

JANUS FILMS PRESENTS

M. HULOT'S HOLIDAY



NEW 35MM PRINTS – NEW RESTORATION!

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Director: Jacques Tati

Country: France

Year: 1953

Run time: 88 minutes

B&W / 1.37 / mono / unrated

JANUS FILMS

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M. HULOT'S HOLIDAY

SYNOPSIS

While on holiday at a seaside resort, Monsieur Hulot – Jacques Tati's endearing, pipe-smoking clown – finds his presence provoking one catastrophe after another. A wildly funny satire of vacationers determined to enjoy themselves, the first entry in the Hulot series includes a series of brilliantly choreographed sight gags about boats, dogs, tennis, and other hazards of leisure. Janus Films is proud to present this masterpiece of gentle slapstick in a new restoration.

*The restoration of **M. Hulot's Holiday**, fully funded and managed by Fondation Groupama Gan and Thomson Foundation with Les Films de Mon Oncle (rights owners), has been made at Technicolor Creative Services (Thomson) in Los Angeles with the support of Cinémathèque française.*

M. HULOT'S HOLIDAY

ABOUT THE RESTORATION

from American Cinematographer, September 2009 issue

This year's Festival de Cannes saw the début of a newly restored edition of *M. Hulot's Holiday (Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot)*, the wistful comedy written and directed by Jacques Tati, who also stars as the nearly silent title character, who goes to a seaside resort for an odd, surreal, slightly melancholy holiday.

Tati himself revisited the movie several times over the course of two and a half decades. *M. Hulot's Holiday* was originally shot in 1951/1952, in Saint-Marc-sur-Mer, a small French resort on the coast of the Atlantic. In 1962, Tati re-edited parts of the movie and reworked both the score and the sound mix. In a nod to his popular postman character from his first feature, *Jour de Fête*, Tati also superimposed a color stamp and a postmark over the final shot of the movie.

Then, in 1977, as *M. Hulot's Holiday* began to attract a new following, Tati saw Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* and was inspired to shoot additional footage. The original movie had a scene in which Hulot goes out on the ocean in a folding canoe, then gets caught inside it when it collapses on him. As he struggles to get free, the canoe keeps snapping open and shut, looking like the biting jaws of a shark. The new shots featured panicked people on the beach, running away from this shark – though closer examination of their hairstyles make it very evident that they were photographed in the late 1970s, rather than the early 1950s.

The restoration of *M. Hulot's Holiday* represented an unusual collaboration between two film foundations -- the Thomson Foundation for Film and TV Heritage and the Fondation Groupama Gan pour le Cinéma -- as well as the rights holder, Tati's nephew Jérôme Deschamps, and the Cinémathèque Française.

When it came time to do the restoration, the question of course came up – which version was the definitive one? “Restoration is not just technical – it's also creative and ethical,” says Séverine Wemaere, head of the Thomson Foundation, speaking on behalf of both herself and Gilles Duval of Fondation Groupama Gan. “Today, many works are called “restorations” and presented in key festivals, but some are not restorations; some are just cleaning. Some respect the author, but some take too many liberties. We have to do heavy work upstream before starting the technical work – what we want, how far we want to go. You really want to go deeply inside the movie and not betray the filmmaker by doing a restoration that is not what he wanted.”

In this case, because the director himself had made all the changes to the movie, it was decided that the third and final version should be the basis of the restoration.

M. HULOT'S HOLIDAY

Wemaere previously worked very successfully with Technicolor (part of the Thomson company) on the restoration of Max Ophüls' *Lola Montès*, so she felt it was natural to go back to them again with this project. "A team that wins, you take it again," she says. Overseeing the project was Tom Burton, vice president of digital services at Technicolor Digital Intermediates in Burbank, who also supervised the *Lola Montès* project.

M. Hulot's Holiday was shot on nitrate, shortly before the highly flammable stock was phased out of use forever in the mid-1950s. Technicolor considered scanning the original nitrate negative, but after doing test scans of both the original negative and an interpositive, the team ultimately decided to work from an interpositive made on Kodak 2366 fine grain duplicating positive film.

