

Monsieur Scié

a film by Dominique Henry & Vincent Detours

Transcript

Preamble

This 26-minute documentary follows a day of an old man: Monsieur Scié. The camera is fixed and focused on Monsieur Scié during the entire film. Other characters are present off camera, except for a child. The soundtrack is paced by cars driving on the road in front of Monsieur Scié's house. Dialogs are spoken in French (English subtitled version available).

Introduction – 53”

Six black and white photographs.

- Treetops in the winter, and an airplane lost far out in the sky.
- A heap of old photographs. On the top, the portrait of a soldier.
- An empty corridor leading to an ajar door. Light diffuses through the window of the door.
- A vast living room. The floor is white tiled, in the corner a chair and other objects, possibly for the trash.
- A kitchen. Clean areas on the wall reveal that the room was once furnished.
- A dishpan filled with old pictures in the corner of a room.

White title on black background: "Monsieur Scié".

Scene 1: kitchen – daylight – 4’58”

Monsieur Scié is lying in a recliner. His eyes are hidden behind thick bifocals.

A long minute passes. We hear someone knocking at the door, and entering. Monsieur Scié wakes up startled.

Mr Scié: Yes!... Ah, it's you.

First man: What is this?

Mr Scié: Ah, this is... he put it there.

1st man: Dominique?

Mr Scié: Dominique.

A pair of legs crosses the screen. A hand shakes Monsieur Scié's.

1st man: So, how are you?

Mr Scié: Oh...

1st man: Is the little white car his?

Mr Scié: Yes.

1st man: How's the foot?

Mr Scié: It's a bit better. I could put the sandal on it.

1st man: That's a little bit better?

Mr Scié: Eh?

1st man: Is it healing?

Mr Scié: A bit.

1st man: And the shoe, did you have it made?

Mr Scié: No! They don't make them. They're morons. I called... day before yesterday. And they just said that they don't make them like I need.

1st man: And they didn't tell you where it could be made?

Mr Scié: No!

1st man: They're not too smart.

Mr Scié: They said they don't do them. Oh, not too smart, I don't know. They do what they want.

1st man: Because the pharmacist here in Empalot, she seemed pretty confident when she said...

Mr Scié: Right, they make shoes. They've got plenty of them.

1st man: Sure.

Mr Scié: But not for my foot, not for...

1st man: Not for this...

Mr Scié: Not for this, under the sole. Otherwise they have plenty of them. Right.

1st man: Sure.

Mr Scié: Dunno why Lili got there. I needed one she told when they came? Saturday... they came... That's right.

Silence.

1st man: So, she is doing the bandage every two or three days?

Mr Scié: Every day?! No way! Every two or three days...

1st man: No way, sometimes she do it like every two or three days.

Mr Scié: Shit, she never done the bandage every two or three days!

1st man: Look, in the beginning I was there and she said she do it every two or three days.

Mr Scié: Then she don't know what she says because it's every days. Every mornings.

1st man: It was in there in the evening, you know at the hospital. She was doing it in the evening.

Mr Scié: Right, but it was before I go to the hospital.

1st man: Right, not now.

Mr Scié: Right, before I go to the hospital.

1st man: Anyway, it's a good thing that it heals... are you still walking on your heel?

Mr Scié: No, I'm fucking putting it down.

1st man: But isn't it hurting when you put it down?

Mr Scié: Well, but, but, sure but... what can I do?

1st man: Sure... right.

Silence.

Mr Scié: Walking on the heel its tricky, you know.

1st man: Right, balance is tricky in the first place because there is mostly the problem of keeping your balance right.

Mr Scié: Especially this one. It doesn't support me at all. Happy I got this [he grabs a walker in the foreground]. [Talking to the walker] Hey Marius? Great you're here so that I can walk everywhere.

[1st man: ...

Image fades to black. Sound fades out as conversation continues.

Scene 2: kitchen – daylight – 2'46"

Monsieur Scié is lying in his recliner, looking into the lens of the camera.

Second man: The mailman's coming.

Mr Scié: Really? Will you get what he brought? Will you?

A pair of legs crosses the screen. We hear a door closing. Monsieur Scié stays alone for a while.

We hear the man coming back.

Mr Scié: Christ!

2nd man: So, Gabriel Scié... all this.

Mr Scié: This is the bank!

The frame is larger. Monsieur Scié is now hunched over his mail.

Mr Scié: I can't even see what's on there. What's that?

2nd man: 135 [francs].

Mr Scié: 100?

2nd man: Previous balance 880. Now you've got 746.

Mr Scié: On the account?

2nd man: Right.

Mr Scié: Fuck! These morons didn't pay the month yet [he laughs]. It's never been so low.

Fuck! Seven francs! [He laughs while putting the back statement next to the recliner].

Well, anyway tomorrow they're going to pay, tomorrow is the 31st... Yes... People who work have been paid at the beginning of last week.

Silence. Monsieur Scié scratches his nose.

2nd man: Why is that?

