



PRESS RELEASE: 1 March 2011

**Newly Restored**

## ***Les Diaboliques***

**(France 1954)**

**Directed by Henri-Georges Clouzot**

**Starring Simone Signoret, Véra Clouzot, Paul Meurisse**

114 mins | Cert 12A

A BFI release

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Release date: 18 March 2011

**Opening venues: BFI Southbank , Curzon Mayfair, Ciné Lumière, Filmhouse Edinburgh plus selected venues nationwide**

Henri-Georges Clouzot's classic spine-chiller ***Les Diaboliques*** might not leave today's audiences horror-struck, but its ability to manipulate the minds of an unsuspecting audience still make it one of the creepiest cinematic experiences around.

On its release in 1955 Clouzot insisted that latecomers be turned away and that critics keep the eye-popping conclusion to themselves. Once inside the auditorium, audiences were treated to inventive plot twists, a corpse that refused to lie down, anarchic food fights and ghastly apparitions - and they loved it. A major international hit, ***Les Diaboliques*** was Clouzot's most commercially successful film, going on - despite a mixed reception from the critics - to win the Prix Louis Delluc and the News York Critics' Award.

At a run-down, provincial private school, the headmaster's ailing wife Christina (Véra Clouzot) and his forceful mistress Nicole (Simone Signoret) form an unlikely alliance to murder the sadistic bully (Paul Meurisse) who has treated them both with cruelty and disdain. Having done the deed, they dump the headmaster's body fully clothed in the school's dank and algae-infested swimming pool. Events then take a turn for the peculiar: the suit he was wearing is

delivered back to the school from the dry cleaners, the pupils swear blind that they've seen him, and his likeness appears from behind a window in a school photograph. His wife Christina, who suffers from a weak heart, is convinced that he's returned from the dead and begins to panic. The pool is drained and the body is missing. Christina, in her increasing fear and paranoia, attracts the attention of retired detective Fichet (Charles Vanel) who takes a keen interest in the case. As events spiral to a horrifying crisis, Fichet steps in and points the finger of blame.

At the time of its first release, many audiences assumed that **Les Diaboliques** was made by Alfred Hitchcock – and film legend has it that Hitchcock had also been after the rights for the source novel 'Celle qui n'était plus' by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac. (Hitchcock later secured the rights to Boileau-Narcejac's 'D'entre les morts' which he then adapted for **Vertigo**.) Such was the apparent similarity in style between the two filmmakers that one man later wrote to Hitchcock with the following complaint: 'Sir, after seeing **Les Diaboliques**, my daughter was afraid to take a bath. Now she seen your **Psycho** and is afraid to take a shower. What should I do with her?' Hitchcock allegedly suggested that the man should 'send her to the dry cleaners'.

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

This new restoration of **Les Diaboliques**, based on the original negative, is released on 18 March at : BFI Southbank , Curzon Mayfair, Ciné Lumière, Filmhouse Edinburgh plus selected venues nationwide.

**Les Diaboliques** is presented on Blu-ray for the first time anywhere in the world by Arrow Academy on 18 April. Mastered in glorious High Definition from a brand new restoration of the original negative, the Blu-ray also features a specially created extras for this new edition. More information is available at [www.arrowfilms.co.uk](http://www.arrowfilms.co.uk)

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