

## THE HOTEL NEW HAMPSHIRE

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*“You couldn’t have asked for a better hotel, but we needed a bear. Everybody does!”*

**Win Berry (Beau Bridges)**

**The Woodfall story** concluded on an idiosyncratic note with Tony Richardson’s adaptation of the best-seller by John Irving, the New Hampshire-born novelist whose *The World According To Garp* had been filmed a couple of years earlier (by George Roy Hill) to considerable box-office and awards success. A commercial dud on initial release despite some upbeat critical responses, *The Hotel New Hampshire* quickly established a considerable cult following and many have detected its thematic and atmospheric influence on Wes Anderson pictures such as *Moonrise Kingdom*, *The Royal Tenenbaums* and *The Grand Budapest Hotel*.

“While it is decidedly not to all tastes, *The Hotel New Hampshire* is a fascinating, largely successful adaptation,” enthused the review in trade-bible *Variety*...

“Richardson has pulled off a remarkable stylistic tight-rope act, establishing a bizarre tone of morbid whimsicality at the outset and sustaining it throughout.” Indeed, of all the many Woodfall literary transpositions, this is arguably the most audacious of all, tackling a multi-decade, globe-hopping chronicle which struck many readers as essentially “unfilmable.”

Richardson’s solution is to dispense with conventional concerns of period detail, instead creating a concrete sort of dreamscape through which his rambunctious characters move with such persuasive brio and bonhomie that we scarcely notice that they are barely changing as the years pass. Anachronism be damned! The fact that the picture was almost entirely shot in Quebec adds to the oneiric, slightly off-kilter mood.

The organic ensemble cast has at its heart various members of the Berry family, a footloose New England clan who set up and operate various hotels—all called the New Hampshire—on either side of the Atlantic Ocean. Win Berry (Beau Bridges) meets his wife (Lisa Banes), whose name is pointedly never revealed, some time just before World War II begins. They have five children in rapid succession, resulting in a tightly clannish atmosphere among the brood: Franny (Jodie Foster) and John (Rob Lowe) are especially, even intimately close. The tragic death of Mrs Berry and her youngest son in a plane crash brings the survivors even closer together, as they tackle the turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s in their happy-go-lucky, quasi-bohemian manner...

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“There’s no point. That’s the whole point,” comments the oldest Berry child Frank (Paul McCrane) at one juncture, summing up the cheerful nihilism which sustains the film and its protagonists alike. Built around an enormously engaging turn from Jodie Foster—the former child star just on the cusp of adulthood here—*The Hotel New Hampshire* takes us into the charming closed circuits of a decidedly unusual American family, second cousins of J D Salinger’s brainy Glass menagerie. A European-oriented director of distinctly Trans-Atlantic sensibility, Richardson proves a vivid prism through which Irving’s tall tales can reach the screen with all of their quirky contours triumphantly intact.