



MIKE LEIGH'S CHOICES

Jules et Jim

A contemporary review

Jules et Jim is very much a conscious attempt on Truffaut's part to make a synthesis of his first two films: to combine the 'big' subject with obvious human significance of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* with what he calls the 'plastic enterprise' of *Tirez sur le pianiste*. And he has succeeded partly, perhaps, because the novel by Henri-Pierre Roché (best known as 'the man who introduced Gertrude Stein to Picasso') from which the film is adapted was already in itself both a 'plastic enterprise' and a strikingly honest study of human relationships.

In the Paris of 1910, two young writers, one with a French passport, the other with a German one, but both inhabitants of that pre-1914 Bohemia nourished by letters of credit, meet and become friends for life. Jim, the Frenchman, is tall and successful with women; Jules is neither. Into their lives steps Catherine (Jeanne Moreau). Both are taken with her, but it is Jules she marries. Jealousy scarcely enters into these relationships, for Catherine is a 'new woman', more a pal than a girlfriend – 'Jim always thought of Catherine as *un vrai Jules*' – and Jules is also slang for a he-man. Like the Scandinavian heroines she admires, Catherine is a force of nature, a cataclysm. On the eve of her marriage, she avenges an imagined slight from Jules' family – and his failure to back her up – by sleeping with one of her ex-lovers. Like most people who are basically and irredeemably unhappy, she feels that it doesn't really matter if she hurts other people – they are still better off than she is. And when, after the Armistice, Jim comes to Germany to stay with Jules and Catherine, he finds Jules resigned to Catherine's periodic bolting. Rather than lose her, he even pushes Jim into her arms: she'll still be *ours* that way, he says.

Friendship, Truffaut seems to be saying, is rarer and more precious than love. Or perhaps he is also saying that friendship, not being as natural or as innate as sex relationships, must always be destroyed by the forces of nature re-asserting themselves – just as in Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, to which several references are made in the film, the wilderness is always waiting to destroy the carefully nurtured garden.

Tirez sur le pianiste moved back and forth between comedy and tragedy with intoxicating brio. In *Jules et Jim* both elements are constantly present, one within the other, as in a chemical suspension. Although the film begins gaily enough, one soon realises that, under the gaiety, tragedy is already present. And even at the end, terrifying though it is, one feels that life is nevertheless re-asserting itself. This precarious balance, this refusal of the genres, is of course very reminiscent of Jean Renoir; and indeed Renoir's influence can be felt throughout the film, in its treatment of character, direction of actors, and feeling for landscape. Jules never seems either contemptible or ridiculous, as he so easily might have been. In fact, all of the characters are sympathetic – even Jim, even Catherine. As in *La Règle du jeu*, everyone is in the right, everyone has his reasons. Although Truffaut is in complete control of the situation, the actors are allowed a life of their own, and this freedom to breathe, to exist totally, is what makes them such thoroughly rounded

characters, enabling one to sympathise with them. Nor are Oskar Werner (whom Truffaut first noticed as the Bavarian student in *Lola Montès*) and Henri Serre (a young avant-garde theatre actor), who play Jules and Jim respectively, ever crushed by the immense authority of Jeanne Moreau. Catherine is a very difficult role to bring off, but she achieves extremely effective simplicity without sacrificing any of her brilliance and technique. Just as Renoir always seemed able not only to get a good performance from his actors, but also to let them express themselves as fully as possible, here we have Jeanne Moreau giving a total representation of her possibilities.

As in Renoir, too, music plays a large part in *Jules et Jim* (and there is even a song for Jeanne Moreau), as does an economically successful evocation of period and place: pre-World War I Paris, the Riviera before the tourists got hold of it, and the deliquescent landscapes of the Rhine valley. The greatest tribute to Truffaut's period sense is that there is never any jarring when he occasionally cuts in actual newsreels of the time. For the war episodes he has distorted ordinary film to CinemaScope width, with shell bursts spreading right across the screen; when he goes back to Paris, it is always with a newsreel shot that communicates a sense of motion – a train, a bus, the Métro.

What belongs undeniably and unmistakably to Truffaut is the film's sense of movement. Just as the story sweeps along from 1910 to 1933, so Truffaut's camera pans, swoops, dives, irises in and out, tracks and turns on itself in great full circles. Cuts and jump-cuts follow on each other with breathless speed and elegance. But whenever it is necessary, Truffaut never hesitates to slow his camera down, to slide in and hold the characters in close-up for important dialogue scenes. And then, smoothly, the movement starts up again: aerial shots scoop down and we soar away. In short, his technique (and Raoul Coutard's photography) is even more brilliant than in *Tirez sur le pianiste*; and as someone pointed out the other day, technique, after all, comes from the Greek word for art – *techne*. There will be those who will regret the simplicity of *Les Quatre Cents Coups*; and there will be those (myself included) who still have a sneaking nostalgia for the anarchy of *Tirez sur le pianiste*. But no one, I think, will have any more doubts about Truffaut's stature: he is right up there with the great directors (make your own list) of our time.

