

# RECOVERED TREASURES: GREAT FILMS FROM WORLD ARCHIVES

January 15–February 20, 2011

## ***PLAY TIME***

Saturday, January 15, 1:00 p.m.

1967, 126 mins.

**Restored 70mm print with DTS Sound, from Janus Films.**

Produced, written, and directed by Jacques Tati. English dialogue by Art Buchwald. Photographed by Jean Badal and Andreas Winding. Artistic collaboration, Jacques Lagrange. Architect/production designer, Eugène Roman. Music by Francis Lemarque. Edited by Gérard Pollicand. Sound by Jacques Maumont.

Principal cast: Jacques Tati (as M. Hulot), Barbara Dennek (the young tourist), Jacqueline Lecomte (her friend), Valérie Camille (M. Luc's secretary), Erika Dentzler (Mme. Giffard), Nicole Ray (the singer), Jack Gauthier (the guide).

*NOTE: A newly commissioned article by Jonathan Rosenbaum about Play Time and 2001: A Space Odyssey, the opening double feature in the Museum of the Moving Image's new theater, is available online at Moving Image Source ([movingimagesource.us](http://movingimagesource.us)).*

Jacques Tati on *Play Time*, from various interviews collected by Les Films de Mon Oncle:

I could have called it "le temps des loisirs" but I preferred *Play Time*. In the modern style of life we have in Paris it's considered very chic to use English words in the marketing of some goods: cars parked in "parkings," housewives go to do their shopping in the "supermarket," there's also a "drugstore," in the evening at the "night-club" liqueurs are sold "on the rocks," one has a "snack" for lunch or if you are desperately busy you have one in a "quick." I couldn't find any title in French. I am often criticized for the dialogue in my films. In

*Play Time* I put the dialogue within the sound. What you hear in the marketplace or in a station, or at the airport, are bits of sentences. Suddenly you hear this particular woman who says to her boyfriend, "But why didn't you tell me so?" You don't know why, basically, he didn't tell her but you know he didn't tell her.

I have often been criticized too for the use of the 70mm, which is commonly considered to be pretentious. The answer is very simple: I am going to ask an artist why he selects a full sheet to draw. If I film in Super 8 I am going to take a window. In 16mm I am going to have four of them. And in 35mm I'll have a dozen of them. And in 70mm I'll have the whole front of Orly. It's my belief, finally, that I'm just doing my job. Someone invented the 70mm, someone else invented the four tracks—I don't see why one should have to revert to black and white with one single soundtrack! In 70mm I can show people what a modern building is like. As

in certain drawings the set is of prime importance in *Play Time*. However it's not the set itself which is the dominant factor but the use to which it is put.

For the entire beginning of the film I direct people so that they are following the guidelines of the architects. Everyone operates at right angles to the décor, people feel trapped by it. If M. Hulot comes into a small shop, a haberdasher's say, and drops his umbrella the haberdasher will say to him: "Sorry, Sir. You've dropped your umbrella. Ah, sorry." It's a matter of no importance. But because of the size of the set, if you drop your umbrella in the hall of Orly, straight away it's a different story. Because everything had been planned and decided on by developers and architects of the complex so that the umbrella should not be dropped in Orly.

And precisely because of the clatter which a falling umbrella makes in Orly you are guilty of acting in a dangerous manner. You have become the focus of attention. The architect might be there, saying his piece "Sir, when we designed this place we didn't envisage you dropping your umbrella." Moreover, that kind of thing happens when people are buying a bottle of Scotch at the airport at a bargain price. Sometimes it happens that the bottle is badly wrapped and, just like that, bang, the bottle of Scotch explodes in the hall. I have never seen people so upset by the breaking of a bottle. By contrast, if you are in a small bar you'll be told "Don't worry Marcel; Robert could you give that a quick sweep of a brush?" In that way the error is righted without any great drama. In modern architecture an attempt has been made to ensure typists sit perfectly straight and that everyone takes themselves seriously. Everyone walks around with a briefcase, which seems to give them the

appearance of being well-informed. In the first part of the film it's the architecture which is dominant. Then, little by little, the warmth, the contact, the friendship, the individual that I am trying to defend begin to take precedence over this international décor. It's at this point that illuminated advertising begins to appear, things begin to whirl then to dance before ending in a veritable merry-go-round. No more right angles at the end of the film. People finish up exactly as if they were on the Place du Tertre. All the same, I think it should be recalled that when there is a breakdown a man with a screwdriver is always sought out. It's the defense of this man with his little screwdriver that I undertake in this film. My job is not to rubbish the architecture. I'm there to try to defend the individual and the personality that is his, to see that there is respect for people, for Mr. Robert who has just repaired something. We need him—with a screwdriver in his hand he is of great importance. Then, I think you have the right to do your hair just the way you want it. In *Play Time* I defend the minor characters. I know for a fact that I like living with simple people because I have a simple life myself and I have no ambition to be the wealthiest corpse in St. Germain-en-Laye! OK maybe you'll say to me "your show was very poor..." Well, I know nothing about that. There are mistakes, of course, what I call my spelling mistakes but if I had to do a film like *Play Time* again, I'd do it in exactly the same way. What I have tried to do is something that spectators would not have anticipated because spectators are always labeling artists and saying "This is the funny fellow, he's going to make us laugh." But in *Play Time*, it's quite the opposite, it's an invitation: Look about you and you'll see there's always something funny happening. I think that *Play Time* is made not so much for the screen as for the eye."

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