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FESTIVAL DE CANNES
2024 OFFICIAL SELECTION
CANNES CLASSICS

JACQUES ROZIER FROM ONE WAVE TO ANOTHER

A FILM BY
EMMANUEL BARNAULT

2024 – FRANCE – FRENCH – 52' / 60'

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SYNOPSIS

Jacques Rozier's filmmaking stands out for its originality, innovation, and non-conformity. JACQUES ROZIER: FROM ONE WAVE TO ANOTHER delves into the director's impromptu creativity and direct approach. This exploration offers a captivating look into his unique storytelling perspective, highlighting the enduring relevance and influence of his work in contemporary cinema.



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Jacques
Rozier

from
one wave
to another



A FILM BY
EMMANUEL BARNAULT

« JACQUES ROZIER, FROM ONE WAVE TO ANOTHER » WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY EMMANUEL BARNAULT WITH THE COLLABORATION OF CARLA BARNAULT
EDITING DAVID PUJOL MUSIC ALFIO ORIGLIO CO-PRODUCED BY INA/MK2 FILMS
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF CINÉ+ WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE INTERNATIONAL SALES MK2 FILMS



PRODUCTION NOTES

In 1963, Jacques Rozier participated in the filming of the movie *Le Mépris* directed by his friend Jean-Luc Godard in Capri, starring Brigitte Bardot and Michel Piccoli. From this insular setting where both fictional characters and the technical team embark, foreshadowing the style and manner of his later works, Rozier derived two short films in the form of behind-the-scenes of *Le Mépris*: *Paparazzi*, focusing on the relationship between Bardot and Italian paparazzi, and *Le Parti des Choses*, an admiring study of Godard's method. Rozier becomes the paparazzi-associate of the filming: his eye is discreet, respectful, alert. He captures the comings and goings of busy stage managers, the spontaneous grace of actors, a camera engulfed by waves. In *Le Parti des Choses*, overlaid on the sublime black and white images of the villa Malaparte, a voice-over states: "Godard's ideal is to get immediately what needs to be done. Immediately is chance; and at the same time, it's definitive. What he wants is the definitive by chance." By observing his friend at work and reflecting on the act of creation in general, Rozier was signing, through this short film, the manifesto of his own cinema. Cinema according to Rozier is captured spontaneity; it's knowing that beautiful chance is more likely to occur when given all the time it needs.

And the same voice-over continues: "Why not have forced things? Godard knows this, as he has Fritz Lang say somewhere in *Le Mépris*: 'Homer belonged to a civilization that developed in harmony, not in opposition to nature. The beauty of the Odyssey lies precisely in this belief in reality as it is, and which it is: to take or to leave.' To take or to leave: the camera is first and foremost a shooting device. And to stage is to take, modestly, the side of things."

Taking the side of things, in Rozier's view, is capturing a 'already there' that one would have to search far from home for; it's filming people as they present themselves, with their whims, their hesitations, their simplicity, their sometimes mediocrity - but even in the most reluctant, all it takes is for his characters to let themselves go on an adventure to bring out all their singularity and eccentricity. Rozier is a master at sublimating the small music of our lives and making it sing new, unexpected melodies - there's a musicality in the dialogues, in this language left free to the spontaneity of the performers, and a rhythm in the editing, like in that famous kitchen scene led by Menez in *Du Côté d'Orouët* where each change of shot is punctuated by the sound of the chef's knife preparing fish and vegetables, and by the sound of the glass of white wine he regularly pours himself, and sets down with a crash. Rozier unfolds his art of fugue, all in well-paced and melodious escapades.