Richard Roud, *Sight & Sound*, Summer 1962

JULES ET JIM

Director: François Truffaut
©/Production Company: Films du Carrosse
Production Company: SEDIF
Adaptation/Dialogue: François Truffaut, Jean Gruault
Based on the novel by: Henri-Pierre Roché
Publisher: Editions Gallimard
Director of Photography: Raoul Coutard
Editor: Claudine Bouché
Laboratory: GTC Joinville France
Music: Georges Delerue
Song 'Le Tourbillon' Lyrics/Music by: Bassiak
Sound Recording: Studio Marignan
Narrator: Michel Subor

uncredited

Producer: Marcel Berbert
Production Manager: Maurice Urbain
Assistant Directors: Florence Malraux,
Georges Pellegrin, Robert Bober
Script Supervisor: Suzanne Schiffman

Camera Operator: Claude Beausoleil
Gaffer: Fernand Coquet
Stills Photography: Raymond Cauchetier
Art Director: Fred Capel
Costume Designer: Fred Capel
Hair/Make-up: Simone Knapp

Cast

Jeanne Moreau (*Catherine*)
Oskar Werner (*Jules*)
Henri Serre (*Jim*)
Vanna Urbino (*Gilberte*)
Bassiak (*Albert*)
Anny Nelsen (*Lucie*)
Sabine Haudepin (*Sabine*)
Marie Dubois (*Thérèse*)

France 1962©
106 mins

MIKE LEIGH

A COMPLETE FILM SEASON

Bleak Moments

Mon 18 Oct 20:40; Thu 28 Oct 18:00

Nuts in May

Wed 20 Oct 18:00; Sun 31 Oct 11:20 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh, Alison Steadman, Roger Sloman, Anthony O'Donnell, Stephen Bill and Sheila Kelley)

The Kiss of Death + The Permissive Society

Sat 23 Oct 12:50

Hard Labour

Sat 23 Oct 15:10

Happy-Go-Lucky

Sun 24 Oct 14:50 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh, Sally Hawkins, Alexis Zegerman and Kate O'Flynn); Mon 15 Nov 20:40

Meantime

Sun 24 Oct 18:00 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh, Marion Bailey and Phil Daniels); Thu 11 Nov 20:45

Secrets & Lies

Mon 25 Oct 14:30; Sat 6 Nov 19:00 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh); Sat 27 Nov 15:00

Abigail's Party

Tue 26 Oct 20:50; Sun 14 Nov 12:00 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh)

High Hopes

Thu 28 Oct 14:30; Tue 2 Nov 18:45 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh, Ruth Sheen and Phil Davis); Thu 11 Nov 18:00; Sat 20 Nov 20:30

Life Is Sweet

Tue 28 Oct 17:50 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh); Thu 4 Nov 18:15; Tue 23 Nov 20:50

Grown-Ups + The Short and Curlies

Sat 30 Oct 17:15 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh); Tue 30 Nov 14:15

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Tokyo Story (Tôkyô monogatari)

Mon 18 Oct 20:20; Thu 21 Oct 14:30;
Sat 13 Nov 14:10; Tue 30 Nov 14:00

Jules et Jim

Tue 19 Oct 20:50; Wed 10 Nov 14:30

The Tree of Wooden Clogs

(L'albero degli zoccoli)

Wed 20 Oct 14:00; Fri 29 Oct 13:30; Sun 7 Nov 13:50

I Am Cuba (Soy Cuba)

Wed 20 Oct 14:30; Sat 13 Nov 20:10

Radio Days

Sat 23 Oct 13:20; Tue 16 Nov 18:10

H3

Mon 25 Oct 18:00 (+ Q&A with director Les Blair); Wed 24 Nov 20:50

A Blonde in Love (AKA Loves of a Blonde) (Lásky jedné plavovlásky)

Mon 25 Oct 20:40; Fri 19 Nov 21:00

The Story of Gilbert and Sullivan

Sun 14 Nov 14:40; Sun 28 Nov 14:50

Home Sweet Home

Mon 1 Nov 17:50 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh); Sat 6 Nov 11:45

All or Nothing

Wed 3 Nov 20:30; Wed 10 Nov 20:30; Sun 21 Nov 17:10 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh, Lesley Manville and Marion Bailey)

Career Girls

Fri 5 Nov 20:50; Fri 12 Nov 18:15; Tue 23 Nov 18:00 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh)

Vera Drake

Fri 12 Nov 20:40; Fri 26 Nov 17:40 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh, Imelda Staunton and Phil Davis)

Topsy-Turvy

Sun 14 Nov 17:30 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh and Jim Broadbent); Sun 28 Nov 17:40

Another Year

Fri 19 Nov 17:30 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh, Ruth Sheen and Lesley Manville); Mon 29 Nov 20:30

Four Days in July

Sat 20 Nov 11:50 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh and Bríd Brennan); Wed 24 Nov 14:15

Peterloo

Sat 20 Nov 16:20 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh); Mon 29 Nov 17:40

Mr. Turner

Sun 21 Nov 13:10 (+ Q&A with Mike Leigh, Marion Bailey and Dorothy Atkinson); Sat 27 Nov 17:30

Who's Who + A Sense of History + A Running Jump

Sat 30 Nov 14:00

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