to a relentlessly personal rhythm that is almost shocking in its distinctness. Often featuring episodic narratives and unlikable characters, Perry's features *Impolex* and *The Color Wheel* also bear the marks of unusually highbrow literary influences: *Impolex* was inspired by a section of *Gravity's Rainbow*, and *The Color Wheel* contained something akin to the cinematic equivalent of Philip Roth's belligerent humor. Perry's third feature, *Listen Up Philip*, was also markedly influenced by a novel – though its genesis is equally due to the fact that Perry began to conceive of the film while touring the festival circuit with *The Color Wheel*.

"I traveled to a lot of festivals with *The Color Wheel*," Perry explains. "During that time, I started to notice that I was losing touch with many people and relationships in New York – they were all being put on hold. Then in the middle of those months, I read *The Recognitions* by William

Gaddis, which is a very early example of a postwar sprawling labyrinth of a novel, and I was blown away by it. It takes place in New York around the time it was written but I was reading it in 2011 and it felt current, the way it depicted the artistic milieu that these characters lived in, the way everyone responded to the main character's talent as a painter. Then the main character disappears for about 700 pages, and the entire thing looks at what happens to this world where everyone is drawn to this central figure and then he's gone. I thought, I would love to do this in a film, to see what it feels like to introduce the main character, then at the 33 minute mark have him vanish except for one scene. So he is gone for about 45 minutes."

As Perry began developing the idea, he realized that his film would center on a novelist, Philip, who becomes increasingly distanced from his girlfriend and social circle once he strikes up a friendship with Ike, an older, venerated writer living in upstate New York who has taken a liking to Philip's latest novel.

STYLE



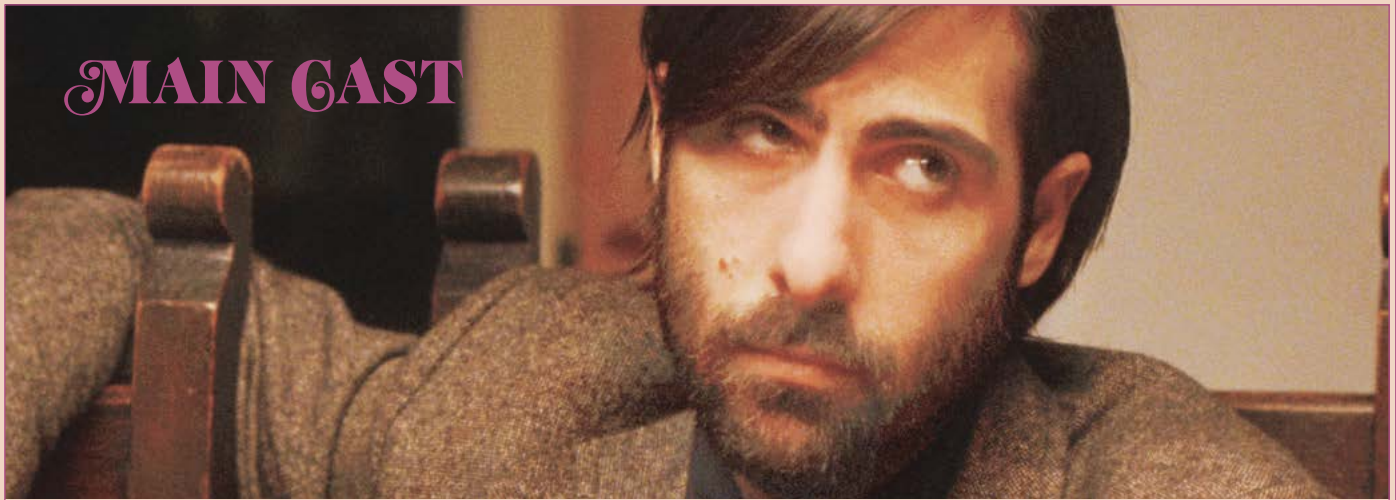
Listen Up Philip features an extremely consistent visual sense, with tight, shaky handheld photography that constantly creates frames in which characters are trapped, environments are secondary, and the actors' faces command the entire screen, providing a visual canvas upon which the film's various emotional states reveal themselves. DP Sean Price Williams, who also lensed *Impolex* and *The Color Wheel* for Perry, expounded upon the film's visual language. "Time and time again over the years, Woody Allen's *Husbands and Wives* enters the conversation. Alex and I love the haphazardness that is embraced throughout that film. We love the fearlessness Woody showed in a very stale time in US cinema in his content and form in that film in particular."

Unlike with the previous two features, Williams and Perry had a larger budget with which to work on this film, leading to a greater aesthetic command of the images. "For the first time we had some control over the images – a conceptual color scheme was considered very early on. I decided to shoot the film on very difficult Leica lenses. My incapability as an operator combined with the lenses gave the film a very convincing illusion of being out of focus. For the domestic scenes between the Philip and Ashley we used a zoom lens. We also used the zoom in the party

scene at Ike's, with the two women. All I was told when going into that highly improvised scene was to 'think *Faces*' (the Cassavetes film). We always lean towards close-ups. Alex had me glued to the actors, moving through very tight spaces at times. It certainly brings an intensity and an energy."