In Rozier's work, there's a constant and delightful coincidence between content and form, between the adventure of filming and the adventure of the film, between the story and its fabrication - until sometimes the story of the film becomes the story of its fabrication. The adventure isn't mimicked; and if one must create the conditions for the adventure to truly recreate it, then those who fabricate the adventure must live it as well. To venture into the Corsican mountains only accessible by mule for *Adieu Phillipine*; to wander in the Antilles for *Les Naufragés de l'Île de la Tortue*, which sometimes resembles an adventure among friends that degenerated into a film, rather than the reverse... From his first short film *Rentrée des Classes* (1957), which follows a child skipping school, increasingly unable to return to class as he becomes absorbed in contemplating the world, Rozier cultivates the detours, the necessary evasion, the truant parenthesis: but first, regular life must be exposed to justify the temptation to flee, the departure as imperative, and finally the escapade.

"All my films were made in surprise; I never prepared them - I never had the time." Rozier's cinematic approach is to leave everything free: geography, language, time. Geography, because his films often start in the center of Paris and end up in the middle of nowhere, with a certain taste for the ends of the earth; language, because the rule is that the screenplay, generally unfinished or barely written, absolutely commits no one to the filming, and Rozier prefers to let his characters create their own jargon, a mixture of languages, slang, argot, and accents, a makeshift creole that serves as a temporary

mooring for his wandering heroes to converse; and finally, temporality, because for Rozier, time stretches and expands to nourish the adventure and nurture the wanderings: scenes obey only their organic duration, rather than narrative conventions. Geographic, linguistic, and temporal freedom: the three combined, and it's total adventure.

But working in freedom as Rozier does paradoxically demands absolute availability for work; because capturing the moment of truth requires always being present and alert. All jazz enthusiasts understand the enormous effort improvisation entails. A great admirer of Italian neorealism, he remains deeply influenced by its tonal freedom, its camera descending into the street, its actors chosen right from the sidewalk, the authenticity of their gaze, the idea of blending professional and non-professional actors, an idea he would revisit for "Adieu Philippine." He always wants to prioritize the first take: it is then imperative to know how to capture the present moment, and therefore to succeed on the first attempt.

It's on television that he hones his skills and learns to master the art of live broadcasting. After graduating from IDHEC in the late 1940s, he gets recruited as a set assistant on what were then called "live dramas," fiction serials filmed live, of which he shows a fine example at the beginning of "Adieu Philippine," and of which one can understand the demand for synchronization of actors, extras, and technicians. It's a delicate choreography that fascinates Rozier. "I chose dramas with a lot of extras. What interested me was the contact, the crowd movements on the set; because it had to be organized very precisely since we couldn't stop filming, as it was live." So, it's at the RTF school that he sharpens his eye for beautiful coincidences and the wandering spontaneity that characterizes his cinema, but also learns the crucial importance of pre-production organization. Capturing the moment of truth, the coincidence, requires knowing where one is stepping, and thus a great deal of preparatory work: "I absolutely need to know the subject I'm going to talk about through a concentric approach," he says. "I research extensively beforehand - perhaps to then enter into fantasy, but this fantasy must have a plausible, authentic basis."

The slogan imagined by the two heroes of *Les Naufragés de l'Île de la Tortue* for a new kind of travel formula could well be Rozier's motto too, an eternal resourceful without a penny: "Robinson, fend for yourself!" "He created his own system - it's a system where he does everything," says his close friend Pascal Thomas. Because the same question is tirelessly hammered at Jacques Rozier, he is urged to answer it: why have you made only four feature films in over 50 years of career? (actually six features, but two of which remained unreleased). One could accuse him of laziness, which is obviously false; and in any case, the question of quantity is less an expression of judgment than of regret: in terms of quantity, Rozier's work does not have the richness that his talent promised.

But asking the question of his rarity in cinema is already beginning to be interested, and then to understand his working method. Rozier has a very particular perception of time, and he wants to remain the absolute master of his.

In his films, time unfolds at its leisure, left free. In his conception, Rozier is a complete anarchist: fiercely independent, resistant to any external constraint, he would like to break free from the most universal and inevitable of them all – time passing and pressing, time sliced into schedules, plans, calendars. If time is money, Rozier wants to break free from both, and above all from the film industry, which likes to tie them together. The peculiar nature of cinema, between art and industry, implies that every filmmaker must position themselves in relation to this duality; and the more one produces auteur cinema, the more this duality poses as a tug-of-war. Rozier resolved it in his own way, perhaps as a truant, surely as an anarchist: if cinema is necessarily an industry because it costs more to make than other forms of artistic expression (the writer only needs paper and a pen, the painter a canvas and pigments; the filmmaker needs cameras and a technical team), so be it, but then one must, in a literally Marxist sense, seize the means of production.

