



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Jules et Jim

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

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In 1912, Frenchman Jim (Henri Serre) and the Austrian Jules (Oskar Werner) become firm friends, happily sharing their enjoyment of Paris, art, literature and women, even when their adoration of the divine but sometimes demanding Catherine (Jeanne Moreau) looks set to test their relationship. Then comes war...

Truffaut's adaptation – at once faithful and ebulliently cinematic – of Henri-Pierre Roché's novel both celebrates its characters' aspirations to unfettered love and acknowledges the social and psychological obstacles that conspire to undermine such dreams. Accordingly, energetic pre-war passions yield to a deeper awareness of responsibilities and needs: life, Truffaut reminds us, is seldom simple, happiness never absolute.

Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-large

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.

BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Devil in a Blue Dress

Fri 1 Mar 20:45; Thu 7 Mar 18:30; Sun 10 Mar 18:30

Jules et Jim

Sat 2 Mar 20:45; Mon 4 Mar 20:30; Mon 11 Mar 20:40; Wed 13 Mar 18:10 + intro

The Killers

Tue 5 Mar 18:15; Sat 9 Mar 18:10; Tue 12 Mar 14:30

In the Cut

Sun 3 Mar 18:20; Wed 6 Mar 18:00 + intro; Fri 8 Mar 20:40

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Seniors' Free Archive Matinee: Blue Black

Permanent + intro + Margaret Tait: Film Maker

Fri 1 Mar 14:00

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Giovanni Project + Q&A with musician and activist

Chardine Taylor-Stone & guests tbc

Sat 2 Mar 14:00

Silent Cinema: Hell's Heroes + intro by BFI

National Archive curator Bryony Dixon

Sun 3 Mar 15:15

Art in the Making: A Sign is a Fine Investment +

intro by Steve Foxon, Curator of Non-Fiction, BFI

National Archive + Exit No Exit + 1 in a Million

Mon 4 Mar 18:15

Projecting the Archive: Dance Pretty Lady + intro

by Marc David Jacobs, writer and film nerd

Tue 5 Mar 18:30

Restored: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

Tue 5 Mar 20:45

Experimenta: The Blue Description Project: Blue

+ discussion

Fri 8 Mar 18:15

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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 – *techné*. 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 and Sound*, Summer 1962