Another bold stylistic choice in the film is the use of narration, supplied by Eric Bogosian. The narration is used early and often, opening the film as well as closing it. Along with the rapid-fire verbiage the characters project at one another, it upholds the film's strong connection to the world of literature, both from literary influences as well as with regard to the professions of the characters. "As I was editing *The Color Wheel* I became frustrated with the limitations your average film has, as to how information can be given to the audience. I was thinking, 'Man, I wish there was some way in thirty seconds I could explain the entire history of this relationship, so I don't have to spend 60 seconds doing it in dialogue. So the next thing I do is, I should have a narrator. That could be our gimmick.' Most movies have one. My last movie's gimmick was that it was in black and white; this central gimmick is that there's a narrator. I feel like any good movie can get away with one gimmick. I really wanted to do it, and I like it."

MAIN CAST



JASON SCHWARTZMAN *as Philip Lewis Friedman*

Jason Schwartzman made his motion picture acting debut for Wes Anderson, starring as Max Fischer in the acclaimed comedy *Rushmore*, opposite Bill Murray. His performance earned him a nomination for Most Promising Actor from the Chicago Film Critics Association, among other honors. He again starred for Mr. Anderson in *The Darjeeling Limited*, which the two wrote with Roman Coppola; in the short film *Hotel Chevalier*; and, in voiceover, on *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. In 2012 Schwartzman was seen in *A Glimpse Inside The Mind Of Charles Swan III*, written and directed by Mr. Coppola. He was also seen in Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom*, opposite Bill Murray, Ed Norton, and Tilda Swinton.

Schwartzman was most recently in Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* with Edward Norton, Jude Law, Bill Murray and others. His other movies include Judd Apatow's *Funny*

People, opposite Adam Sandler, Seth Rogen, and Jonah Hill; Edgar Wright's *Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World*; Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette*, alongside Kirsten Dunst; David O. Russell's *I Heart Huckabees*; Roman Coppola's *C.Q.*; Jonas Åkerlund's *Spun*; Andrew Niccol's *Simone*, with Al Pacino; and Anand Tucker's *Shopgirl*, adapted by Steve Martin from the latter's book of the same name, for which Mr. Schwartzman received a Satellite Award nomination.

The Los Angeles native recently starred for three seasons as Jonathan Ames on HBO's Brooklyn-based acclaimed television series *Bored To Death*, alongside Ted Danson and Zach Galifianakis.

In the musical world, he was lead drummer for the Los Angeles-based band Phantom Planet. Their second studio album, *The Guest*, written in part by Mr. Schwartzman, was released by Epic

Records in February 2002; shortly thereafter, the band embarked on a 14-month tour with Incubus. By 2006, he had embarked on a new endeavor as a one-man group, under the name Coconut Records. Coconut Records released its debut album, *Nighttiming*, in 2007, with contributions from Incubus and Kirsten Dunst. Mr. Schwartzman wrote all of the songs and performs the majority of the instruments. The song *West Coast* was heard in an episode of the television series *The O.C.* as well as in Matt Reeves' *Cloverfield*. Coconut Records' second album, *Davy*, was released in January 2009.



Philip is the sun but doesn't know that any planet could possibly need his light and warmth. This is why he doesn't understand why they orbit him. But if he opened his eyes just a little, he'd understand the affect he has on those around him and probably even take responsibility for it. Instead he assumes the worst of those who want only the best and structures his actions and behavior as though nobody else has relevant feelings or emotions, nor will they continue to exist when he walks out of their lives.

JONATHAN PRYCE *as Ike Zimmerman*

Jonathan Pryce is a Welsh stage and film actor and singer. After studying at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and meeting his longtime girlfriend English actress Kate Fahy in 1974, he began his career as a stage actor in the 1970s. His work in theatre, including an award-winning performance in the title role of the Royal Court Theatre's *Hamlet*, led to several supporting roles

in film and television. He made his breakthrough screen performance in Terry Gilliam's 1985 cult film, *Brazil*.

Critically lauded for his versatility, Pryce has participated in big-budget films such as *Evita*, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *The New World*, as well as independent films such as *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *Carrington*. His career in theatre has also been prolific, and he has won two Tony Awards – the first in 1977 for his Broadway debut in *Comedians*, the second for his 1991 role as “The Engineer” in the musical *Miss Saigon*.

When the king taps a pauper on the shoulder, he can rise up and be a knight. When the pauper returns home to his pauper's house, the familiar is suddenly inferior. His place is a dump and his wife and children hold no interest. After all, they represent the life of the man he no longer is. Such is the effect Ike has on Philip. There's no trepidation in the young man accepting the approval and affections of a hero whose flaws are invisible. Philip enters his kingdom willfully.



