

We are grateful for funding from Film Hub Midlands which supports these shows.



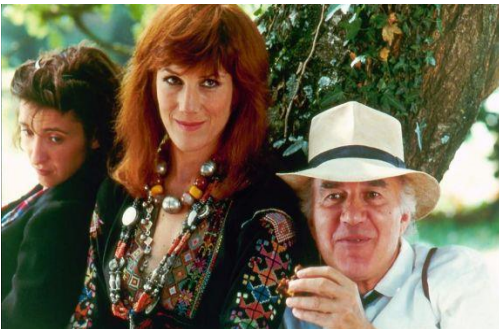
Milou in May

Director: Louis Malle

Country: France

Date: 1990

A review by Peter Travers for *Rolling Stone* magazine:



In a large, slightly run-down villa in the French countryside, Madame Vieuzac (Paulette Goddard) prepares a meal for her sixtyish son Milou (Michel Piccoli), who is tending beehives in the garden. On the radio an announcer speaks of student demonstrations in Paris. It is May 1968. The old woman's face clouds with pain, but it has nothing to do with the news that insurrection is in the air. The matriarch is suffering a heart attack, and her death will bring her family from Paris to bicker over the division of her wealth and her estate.

May Fools is a small film with grand ambitions: an elegant comedy of manners set against a background of historical turbulence. In structure the film recalls Jean Renoir's 1939 masterpiece, *The Rules of the Game* (also featuring Goddard), which farcically and devastatingly examined the class distinctions of masters and servants enjoying a weekend in the country on the eve of World War II. *Rules* achieved greatness; *May Fools* bravely reaches for it and just falls short. Though exceedingly well acted and perceptively imagined, the film traverses familiar territory instead of breaking new ground.

Still, director Louis Malle (*Atlantic City*, *Au Revoir les Enfants*), who co-wrote the screenplay with Jean-Claude Carrière (*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*), has fashioned an entertainment rich in sly wit and intelligence. Malle says the idea came to him two years ago while France was observing the twentieth anniversary of the student riots. Watching the rebel leaders of the Sixties on Eighties television pained him. "They had become teachers, advertisers, middle-of-the-road politicians," he says. Malle wanted to make a film that captured the "Utopian dream" of a time that shook up the classes, broke routine, shattered complacency and stirred hopes that France was headed for its greatest revolution in two centuries.

As the Vieuzac family arrives at the villa for the grandmother's funeral, Malle sets up the culture clash. Milou's daughter Camille (the stunning Miou-Miou) is a grasping housewife; his orphaned niece Claire (Dominique Blanc) is a lesbian who brings along her lover Marie-Laure (Rozenn Le Tallec); and his brother Georges (Michel Duchaussoy) is a journalist whose son Pierre-Alain (Renaud Danner) supports the student uprising. Everyone is stunned to learn that Madame Vieuzac has left a fourth of her estate to Adele (Martine Gautier), her servant and Milou's sometime bed mate.

But even the squabbling over money takes a back seat to the events in Paris. A strike delays the funeral, and rumors of attacks on the aristocracy send the family scurrying to the hills for safety. Talk of sweeping change loosens inhibitions -- Claire invites a truck driver (Bruno Carrette) to feel her breasts. For a while, these privileged few are not just frightened but exhilarated by what may lie ahead. What distinguishes the film is the way Malle refuses to take sides. His hope for the future is matched by his love of what came before. Milou's life in the country is a reflection of Malle's own upbringing. In a climactic fantasy, Milou leads his dead mother in a dance. The moment -- as joyous and ineffably sad as the film -- is both a tribute and a farewell to the past. In a summer awash with overpriced fluff, Malle has blended the lyric, the comic and the tragic into a film of resonant complexity.

From: <https://www.rollingstone.com/movies/reviews/may-fools-19900622>