Because there were many splices and grading notches in the negative, when Technicolor struck the interpositive, they had to do custom adjustments in the gate of the contact printer to stabilize the negative as much as possible as it went through.

Partly because of all of Tati's work on the movie over the years, the negative was in very bad shape. There were tears, vertical scratches, warping at splices, splice damage, perf damage, emulsion digs. The black-and-white was completely grayish. "You couldn't see *M. Hulot's Holiday* in good condition anymore," says Wemaere. "That was a key, key factor that pushed me to go into this. The object was film heritage. French film heritage, of course, but much more than that: many, many filmmakers were inspired by him."

The restoration of *M. Hulot's Holiday* was both digital and photochemical. Wemaere explains that there were two important goals: first, to get the best new elements, so that the film could be shown again with all the damage removed and the contrast restored – which required all the help that digital tools could bring. And second, to create a new film negative, so that the movie could be preserved properly – the photochemical aspect. "In ten years, who knows what digital format will still be in effect?" she asks.

One of the biggest challenges was schedule: Wemaere admits it should have been a one-year project, but by the time they located all the necessary elements for the restoration, it was December, 2008 – and they wanted to be ready for the following Festival de Cannes, in May. "If it could be presented in Cannes, it would be silly not to at least try to be ready. So then it was a race."

Different phases of the process that ordinarily would have been sequential all went on at the same time: The interpositive was scanned using ARRI and Spirit scanners, to create a 2K master; the color correction was done by Tim Peeler on a da Vinci 2K Plus, and the image repair was done using an array of tools, including da Vinci Revival, MTI Correct, Digital Vision Phoenix and Adobe After Effects. A team of about 20 people worked in two or three shifts. "Organization

M. HULOT'S HOLIDAY

was the key," says Danny Albano, who was a visual effects artist and compositor on the project.

From a technical standpoint, the biggest issues on the movie were stabilizing the image to compensate for the jitteriness caused by perf damage; cleaning up the damage, especially from splices that had been taken apart and put back together (often leaving missing frames), and combining materials from different sources.

Many of the existing opticals and effects in *M. Hulot's Holiday* were questionable, to say the least, presenting the team with the recurring question of which to restore and which to leave untouched. In one instance, an image of a horse kicking a car rumble-seat and trapping a man inside was created using a split-screen composite – but in the existing footage, the two sides of the composite shift noticeably against one another. "It's tricky – do you fix it?" asks Burton. "In this case, yes."

And a major alteration was in the overall look of the film – taking it from muted, low-contrast grays back to higher contrast blacks and white, and turning what had become a cloudy day back into a sunny one.

Burton admits that adding the color stamp at the end of the movie – one of the changes made in Tati's 1962 revision – was complicated, because it meant combining color and black-and-white stocks. He says that while most modern black-and-white movies such as *Good Night and Good Luck* and *The Good German* are actually printed on color stock, in this case the team behind the restoration wanted to replicate the original scenario as closely as possible – which meant that the shot with the stamp was printed on color stock (Kodak Vision Color Print Film 2383), while the rest of the movie was printed on black-and-white (Kodak Black-and-White Print Film 2302). As a result, they had to splice in that extra color shot by hand -- and also accept the subtle focus issues caused by the different thicknesses of the black-and-white stock, which has only one layer of emulsion, and the color, which has three.

At the same time that picture restoration work was happening in California, Léon Rousseau at L. E. Diapason in France was similarly cleaning up the sound. Burton says that the difference was that Rousseau had a complete reference sound track to work with, with no splices, no missing pieces. Since there were small bits cut out of the picture, and since the two teams were working on opposite sides of the world from each other, there was a lot of conversation back and forth, trying to ensure that picture and sound would match up perfectly when they were put together immediately before Cannes. But work like that is always risky, and Burton admits that there was no room for errors – fortunately there were none.