Mr Scié: I don't know. I know they never pay in advance, but this time they're kind of late.

He grabs the dresser next to the recliner in order to pull himself up, still laughing.

Mr Scié: Seven francs, that's not much!

He snaps his denture. Struggling to get on his feet:

Mr Scié: Huh, let's go.

Scene 3: bathroom – tungsten light – 1'22"

The tap is running. Monsieur Scié carefully cleans himself with a white face cloth. The back of his neck first, then the back of his right ear, like a cat, finally—after a deep sigh—the back of his left ear. He puts the face cloth on the tap, grabs a towel, dries the back of his neck,

and meticulously cleans his ears. Sighs. He puts his glasses back on, wrings the face cloth at length, and turns off the water. He then unfolds the face cloth, removes his glasses, applies the still moist face cloth to his face, and puts his glasses back on without drying his face.

Scene 4: corridor, then kitchen – daylight – 2’02”

Monsieur Scié is walking toward the camera supporting himself with his walker. We hear a jet passing by, and the "clac-clac" of the walker on the tiles. Next shot. He stands with back to the camera in front of the kitchen table, pulls the a chair away from the table—with great noise. While sitting on the chair:

Mr Scié: Huh.

Monsieur Scié, still with back to the camera, puts away objects on the table. Repeated attempts to bring the chair he now sits on closer to the table: first try, second try, third try, fourth try.

Scene 5: kitchen – daylight – 1’19”

Monsieur Scié puts his glasses on the table (outside the frame). A fragile contact lens teeters on the tip of his finger. He brings it slowly to his left eyes, checks in a magnifying mirror that it is properly adjusted, and looks toward the ceiling. Monsieur Scié then snaps his tongue, producing a crisp sound, sprays cleaning solution on the other contact lens, and applies it to his right eye.

Mr Scié: Hey, I did'em quite well this time.

Scene 6: kitchen – daylight – 36”

Monsieur Scié is standing up, motionless, staring vacantly. After a while, he walks toward the dresser, grabs a bundle of mail, looks at it, and splits it in two distinct bundles.

Scene 7: kitchen – daylight – 1’30”

The hands of Monsieur Scié lie flat on the newspaper *La Dépêche du Midi*. The headline reads “Tout ce qui va changer en janvier” (subtitle reads: "Upcoming changes in January").

Mr Scié: The euro, sure. Nonsense.

Monsieur Scié attempts to bring his chair closer from the table. As it resists, he gets upset:

Mr Scié: Fucking chair!!! What’s going on!

He gives up after several tries.

The camera now captures his profile. He reads silently, sporadically emitting comments for himself.

Mr Scié: Gee, She’s 110, wow... Mmm, no it’s the Eiffel tower who is 110.

Looking to the top of the page:

Mr Scié: Euro, euro, we’re not going anywhere with that.

Monsieur Scié continues to read the newspaper with his back to the camera.

Scene 8: kitchen – daylight – 2’28”

We hear something frying in a pan. Monsieur Scié is lying in his recliner facing the camera. A female voice:

First woman: Here we are.

Mr Scié: Thanks.

1st woman: We’re going to put on the meat, and you’ll be all set.

Mr Scié: Yes, that’s right.

1st woman: It’s going to be tender, isn’t it?

Mr Scié: Christ, it better be tender otherwise he’s going to hear from me.

Silence.

1st woman: This wind is a real pain.

Mr Scié: Yeap, sure is.

Silence.

1st woman: I guess you want to come to the table Sir.

Mr Scié: All right, I'm coming.

He brings the recliner upright.

Mr Scié: Huh!

Sighs.

1st woman: Are the chickens out again?

Mr Scié: Well no, probably not.

1st woman: Here we are, hup!

He stands up supporting himself with the walker, and leaves the frame. The camera remains focused on the empty recliner.

1st woman: OK, you've got everything you need now. You're all set!

Mr Scié: Put the stuff on the other chair, if you like.

We hear the meat being removed from the frying pan.

1st woman: Heeere we aaare.

Mr Scié: Thanks.

1st woman: Enjoy.

Mr Scié: Thanks.

The woman crosses the screen rolling up her sleeves.

1st woman: All right, time to go.

Scene 9: kitchen – daylight – 29''

Monsieur Scié is eating at the table. He grabs a piece of bread. Points to an imaginary object with his index finger. He pokes some food with his fork, brings it to his mouth, and puts the fork on the edge of his plate.

Scene 10: living room – daylight – 1’28”

Monsieur Scié is sitting on a white plastic chair, dressed up to go out. A cap is on the table in front of him. His body is leaning forward. He yawns, strokes his thighs, pats them, scratches his nose. We hear a jet passing by. He makes the motion of measuring some imaginary object with his two hands, whispers a few words for himself. He then grabs the arms of the chair, stands up, grabs the walker. Once footing is stable, he extends his arm forward groping, for the cap. He puts it on his head, and leaves the frame. The sun illuminates the empty chair through the nearby window. We hear Monsieur Scié opening the door.

