



Monday 07 May at 6:30pm

Mon Oncle

France/Italy 1958

Director/Producer: Jacques Tati
Production co: Specta Films, Gray Film, Alter Films, Film del Centauro
Screenplay: Jacques Tati, Jacques Lagrange, Jean L'Hôte
Photography: Jean Bourgoïn
Editor: Suzanne Baron
Music: Frank Barcellini, Alain Romans

With: Jacques Tati (M Hulot), Jean-Pierre Zola (Charles Arpel), Adrienne Servantie (Mme Arpel), Alain Becourt (M Arpel), Lucien Fregis (M Pichard), Betty Schneider (Betty, landlord's daughter), JF Martial (Walter), Yvonne Arnaud (Georgette, the housekeeper), Adelaide Danieli (Mme Pichard)

116 mins, DCP. G
In French with English subtitles

Jacques Tati is the great philosophical tinkerer of comedy, taking meticulous care to arrange his films so that they unfold in a series of revelations and effortless delights. They tickle us with their quiet bemusement, they involve us in a conspiracy with Tati to discover serendipity in a world of disappointment. That's especially the case with *Mon Oncle*, which places Hulot in a gimmicky 1950s society of garish materialism.

Hulot is always the same. Tati's character varies as little as Chaplin's tramp, and is often seen in a brown fedora, a tan raincoat, a bow tie, too short pants, striped socks. He is never without his long-stemmed pipe, and at moments of urgency or confusion, he nervously taps it against his heel. He hardly ever says anything, and indeed *Mon Oncle* is halfway a silent film, with the dialogue sounding like an unexpected interruption in a library. The music is repetitive, simple, cheerful, like circus music while we're waiting for the clowns.

Hulot was the hero of *Monsieur Hulot's Holiday*, but here he is a lost soul, unemployed, bemused and confused by the modern world. His sister Madame Arpel (Adrienne Servantie) believes she can help him. She lives with her husband Monsieur Arpel (Jean-Pierre Zolla) and their young son Gerard (Alain Becourt) in a futuristic architectural monstrosity, and a great deal of the movie's time is spent exploring their cold new world.

The house they live in, a masterpiece of production design by Henri Schmitt, has automatic gates, doors, windows, kitchen appliances and a hideous aluminum fountain made from a fish that spouts water from its mouth. The fish is turned on for company, left off for family, tradesmen and relatives. Two round upstairs windows look like eyeballs, especially when the backlit heads of M and Mme Arpel function as their pupils. The garden has a winding path to the door, allowing a wicked shot where two women effusively greet each other while the path has them walking in opposite directions.

The only person who seems to understand Hulot is his nephew Gerard, who treats life in the modernist house as a bore, and escapes to scamper about town with his prankster playmates. The family dog, a dachshund in a plaid overcoat, also sneaks out to run with the local strays.

Tati was a perfectionist whose precise construction of shots, sets, actions and gags is all the more impressive because he remained within a calm emotional range; Hulot doesn't find himself starving, hanging from clock faces, besotted with romance or in the middle of a war, but simply pattering away at life, genial and courteous, doing what he can to negotiate the hurdles of civilization. Roger Ebert



Monday 14 May at 6:30pm

AFS thanks Retrospace

Akira

Japan 1988

Director/Screenplay/Editor: Otomo Katsuhiro
Producers: Suzuki Ryohei, Kato Shunzo
Production co: Akira Committee
Screenplay: Otomo Katsuhiro, Hashimoto Izo. Based on the manga by Otomo
Editor: Seyama Takeshi
Chief animator: Nakamura Takashi
Music: Yamashiro Shoji

Voices: Iwada Mitsuo (Kaneda), Sasaki Nozumo (Tetsuo), Koyama Mami (Kei), Ishida Taro (colonel), Genda Tessyo (Ryu), Suzuki Mizuho (doctor), Nakamura Tatsuhiko (Takashi, "Number 26"), Kando Kazuhiro (Masaru, "Number 27")

124 mins, DCP. M violence
In Japanese with English subtitles

For anime, 1988 was an extraordinary year. That April, Studio Ghibli released *My Neighbor Totoro* and *Grave Of The Fireflies*, two films that would soon cement its reputation as one of Japan's finest animation houses. And three months later, writer, artist and director Katsuhiro Otomo would unveil *Akira*.

Based on Otomo's best-selling, voluminous manga... *Akira* is set in a 2019 Neo-Tokyo balanced on a knife-edge. Rival motorcycle gangs fight in the streets. Revolutionaries and religious fanatics clash with the police. Behind the scenes, the military and sneaky politicians tussle for control, while scientists carry out strange experiments on grey-faced children. *Akira's* multi-strand plot is told primarily from a gang of teen bikers, including the outgoing Kaneda and his downtrodden childhood friend Tetsuo. When a chance encounter with an escaped test subject named Takashi leaves Tetsuo wounded, he's dragged off to a government lab. There, Tetsuo acquires god-like powers that threaten to tear Tokyo apart.

A manga artist and writer for many years before he moved into animation, Otomo was given unprecedented resources to bring *Akira* to the screen... The result remains one of the most technically astounding animated features ever to emerge from Japan. *Akira's* action moves not just across the screen, but in and out of it. *Akira* is constantly moving. The frame is always alive – nowhere more so than in the exhilarating motorcycle scene through night time Tokyo in the first act. Look, too, at how Otomo and his animators use colour. It's something many modern filmmakers could learn from. Teal and orange is joined by acid greens, purples, impenetrable shadows and blinding lights.

Akira is unusual, in that it features none of the exotically-hair-coloured ladies or outlandish mecha commonly associated with anime. It's nevertheless possibly one of the most brutal animated features ever made. Brutal, that is, in filmmaking terms: every bullet, punch, kick and explosion has weight and impact, imbued through beautifully-drawn animation, editing, and Tsutomu Ohashi's stunning, percussive score. But beneath all this technical brilliance, brutality, political intrigue and violence, there's a human story. Strip everything else away, and you're left with a quite touching tale about young kids trying to find their way into adulthood in a cruel and terrible city. No other science fiction film looks quite so distinctive or detailed as *Akira*, and its depiction of a believable city makes it a clear relation to *Metropolis* and *Blade Runner*, and as artistically important as either. ...

[Thirty] years on, *Akira* still has the power to enthrall and mesmerise. It's telling that Otomo, although still working and producing great work, has never attempted to make anything on its scale again. *Akira* stands alone as a unique piece of animated science fiction. – Ryan Lambie, *Den of Geek!*