Wemaere says that she and Gilles Duval of the Fondation Groupama Gan share a similar philosophy on the restoration of movies – that films shouldn't just be

M. HULOT'S HOLIDAY

restored, but presented to and shared with the public. Four film prints and a DCP of the movie have been made, and it has already screened at festivals in La Rochelle and Bologna, as well as at Cannes; also, according to Burton, a Criterion DVD of the restored movie is expected.

Wemaere points out one other important aspect of the restoration: it was launched in November, 2008, at the height of the financial crisis. "Nobody wanted to enter into any projects" she recalls. "Two foundations working together gave such a good example -- nothing is impossible. In those times of economic crisis, where the state doesn't give much money -- even in France -- and where money is short everywhere, it's a really interesting idea. Not just sharing the costs, but sharing the experience -- the joy of restoring. Restoration is very tricky work -- you have to give back something to the audience."

M. HULOT'S HOLIDAY

***M. Hulot's Holiday* has been restored by:**

La Fondation Groupama Gan pour le Cinéma

Gilles Duval
Dominique Hoff

Les Films de Mon Oncle

Jérôme Deschamps
Macha Makeïeff
Philippe Gigot

La Fondation Thomson pour le Patrimoine du Cinéma et de la Télévision

Séverine Wemaere
Loubna Régragui

La Cinémathèque française

Serge Toubiana
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Technicolor®, Burbank (U.S.A)

Tom Burton
Tim Peeler
Karen Krause
Danny Albano
John Healy
Beth Ostermann
LaNelle Mason
John Kearns
Chris Kutcka
Joe Zarceno
Trey Freeman
Brad Sutton
Wilson Tang
Everette Webber

Technicolor®, North Hollywood (U.S.A)

Colleen Simpson
Jeff McCarty
Linda Koncel
L.E. Diapason
Léon Rousseau

M. HULOT'S HOLIDAY

HULOT ON HOLIDAY

By Serge Toubiana, Managing Director of the Cinémathèque française

Here's a naïve question: What does M. Hulot do when he's not on holiday? Does he have an activity? A profession? We know virtually nothing about him. He's only a silhouette, a moving sketch of a man. This is his lot from film to film. His car, a spluttering, cheerfully antiquated motorcar, is steadfastly eccentric. Like its driver. The license plate reads 8244 AK 75. So Hulot is Parisian. We don't know much more. Hulot has driven out to this picturesque Brittany seaside town, where, like the other holidaygoers, he usually stays at the Hôtel de la Plage. One of the film's many qualities is to endear us to boarding house life. The bell strikes at the same hours, everyone hurries back from the beach and gathers in the hotel dining room. Greetings are exchanged; eyes meet across tables, guests brush past one another without touching. Tati's cinema is about the art of not touching (too much). When Hulot serves on the tennis court in that efficient if peculiar style of his, his adversary is unable to return the serve. Here's a hypothesis to consider: Hulot doesn't create a sense of otherness, but one of avoidance. Failure. Just like at the ping-pong table, where the game is played out of frame.

It's hard to imagine Hulot not on holiday. He is not defined by work but by an inborn capacity to sow disorder, to gently disturb the peace. Which doesn't stop him from being hyperactive. He is rarely separated from his fishing rod, just as he will never be without his umbrella in *Playtime*. Hulot always looks busy, even if he walks with his head in the clouds. He's a Cartesian diver, an eternal child in an adult body.

The notion of work is important in Tati's world. Work is his obsession, as it obsesses his characters. With one important nuance: everyone works at his own rhythm, in a kind of fragmented, unproductive general economy. Nothing is produced. What matters is the posture, the gestures, which are a source of gags. The characters in *M. Hulot's Holiday* proceed at their own pace, an individual energy in constant collision with that of others, at the risk of creating sparks, short circuits (the brilliant climax of the fireworks). In the hotel restaurant, the waiter is slow because there is always something in his path between the kitchen and the dining room, an obstacle, a lull, an unexpected event that disturbs any smooth movements. Tati or the art of choreography. It gets worse in *Playtime*, where the principle of general inefficiency dominates. It's Hulot who, in the Royal Garden restaurant, sparks off the crisis.

