

Mr Bean and M. Hulot

William: Hello and welcome to Entertainment – I'm William Kremer.

[FX – canned laughter]

Well, the comedy that has made Mr Bean popular around the world doesn't quite work on the radio, since the main character – Mr Bean - doesn't actually say anything. It is what we call **visual comedy** – jokes that you watch, rather than listen to.

This month sees the release of a new Mr Bean film, *Mr Bean's Holiday*. It's been a long time since the first Mr Bean film – ten years! But it's been over fifty years since a film with a very similar name emerged from France – *Mr. Hulot's Holiday*, or to give it its French title, *Les Vacances de M. Hulot*.

We're going to listen to part of an interview with the creator of Mr Bean, Rowan Atkinson. He describes his reaction to seeing M. Hulot when he was seventeen... and he uses two really great descriptive expressions. See if you can catch them:

R. Atkinson: *Les Vacances de M. Hulot*, I remember, I remember watching when I was seventeen at school and it was a, it was an eye-opening and jaw-dropping experience for me.

William: It was a what...?

R. Atkinson: *Les Vacances de M. Hulot*, I remember, I remember watching when I was seventeen at school and it was a, it was an eye-opening and jaw-dropping experience for me.

William: An **eye-opening** and **jaw-dropping** experience – do you have the image of someone’s eyes opening really really wide? Or the lower part of their mouth – their **jaw** – dropping to the floor? Good! Now think about what might cause this kind of reaction and you’ll get an idea of the meaning of these phrases. If something is eye-opening, it makes you think in a new way or opens you to very different experiences. For example, if you travel to another country, that can be an eye-opening experience. We can use this image in a number of ways – for example, ‘I went to see an interesting exhibition yesterday; it really **opened my eyes** to some new things’. Or you might say, ‘It was a real **eye-opener**’.

If something is jaw-dropping, it is astonishing or amazing. For example, you might say, ‘The Great Wall of China is jaw-dropping’. Or you could say, ‘Mt. Kilimanjaro is jaw-droppingly beautiful’.

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William: So *Mr. Hulot’s Holiday* was an eye-opener for Rowan Atkinson. In the next clip, Atkinson describes what he found so astonishing about the film, which starred and was directed by Jacques Tati. He contrasts the French film with the Hollywood comedies of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd:

R. Atkinson: I mean the very nature of the traditional silent comics in Hollywood – the Chaplins and the Keatons and Harold Lloyd and people – is that what they did was, you know, it was not just visual but physical, you know, lots of stunts and

falling over and dancing and... and what I liked about what Jacques Tati did, it just had a slower, sort of more European flavour and tone and pace to it.

William: He said that American comedies were very physical, with lots of stunts and falling over. **Physical** means, to do with the body, so the Hollywood comics did things with their bodies to make people laugh, like falling over. Jacques Tati, being a European, had a different style. I like the three words that Atkinson uses to contrast M. Hulot from the American films.

R. Atkinson: ... it just had a slower, sort of more European flavour and tone and pace to it.

William: **Flavour, tone and pace.** When we talk about tone in art, we usually mean a work of art's underlying emotion or feeling. For example, we can say that something has 'an optimistic tone', 'a serious tone', 'a happy tone' and so on.

The word flavour, we usually use to describe the way something tastes – e.g. 'The sauce had a spicy flavour'. Rowan Atkinson is using the word to mean something similar to tone – the flavour of the film means the overall feeling that the film gives the audience.

Pace is simpler. The pace of a film means how quickly things happen. If the story moves very quickly it has a fast pace, and if it moves very slowly, it has a slow pace.

European films, of course, have a slower pace than American ones. Rowan Atkinson says that the new Mr Bean film is much closer in tone to European films like *Mr Hulot's Holiday*, than American ones.

R. Atkinson: And, and what I liked about what Jacques Tati did, it just had a slower, sort of more European flavour and tone and pace to it. And that I think is, is, is what

distinguishes *Mr Bean's Holiday* from the first Mr Bean movie – is that I think it is something which is far more European in tone, whereas the first movie was definitely American.

William: So – whether you like *Mr Bean's Holiday* as much as the first Mr Bean film will depend whether you like films with a fast pace or a slower one, with an American tone or a European one. It's released in the UK on 30th March.

Remember that you can download this programme, and hear today's vocabulary again by going to the Entertainment website on BBC Learning English dot com. Goodbye.