



FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT: FOR THE LOVE OF FILMS

Finally, Sunday! (*Vivement dimanche!*)

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

It is in the nature of wheels to turn full circle. Two years after attacking the Cannes jury as ‘a pack of incompetents who doze through the afternoon session,’ François Truffaut was up there accepting the director’s prize from them for *Les Quatre cents coups*. Not far short of thirty years (wheels, after all, come in different sizes) after a consistent series of attacks on *le cinéma de papa* for producing commercially successful but unambitious films which accustomed the public to ‘gilded insignificance’, Truffaut now finds himself attacked for much the same. *Vivement dimanche!* is a commercial success (it has outstripped all his previous movies at the Paris box office), and it could be – indeed has been – accused of both lack of ambition and gilded insignificance. It pretends to be no more than a slick comedy thriller and its main aim is to please. François Truffaut seems to have lapsed comfortably into cinematic fatherhood (not to say *papadom*), where enthusiastic comments about the performances and the glistening surfaces of Nestor Almendros’ cinematography are all.

The French have for some time been conducting their own cinematic battles around Truffaut, but his lapse appears to have come as a special shock in the curious, post-Leavisite world of British film criticism. Of all movements in modern cinema, the French New Wave seems to be the one we are least prepared to allow to take it easy. It is far too well established as the standard bearer for a certain kind of cinema – one which did all those things experimental cinema was supposed to do (like be formally innovative and engage with questions of social and sexual significance) while remaining watchable and above all of a certain quality. That made it a sort of alternative *cinéma de papa*, in which the educated critic could find identity and, with it, comfort. It was an easy world in which to be angry, since the important issues with which it dealt were set apart from the social problems of our own environment. The identity and development of the individual director became lost beneath an image of the *Cahiers* cinéaste, forever young, a hand-held camera in his fist.

Well, those days are gone. Not only has the wheel come full circle, but the idea of a *caméra stylo* – a cinema of personal expression – has asserted itself with a vengeance. One of the prime functions of the ballpoint, after all, is to doodle. And that, precisely, is what *Vivement dimanche!* is: a masterly doodle, executed with love, skill and flourish. It is a complicated thriller about a man falsely accused of murder in the best *Wrong Man* tradition, who is caught up in a chain of events so apparently relentless that it seems as though his innocence can never be established. There is no anger to be found in it, unless one counts as anger a harsh glance at the things men and women will do for money (and men for women), and very little that is cinematically innovative. But then, anger has not really been a part of Truffaut’s work since *Les Quatre cents coups*, and his major stylistic achievement – and arguably his greatest influence on subsequent cinema – has always been verve.

Vivement dimanche! has lots of verve: a verve in storytelling (the discovery that the sound of trumpets heard on a crucial phone call comes from the Nice trotting track), a verve in construction (the cut from Fanny Ardant's entrance line in the awful amateur Victor Hugo play in which she is involved – 'La voilà! Elle arrive!' to Ardant speeding south, still in Victor Hugo costume, in her ex-husband's car), and a verve in the delighted exploitation of secondary details, like the opaque glass window through which Jean-Louis Trintignant, hiding in a storeroom, morosely watches female ankles pass by in the freedom of the street.

True, much of the energy which characterised the work of the young Truffaut has turned to stylistic devices, almost to the point of self-parody, as in the opening sequence in which a young man tries to pick up Fanny Ardant on the street, but good-naturedly accepts that she is going the other way. On the other hand, one can be grateful that the semi-comic, semi-tragic pursuit of the magic woman which has dogged many of the more recent films has here been reduced to its proper status of McGuffin. Trapped in the phone box at the end, Philippe Laudenbach reveals he did it all for women, but the confession, which has been central to earlier works, here registers about as much as the microfilm in the statuette in *North by Northwest*.

The parallels with Hitchcock films are inevitable, explicitly encouraged by Truffaut himself. And, at the risk of offending one of cinema criticism's most unquestionable canons, I would say he brings it all off rather better than the master in his recently re-released foray into similar territory with *The Trouble with Harry*. What Hitchcock rather archly does for small-town America there, Truffaut lovingly does for small-town France, artificialised here according to a set of rules as specifically French as those which govern the Hitchcock film are undoubtedly American, with that fascination for the very ordinary eccentric – the diminutive, elderly gentleman who runs the Marseilles detective agency – and the idiosyncratically obsessive behaviour of his more central characters. In a curious kind of way, the film seems to be as much a *hommage* to a certain kind of French cinema – Autant-Lara's *La Traversee de Paris*, perhaps – as to Hitchcock. Above all, though, it remains a doodle, some of its figures skilfully suggestive, others merely decorative, some undoubtedly botched. But for all that, it is Truffaut's most entertaining and watchable film since *Day for Night* – which, come to think of it, was also taken to task for being neither angry nor innovative. Who'd be a battle cry?