The foundation of cinema according to Tati: the elaboration of the gag, the *mise en scene*, the meticulous study of gesture, the sense of balance and imbalance, all this obeys a principle of expenditure, provided that this expenditure creates no new energy. Therein lies the subtlety of Tati's films. M. Hulot is never prisoner of the meanings his attitudes engender. He owes everything to a never-ending lightness, with his hat, his fishing rod and his umbrella. His silhouette moves

M. HULOT'S HOLIDAY

between the drops of reality. From gag to gag, Hulot's silhouette returns to what it must remain. Hulot comes out unharmed, in his true colors. Unshakeable in his visceral failure to adjust to the world, he nonetheless exposes its unconscious or invisible mechanisms. M. Hulot allows the world of humans and objects to exist, move, make noise and show the audience the clockwork movement that regulates the universe. Without himself getting bogged down in any moral and physical responsibility that would make him a spokesman or critical conscience. Hulot is innocent, he doesn't judge others, just as others don't judge him. Just gauged. Everyone knows Tati's films are more about sounds than words. The memory and nostalgia of silent movies underlines them in a caustic, euphoric manner. Music plays a crucial role. It is not (only) background music, it deeply stamps the film's rhythm like a ritornello. Think of the one in *M. Hulot's Holiday*: tatati-tata, tatati-tata... The ritornello is a melody that keeps coming back and which stays in the mind. Its gentle melancholy haunts you. What does M. Hulot do at the end of the film, when the holiday is over? He gets into his spluttering car. He'll be back next summer, like the other hotel guests. Holidays were made for him. He understands their subtleties and most of all the art of living.

M. HULOT'S HOLIDAY

HULOT OUT OF STEP

By Stéphane Goudet, Director of the Méliès cinema at Monteuil, critic for *Positif*

Monsieur Hulot is late. As always. But it hardly matters because, unlike the throng of travelers from which steps only a young blonde tourist, the hero has no train to catch. He has his own car, which is as antiquated as he is. As in another summer film *Jour de Fête* (1949), *M. Hulot's Holiday* partially identifies the vehicle and its driver. François's bicycle had associated him, by dint of some acrobatics, with speed and efficiency. M. Hulot's car is a bit of grit in the well-oiled mechanisms of proper bourgeois society on its way to the seaside. "What is there to do there?" Tati asks. The same thing as in Paris! This is reflected, ironically, in the song whose melody is the film's refrain: "What's the weather like in Paris?"

As the word suggests, a holiday should represent a time for rest and relaxation, a time where we forget ourselves a bit, and allow ourselves to be lulled, even re-invented, by the murmur of the waves and the smiles of children. But, as Tati sees it, the student continues to study, the retired officer to command, the businessman to manage. There's no break, no respite. The bell that strikes at mealtimes reminds the negligent: abandonment will not be tolerated here.

From this point of view, naturally, Monsieur Hulot is equally out of step. Never in synch. Along with the old Englishwoman and the children eager to escape parental tedium, he tries his best to enjoy a necessarily limited holiday. Because the sands of holiday-time are still confined to the hourglass. On the horizon, work or die: isn't the diverted funeral designed not only to find a foster family for the solitary Hulot, but also to transform a last gasp into a new breath of life? Laughter as a life-saver. The gust of wind with which Hulot is associated right from his belated entrance at the Hôtel de la Plage, which recalls the protagonist's arrival at the inn in James Whale's *The Invisible Man*. Hulot and a breath of fresh air: here is something to air the premises and its overly restrained tenants.