Indeed, Rozier has a bone to pick with "the breed of producers," in his eyes parasites who lost all courage during the 1960s, when television was formatted and abandoned the experimental and transgressive dimension it had explored under the guidance of original talents like Jean-Christophe Averty.

Film producers are also on a bad streak: they have lost all sense of adventure. He is especially annoyed by the fact that filmmakers spend more time trying to get a film produced than on the creation and direction themselves. After *Adieu Philippine* and his unfortunate experience with Georges de Beauregard, the famous producer of the New Wave whom Jean-Luc Godard had introduced him to, he will now organize himself to simply make producers obsolete by bypassing their role – self-producing, therefore self-managing, will be his thoroughly anarchist way of seizing the means of production.

Rozier loves his freedom and is ready to pay a high price for it. Autonomous in the literal sense of the term, he wants to govern himself according to his own laws. He can afford the pride of autonomy, since, according to Pascal Thomas, "Jacques is an absolutely accomplished technician. He can do everything."

The same sentiment is echoed by Paulo Branco, producer of *Maine Ocean* in 1986: "He wants to do so much on set that he is capable of wasting a day dealing with a photocopy problem that should absolutely not be his concern." It is this fierce independence, this resourceful tinkering, this appearance of nonchalance that hides the enormous thought work that we would like to pay tribute to, perhaps to prove that there is great nobility in this dilettantism: one should embark on life as Rozier embarked on cinema, being both a director, a free conversationalist, a set manager, a producer, a paradoxical figure of a relaxed demiurge who would be absolutely open to surprise, and above all, eternally curious.

ABOUT EMMANUEL BARNAULT (DIRECTOR)

With more than twenty documentaries on the influential figures of French and Italian cinema, already honored with two selections at Cannes Classics in 2011 and 2021, Emmanuel Barnault is one of the most talented directors of the genre in France. After Jacques Perrin, Bruno Podalydès, Monica Vitti, Marcello Mastroianni, Michaël Lonsdale, Jean-Pierre Mocky, the Délépine/Kerven duo and Bertrand Blier, Emmanuel Barnault offers with JACQUES ROZIER FROM ONE WAVE TO ANOTHER an amused, didactic and poetic look at the enigmatic French New Wave director, Jacques Rozier.

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

- 2024 *Jacques Rozier D'une vague à l'autre*
- 2023 *Stéphane Audran, la complice*
- 2022 *Nos italiennes, de Magnani à Muti*
- 2021 *Bertrand Blier, l'iconoclaste impénitent*
- 2020 *Morceaux de Cannes*
- 2019 *Tony Gatlif, l'indigné*
- 2019 *Marcello...*
- 2018 *Il mondo di Paolo Sorrentino*
- 2017 *Bruno Podalydès, l'illusionniste*
- 2016 *Carmet d'Or*
- 2015 *Delépine / Kervern (Échappements Libres)*
- 2015 *Menez Le Flamboyant*
- 2014 *Dolce Vitti*
- 2014 *Cinéma Jacques Perrin*
- 2013 *Je vous salue Marielle*
- 2012 *Séria lover*
- 2012 *Trintignant l'italien*
- 2011 *Claude M le Cinéma*
- 2010 *La petite histoire du Cinéma Suisse Romand*
- 2010 *Antidoc en co-réalisation avec Hélène Giquello*
- 2009 *Stefania Sandrelli et ses cinéastes*
- 2009 *Scola le satiriste*
- 2008 *Dino Risi, le pessimiste joyeux de la comédie italienne*
- 2007 *Les lumières de Bulle*
- 2006 *Le cinéma de Mr. Lonsdale*
- 2005 *Mocky Circus*

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