Nick Roddick, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1983-84

FINALLY, SUNDAY! (VIVEMENT DIMANCHE!)

Director: François Truffaut

Production Companies: Films du Carrosse, Films A2, Soprofilms

Producer: Armand Barbault

Production Manager: Roland Thénot

Production Administrators: Jean-François Lentretien, Jacqueline Oblin

Assistant Directors: Suzanne Schiffman, Rosine Robiollé, Pascal Deux

Screenplay: François Truffaut, Suzanne Schiffman, Jean Aurel

Original Novel: Charles Williams

Director of Photography: Nestor Almendros

Camera Operators: Florent Bazin, Tessa Racine

Editor: Martine Barraque-Curie

Assistant Editors: Marie-Aimée Debril, Colette Achouche

Production Designer: Hilton Mac Connico

Assistant Art Directors: Jean-Michel Hugon, Frankie Diago, Alain Gambin, Jacques Gaillard

Set Dresser: Jacques Preisach

Costumes: Michèle Cerf

Wardrobe: Christiane Marmande

Make-up: Thi-Loan N'guyen

Titles and Opticals: Euro-Titres

Music: Georges Delerue

Sound Recording: Pierre Gamet, Bernard Chaumeil

Sound Re-recording: Jacques Maumont

Sound Effects: Daniel Couteau

Cast

Fanny Ardant (*Barbara Becker*)

Jean-Louis Trintignant (*Julien Verce*)

Philippe Laudenbach (*maître Clément*)

Caroline Sihol (*Marie-Christine Verce*)

Philippe Morier-Genoud (*Superintendent Santelli*)

Xavier Saint-Macary (*Bertrand Fabre*)

Jean-Pierre Kalfon (*Jacques Massoulier*)

Anik Belaubre (*cashier at the Eden*)

Jean-Louis Richard (*Louison*)

Yann Dedet (*Angel Face*)

Nicole Félix (*scarred woman*)

Georges Koulouris (*Lablache*)

Roland Thénot (*Jambrau*)

Pierre Gare (*Inspector Poivert*)

Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko (*the slav*)

Pascale Pellegrin (*secretary*)

Castel Casti

Michel Aubossu

Paulina Aubret

Isabelle Binet

Dany Castaing

Alain Gambin

Michel Grisoni

Marie-Noëlle Guillot

Pierrette Monticelli

Adrien Silvio

Paul Steiger

Christine Verbèke

Jacques Vidal

France 1983

110 mins

FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT: FOR THE LOVE OF FILMS

Jules et Jim (Jules and Jim)

From Fri 4 Feb

Philosophical Screens: Jules et Jim

Thu 10 Feb 20:20

The Representation of Women in Truffaut's Films

Fri 18 Feb 18:20

THE LITERARY TRUFFAUT

Anne and Muriel (Les Deux Anglaises et le continent)

Sat 5 Feb 12:20; Thu 17 Feb 17:50 (+ intro by actor Kika Markham); Tue 22 Feb 20:25

Fahrenheit 451

Sat 5 Feb 20:45; Sun 13 Feb 12:40; Sun 27 Feb 18:40

The Story of Adèle H (L'Histoire d'Adèle H)

Wed 9 Feb 20:55; Sat 12 Feb 20:45; Sat 19 Feb 18:20

The Green Room (La Chambre verte)

Thu 10 Feb 18:20; Tue 15 Feb 20:40; Wed 23 Feb 20:40

THE HITCHCOCK TRUFFAUT

Shoot the Pianist (Tirez sur le pianiste)

Tue 1 Feb 20:50; Fri 11 Feb 18:30; Sat 26 Feb 13:20

The Bride Wore Black (La Mariée était en noir)

Fri 4 Feb 20:45; Sun 13 Feb 18:00; Sun 27 Feb 12:10

Finally Sunday! (Vivement dimanche!)

Sat 5 Feb 17:50; Sat 12 Feb 12:30; Sun 27 Feb 15:00

Mississippi Mermaid (La Sirène du Mississippi)

Sun 6 Feb 12:40; Fri 18 Feb 20:35; Fri 25 Feb 18:00

La Peau douce (Silken Skin)

Sun 6 Feb 18:20; Sat 12 Feb 17:20; Sat 26 Feb 15:30

The Woman Next Door (La Femme d'à côté)

Tue 8 Feb 20:30; Mon 21 Feb 18:10; Thu 24 Feb 20:30

In cultural partnership with



A selection of 10 Truffaut films will be available on BFI Player Subscription from January, and a selection of Truffaut films will screen around the UK

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

BFI SOUTHBANK

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library, regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop.

We're also pleased to offer you a unique new space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun goes down.

Join the **BFI mailing list** for regular programme updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account at www.bfi.org.uk/signup

Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email prognotes@bfi.org.uk

The British Film Institute is a charity registered in England and Wales No. 287780