ELISABETH MOSS
as Ashley Kane

Who kind of woman can possibly deal with a monster like Philip? How strong must she be, how comfortable in her own skin, how confident in her own decisions that the constant misery surrounding her makes little or no difference? Ashley is the inverse of Philip; success

makes her feel fulfilled and she is happiest when working as hard as possible. It is this dedication that makes her somewhat ignorant of the human struggles right in front of her.



KRYSTEN RITTER
as Melanie Zimmerman

The decisions a guy like Philip can make are mirrored and refracted in those Ike has already made. Melanie has come out the other side of that tunnel and her eyes have been readjusting to the light ever since. What becomes of the broken hearted indeed, a short lifetime of disappointment in a father not dissimilar but frustratingly much longer than Ashley's brief flogging at the miserable temple of Philip. Some people get away clean, others need a clean break.



JOSEPHINE DE LA BAUME
as Yvette Dussart

The unattainable goal oft strived for turned attainable. The rapidity with which Philip can now set his mind to something and then have it is new and shocking. Yvette turns from enemy to ally too quickly for Philip to understand or appreciate that actually you kind of need to work to maintain these things. People aren't property and you cannot collect them. Easy come easy go.



“So rueful and wise is writer-director Alex Ross Perry’s *Listen Up Philip* about artistic ambition, youthful arrogance and middle-aged regrets, it comes as a shock to discover that Perry himself is not yet even 30. That gives this remarkably achieved feature a precocity nearly equal to that of the prodigal fiction writer who rests at its center, honing his craft at the expense of any and all meaningful relationships in his life. It’s a familiar tale, but one told by Perry with immense filmmaking verve and novelistic flourish, and acted by an exceptional ensemble cast... By any measure, the pic formally announces Perry as one of the most promising young talents on the indie scene.”

Scott Foundas, VARIETY

“The acerbically funny *Listen Up Philip* counts as a great leap forward for Alex Ross Perry after his generously received second feature, *The Color Wheel* ... The movie nimbly hopscotches from one character to another, including Philip’s increasingly alienated girlfriend, Ashley Kane (a strong Elisabeth Moss), and an older, reclusive writer, Ike Zimmerman (Jonathan Pryce, delivering a master class in monstrous egomania), who with a bombardment of hilarious put-downs, becomes Philip’s mentor.”

Manohla Dargis, THE NEW YORK TIMES

“Perry’s new film, in the guise of a riff on several themes by Philip Roth, is a riff on what it means for a filmmaker to read Philip Roth – to want to achieve something in movies akin to what Roth has accomplished in novels ... In its peculiarly concrete variety of abstraction and multiple levels of narrative gamesmanship, *Listen Up Philip* disinvites the sort of discussion of character and motive that all too often takes the movie screen for a transparent view of real people. The actors’ nuanced specificity is broken up into moments and glances that seem as elusive as memories. I can’t think of a recent movie that stages with as much joy and wonder the sense of living a life that becomes, directly or obliquely, in action or in idea, the stuff of art. Not that *Listen Up Philip* is devoid of pain or bewilderment; rather, it’s devoid of guilt. That may be the Rothiest element of all.”

Richard Brody, THE NEW YORKER

MAIN CAST

Philip Lewis Friedman *Jason Schwartzman*
Ashley Kane *Elisabeth Moss*
Jonathan Pryce *Ike Zimmerman*
Melanie Zimmerman *Krysten Ritter*
Yvette Dussart *Josephine de La Baume*
Narrator *Eric Bogosian*
Holly Kane *Jess Weixler*
Emily Dree *Hemingway*
Josh Fawn *Keith Poulson*
Nancy *Kate Lyn Sheil*
Norm *Yusef Bulos*

MAIN CREW

Written and Directed by *Alex Ross Perry*
Produced by *Katie Stern, Joshua Blum*
Produced by *James M. Johnston, Toby Halbrooks, David Lowery*
Executive Producer *Christos V. Konstantakopoulos*
Co-Producer *Michaela McKee*
Director of Photography *Sean Price Williams*
Editor *Robert Greene*
Production Designer *Scott Kuzio*
Costume Designer *Amanda Ford*
Casting by *Susan Shopmaker CSA, Lois Drabkin CSA*
Original Score *Keegan DeWitt*

Filmed With The Support of the New York State Governor's Office for Motion Picture & Television Development

Filmed on location in
Brooklyn, New York; Manhattan, New York; Nyack, New York; New Rochelle, New York
and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Shot Entirely on Super 16mm Film







TECHNICAL DETAILS

production year: 2013
length: 108 min
Language: English
with French Subtitles
colour
Aspect ratio: 1:1.85
Sound: 5.1

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