

Jour de fête DVD

By Jan Uhde

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Jacques Tati, the French director, writer and comedian of Russian background is justly known as the heir of the best slapstick of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. His gentle, subtle humour reminds the contemporary viewer of the forgotten visual pleasures of the film medium's earlier days. *Jour de fête*, Tati's first feature, is dominated by the blundering postman François (Tati) who, inspired by a cinema newsreel, tries to introduce to a sleepy rural French town the "cutting edge" of the 1940s American postal technology, albeit with little success. Many François' characteristics foreshadow Monsieur Hulot, the famous character Tati introduced in his next film and which became his trademark. More than in the protagonist's own actions, Tati's slapstick is anchored in the hilarious reactions of those bewildered by the hero's slow-burn antics.

This DVD issue reflects a unique restoration undertaking. Tati's 1949 film debut was filmed simultaneously on a monochrome and on experimental colour stock. Due to technical difficulties, the movie was originally released in black-and-white only. In the 1990s, with the help of Tati's daughter Sophie, the original colour negative was painstakingly restored and recently became available to film lovers world-wide and practically completing Tati's digital video disc collection...



Figure 1: *JOUR DE FÊTE* DVD ¶ Dir. Jacques Tati, 1949 ¶ PAL, Reg. 2. BFI Video Publishing ¶ Subtitles ¶ GBP 19.99 ¶

Author Information

Jan UHDE is Professor Emer. (Film Studies) at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. Born in Brno, Czech Republic. Graduated (MA) from the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno; PhD received at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. He taught at the University of Waterloo (1970-2012) where he founded a General and Honours BA program in Film Studies at the Department of Fine Arts.

Publications: *Latent Images: Film in Singapore* Second edition, with Yvonne Ng Uhde (Ridge Books, National University Press of Singapore, 2010); *Latent Images: Film in Singapore*, with Yvonne Ng Uhde (Oxford University Press, 2000); *Latent Images: Film in Singapore CD-ROM* (2003, co-author); *Vision and Persistence: Twenty Years of the Ontario Film Institute* (University of Waterloo Press, 1990) and *Ontario Film*

Institute Programming Activities Index 1969-1989 (Toronto: Ontario Science Centre, 1990). He co-edited the *Place in Space: Human Culture in Landscape* (Proceedings from the Second International Conference of the Working Group "Culture and Landscape" of the International Association of Landscape Ecology, Pudoc Scientific Publishers, Wageningen, Holland, 1993). Jan Uhde has published articles and reviews in several countries (including Canada, USA, Germany, Italy), participated in international juries at film festivals and presented papers at international conferences in North America and Europe. In 1998/99, he was a visiting researcher at the School for Film and Media Studies, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Singapore.

His professional and research interests focus on Singapore cinema; the identification and distancing mechanisms of the film viewer; the non-authored modifications and manipulation of films; and specific aspects of film history, including the Central European cinema.

He founded KINEMA in 1993.