Ceding to the present moment, Hulot embarks on a variety of sporting activities: tennis, kayaking, horse-riding, ping-pong, all sorts of sports at which he is more-or-less competent. Sport is the perfect activity for giving free reign to the body and carte blanche to time. Who knows in advance how long a tennis game will last? No one. Sports time is floating time, free time. Literally. And for Tati himself, it was indeed sport (rugby, horse-riding, tennis, soccer) that freed him from the family yoke and a future career as a picture-framer that his picture-framer father had chosen for him. Sport played, sometimes at a relatively high level of skill (rugby at the Racing Club), but most of all in the sporting activities Tati first mimed in 1935 in his stage show, "Sporting Impressions," in which he was already acting out, without props, the sports seen in this film.

In fact, for Tati, *M. Hulot's Holiday* was something of a flashback. In a letter addressed to Sophie Tatischeff, Madame Danielle Sully reveals how the sitting

M. HULOT'S HOLIDAY

room of Martine's aunt reproduced the interior of the boarding house where Tati stayed in 1926 with his friend, Jacques Broïdo. "He practically reconstituted that Ker-bois sitting room, with everything that went with it at the time: endearing bits of rococo furniture, on the upright piano a lamp, held by a woman draped in floating veils, little crochet doilies, antimacassars, lace curtains. . ." (Les Films de Mon Oncle archives). Apart from the decor, if Hulot is so close to children in the film, it's also because he is here remembering his own youth, the joys and lethargy he felt as a kid left on his own in the sand, his father in military uniform coming down to join his well-behaved and very bourgeois family on the beach in their wet bathing suits.

But the film's strength, as with all Tati's films, apart from its personal associations, is the way it embodies the History of post-war France. You can still hear echoes of the conflict in the officer's dialogue and in the early firing of inglorious rockets that light up the sky in the distance or bombard the hotel. In the opening scenes of *The Great Dictator*, Chaplin had filmed The Great War as a fairground. Tati, in *M. Hulot's Holiday*, stages a fireworks display as a bellicose retaliation against the established order. A war in which he is the only casualty, with his bandaged nose, like that of Major Kovaliov in Gogol's *The Nose*, whose appendage has just vanished, or like those clowns who hide theirs under a blood-red blob.

But the history that is swept along by the waves of the opening credits of *M. Hulot's Holiday* is also that of the first paid holidays of 1936. The bustling crowds at the train station anticipate the growth of mass tourism and the invention of that "leisure time" which Tati would examine again in *Playtime* (1967). After the beach enclave, which has no history or geography, in the first Hulot adventure, there is the virtualized, globalized Paris of Tati's fourth feature, where again we see the hero slip away, melt into the décor, at a time of triumphant modernism and standardization. It matters little that Hulot is always late and mistaken for his bland look-alikes. All that counts is that his unique inventor be shown forever ahead of his time.

M. HULOT'S HOLIDAY

CREDITS

CAST

Monsieur Hulot
Martine
The Aunt
The Englishwoman
Fred
The Commander
The Hotel Manager
The Waiter
Strolling Man
Strolling Woman
The Commandant's Wife
Holidaygoer
The South American

Jacques Tati
Nathalie Pascaud
Micheline Rolla
Valentine Camax
Louis Perrault
André Dubois
Lucien Frégis
Raymond Carl
René Lacourt
Margeurite Gérard
Suzy Willy
Michelle Brabo
Georges Adlin

CREW

Story, Script & Dialogue
with the collaboration of
Cinematography

Jacques Tati and Henri Marquet
Pierre Aubert and Jacques Lagrange
Jacques Mercanton and Jean
Mousselle

Camera
assisted by

Pierre Ancrenaz and André Villard
Le Chevallier, Fabien Tordjmann,
and André Marquette

Editing

Jacques Grassi, Ginou Bretneiche,
and Suzanne Baron

Music
Sound
Sound Recorder
Production Design
Props
Producer

Alain Romans
Roger Cosson
Jacques Carrère
Henri Schmitt and Roger Briaucourt
Pierre Clauzel and André Pierdel
Fred Orain / Cady-Films