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| Tati, Jacques (1907-1982) |
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| Jacques Tati (born Jacques Tatischeff) was a French director and actor. Despite a very small output — only six feature films and three shorts — he is considered one of the most influential comedy directors of the 20th century. He is best known for creating the character of Monsieur Hulot — a slightly anachronistic, bumbling gentleman — whom he played in four films: *Les Vacances de M. Hulot* [*M. Hulot’s Holiday*](1953), *Mon Oncle* [*My Uncle*] (1958), *Play Time* (1967) and *Trafic* [*Traffic*] (1971).  Tati had a complex Russian, Dutch, French and Italian ancestry (his paternal grandfather was a general in the Russian Imperial Army and came from nobility) and grew up under relatively affluent circumstances. Nonetheless, by the early 1930s, instead of joining his family’s picture frame business, he had turned to performing, first as a mime and then as a stage and film actor. One of his most notable early roles was in René Clément’s 1936 short *Soigne ton gauche*. Tall and athletic, Tati was always a physical performer, making great use of his gangly frame in carefully choreographed displays of social ineptitude which owed a lot to classic silent comedians like Mack Sennett, Buster Keaton, Max Linder or Stan Laurel. |
| Jacques Tati (born Jacques Tatischeff) was a French director and actor. Despite a very small output — only six feature films and three shorts — he is considered one of the most influential comedy directors of the 20th century. He is best known for creating the character of Monsieur Hulot — a slightly anachronistic, bumbling gentleman — whom he played in four films: *Les Vacances de M. Hulot* [*M. Hulot’s Holiday*](1953), *Mon Oncle* [*My Uncle*] (1958), *Play Time* (1967) and *Trafic* [*Traffic*] (1971).  Tati had a complex Russian, Dutch, French and Italian ancestry (his paternal grandfather was a general in the Russian Imperial Army and came from nobility) and grew up under relatively affluent circumstances. Nonetheless, by the early 1930s, instead of joining his family’s picture frame business, he had turned to performing, first as a mime and then as a stage and film actor. One of his most notable early roles was in René Clément’s 1936 short *Soigne ton gauche*. Tall and athletic, Tati was always a physical performer, making great use of his gangly frame in carefully choreographed displays of social ineptitude which owed a lot to classic silent comedians like Mack Sennett, Buster Keaton, Max Linder or Stan Laurel.  In 1947, Tati directed his first film — a short entitled *L’École des facteurs* [*The School for Postmen*] in which he played an efficiency-obsessed postman. He would reprise the role two years later in 1949 for his first feature film, *Jour de fête* [*The Big Day*]. A series of scenes and vignettes revolving around a rural postman’s daily routines and somewhat drunken attempts to emulate the speed and productivity of his American counterparts, Jour de fête displays all the characteristics of Tati’s style: a very loose narrative, minimal dialogue, and a strong interest in sight and sound gags.  Tati’s next four films feature his signature character, Monsieur Hulot. *Les Vacances de M. Hulot* follows him as he bumbles his way through a seaside resort. In *Mon Oncle* he is a relic of an old-fashioned Parisian struggling to adapt to a consumerist lifestyle, while bonding with his young nephew. In his masterpiece, *Play Time*, a quasi-experimental fable of modern anomie, Hulot struggles to escape the geometrical confines of a ‘new’ Paris that’s all sterile cubicles, metal, glass and concrete. In *Trafic*, he is an automobile designer harassed by his own creation.  Tati’s unique directorial and performing style have always straddled the border between anachronism and experimentation. His films sometimes appear to express a populist, antiquated, almost hackneyed, vision of France, and *Mon Oncle* was even accused of *poujadisme* for its perceived antimodernity and sentimental presentation of a disappearing Paris. At the same time, Tati was keenly interested in visual and aural innovations. His films sacrifice plots for tightly constructed gags which explore the geometry and technology of modernity for both satirical and creative purposes, while dialogue is substituted with an assortment of expressive organic and mechanical background noises. At heart, despite the humour of his cinema, Tati is a skeptic — a critic of modernity and mindless conformity — who nonetheless displays almost a Dadaist’s fascination with machinery and mechanics. Selected Filmography: *L’École des facteurs* [*The School for Postmen*] (1947)  *Jour de fête* [*The Big Day*] (1949)  *Les Vacances de M. Hulot* [*M. Hulot’s Holiday*] (1953)  *Mon Oncle* [*My Uncle*] (1958)  *Play Time* (1967)  *Trafic* [*Traffic*] (1971) |
| Further reading:  Link: <http://www.tativille.com>/  3 The official site of the director, maintained by his nephew  (Armes)  (Bazin)  (Hilliker) |