Scene 11: in a room, then outside Monsieur Scié’s house – daylight – 56”

A window wide-open to the outside. Iron bars protect it from intrusions. Monsieur Scié’s upper torso slowly crosses the window frame from left to right.

Outdoor shot. Monsieur Scié appears with his walker around a corner of the house, walking toward the camera. He stops, smiles, bites his bottom lip. We hear a car passing by at high speed. The smile vanishes. Monsieur Scié resumes his walk. He opens the front door, steps inside, turns his head back toward the camera. After waiting a moment, he drops the door which closes by itself.

Scene 12: kitchen – daylight – 1’49”

Monsieur Scié is lying in his recliner. We hear water and sink noise. After some time:

Mr Scié: I gotta pay more than 1,000 francs of tax a month.

Second woman: 1,000 francs???

Mr Scié: Yes.

2nd woman: Are you kidding?

Mr Scié: Hell no! I’m not kidding! I’m gonna show you the stuff, and you’re gonna see.

2nd woman: You’ve got 100 francs on one...

Mr Scié: I’ve got four of them!

2nd woman: What???. You’ve got four taxes?

Mr Scié: Yes! Two for the house, one for the yard, and the other one I can’t remember.

2nd woman: Two for the house? You've got two taxes for the house? What are you talking about? The house: one tax. You've got the income tax, you've got the yard: that's three taxes, not four. Where did you find four taxes?

Mr Scié: Pfff... Well... I got...

2nd woman: You just can't get two taxes on the house. There is only one tax on the house, not two.

Mr Scié: I got the tax on the yard and I got the tax on the house.

2nd woman: Right, that's two.

Mr Scié: Right.

2nd woman: And the income tax.

Mr Scié: The income tax.

2nd woman: Which is about 100 francs.

Mr Scié: Yes. Then I got the electricity.

2nd woman: OK, but electricity is not a tax.

Mr Scié: Sure, but I don't give damn. That's money I've got to pay.

Long silence. He coughs.

Mr Scié: And the health insurance, 420 francs. See, I knew I had another tax!

2nd woman: That's not a tax...

Mr Scié: That's not a tax, but... Well, I don't give a damn, that money I've got to pay.

2nd woman: OK, assume that you give 1,200 francs,...

Mr Scié: Oh, I don't know, I didn't count exactly.

2nd woman: ...you still have 8,000 francs left.

The woman briefly enters the frame. She carries a bucket. Only her lower body is visible. Monsieur Scié is now alone in the room.

Mr Scié: Oh, I got nothing left.

Scene 13: kitchen – daylight, 18''

Close-up shot. The left hand of Monsieur Scié is nervously patting the arm of the recliner. We hear the loud noise of a food processor.

Scene 14: kitchen – daylight, 35”

Close-up on the profile of Monsieur Scié. The room is quiet. We distinguish his eyes moving behind his bifocals.

Cat: Miaou.

Mr Scié: What’s going on kitty?

Cat: Miaou.

Mr Scié: Something wrong?

Wider shot. Monsieur Scié is lying on his recliner. A cat lies on his legs. A big red pot is simmering on the stove next to the recliner.

Scene 15: living room – sunset light – 1’51”

Three-quarter shot of Monsieur Scié lying in his recliner. A baby lying in a baby recliner is facing him. Monsieur Scié plays with the baby with the tip of his walking stick. The baby babbles.

After some timee, we hear a door opening. A strong ray of light penetrates in the room. Someone enters.

2nd woman: Take her to the chickens.

2nd man: She is fine here.

2nd woman: Grandpa, be careful she doesn’t suck her hands. Don’t put the stick on her hands.

He pulls the walking stick a few inches away from the baby. Someone leaves and closes the door. Monsieur Scié sighs and nods disapprovingly. A pair of legs crosses the frame. The man sits next to Monsieur Scié, off screen. The baby resumes his babbling.

2nd man: It’s bizarre at this age, isn’t it?

Monsieur Scié agrees with a nod.

Mr Scié: Oop, Oop.

Baby: Hui. Huijk.

Mr Scié: Boin, Boin. Heeeee.

Baby: Hii. Haaay. He, he, he.

Mr Scié: Charp, Charp, Charp.

Black screen.

Scene 16: Outdoor, color Super 8, no sound – 30”

Monsieur Scié two or three years ago. He walks toward the camera, stops, and leaves the frame.

Back-lit foliage. A butterfly crosses the screen. The wind shakes the foliage, letting the sun burn the film white. The green of the foliage fills the screen again.

Trailer – 28”.

Technical note

Format

- 26 minutes
- Video (shot in mini-DV, and color Super 8)
- English, French, and Spanish versions available.

Personnel

- Directors: Dominique Henry & Vincent Detours
- Image & sound: Dominique Henry
- Editing: Luc Plantier
- Mixing: Manu de Boissieu & Greg Noël
- Production: AJC!