

## JACQUES RIVETTE

Le coup du berger (cm) • Paris nous appartient • La religieuse • Jean Renoir le patron • L'amour fou • Out 1 : Noli me tangere (runtime 12h40 - co-directed with Suzanne Schiffman) Out 1 : spectre (short version) • Céline and Julie go boating • Duelle • Noroît • Merry-go-round • Le pont du nord • Paris s'en va • L'amour par terre • Hurlevent • La bande des quatre • La belle noiseuse • Divertimento (short version of "La belle noiseuse") • Jeanne la Pucelle : les batailles • Jeanne la pucelle : les prisons • Haut bas fragile • Une aventure de Ninon • Secret défense • Va savoir • Va savoir + • The story of Marie and Julien • Don't touch the axe • Around a small mountain



### CAST

Kate Jane Birkin • Vittorio Sergio Castellitto  
Alexandre André Marcon • Marlo Jacques Bonnaffé  
Clémence Julie-Marie Parmentier • Margot Hélène de Vallombreuse • Wilfrid Tintin Orsoni • Barbara Vimala Pons • Tom Mickaël Gaspar • Stéphane Stéphane Laisné • Dom Dominique D'Angelo  
Inn Landlady Hélène de Bissy • Inn Landlord Pierre Barayre • Estelle Marie-Paule André Xénie Julie-Anne Roth • Élodie Elodie Mamou • Monsieur Gaffe Laurent Lacotte • Madame Gaffe Marie Vauzelle

### CREW

Directed by Jacques Rivette • Screenplay Jacques Rivette, Pascal Bonitzer, Christine Laurent, Shirel Amitay • Dialogue Pascal Bonitzer • Photography Irina Lubtchansky • Sound Olivier Schwob • Production Design Manu de Chauvigny, Giuseppe Pirrotta • Costumes Laurence Struz • Film Editor Nicole Lubtchansky • Sound Editor Georges-Henri Mauchant • Re-recording Mixer Anne Le Campion Music Pierre Allio • Script Supervisor Lydia Bigard Production Managers Pierre Wallon, Elisabetta Olmi • Produced by Pierre Grise Productions (France), Maurice Tinchant and Martine Marignac, France 2 Cinéma (France), Cinemaudici (Italy), Luigi Musini, Roberto Cicutto and Ermanno Olmi, Rai Cinema (Italy), Alien Produzioni (Italy), Sergio Castellitto and Margaret Mazzantini With the participation of Canal+, France 2, RAI Cinema, Centre National de la Cinématographie, Italian Ministry of Culture • With the support of La Région Languedoc-Roussillon • In partnership with Le Centre National de la Cinématographie, the programme Media Plus of the Communauté Européenne



### SYNOPSIS

On the eve of the troupe's summer tour, the owner and founder of a small circus dies suddenly. In order to save their season, the troupe decides to ask his oldest daughter, Kate, to step in. Even though she walked out on the circus fifteen years before, to everyone's surprise, she agrees to put her new life on hold and join them.

By chance, she crosses paths with an Italian, Vittorio. Intrigued by Kate and fascinated by the circus lifestyle, he decides to follow them. Gradually, he becomes part of the life of the troupe, eventually taking the plunge and joining the show. But above all, he tries to uncover Kate's secret—why did she leave the circus and why did she agree to return?

At the end of the tour, they go their separate ways. But which way?

2009 • FRANCE / ITALY • 35MM • COLOR • 1.85 • SRD • 1H24

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PIERRE GRISE PRODUCTIONS presents  
JANE BIRKIN SERGIO CASTELLITO

# AROUND A SMALL MOUNTAIN

A FILM BY JACQUES RIVETTE



66  
VENEZIA 2009  
Competition



Photo © MOÏNE JAMET

**A**round a small mountain casts a “novel, unprecedented, never seen before” light on Jacques Rivette’s oeuvre. The quote is from Vittorio (Sergio Castellitto), a new, Italian incarnation of the mysterious character of guide/savior/intercessor whose mission, since *Va savoir*, consists in releasing a princess from her spell—in other words, her past or her grief. This gracious, princess, inconsolably mourning her late love by a graveside (like John Wayne talking to his departed wife in *She Wore A Yellow Ribbon*) is Jane Birkin.

Having played the ingénue in *L’Amour par terre* and the great painter’s former model in *La Belle Noiseuse*, Jane Birkin strips bare, in *Around a small mountain*, the enigma of all Rivette’s heroines: confined

behind the bars of the Rue de Rivoli in Paris in a moment of distraction snatched from the film’s Cevennes mountains, she brings to mind Anna Karina, imprisoned in a convent in *La Religieuse*; haunted by a mistake she didn’t make, her heart aches like Sandrine Bonnaire’s in *Secret Défense*; madly in love with a ghost, like Pauline (Bulle Ogier) in *Out 1*, she moves like a tightrope walker in a halfway state between life and death, similar to the coma from which Louise (Marianne Denicourt) emerges at the start of *Haut Bas Fragile*.

Yet *Around a small mountain* introduces an unprecedented space-time, which changes the rules of the game: the circus. Despite appearances, the circus isn’t an extension of the theatre by other means.

Jacques Rivette makes it a synthesis: it’s a magical circle of light, surrounded by banks of empty seats, occupied after nightfall by whispering ghosts closed in by crinkled walls of blue canvas.

Since *Paris nous appartient*, the theatre has constituted an acid test for Rivette’s heroines, each novice actor becoming herself through the words of someone else: her role. For the traps of theatrical language, the circus substitutes clowns’ masks and acrobats’ death-defying feats: “It’s the most dangerous place in the world where anything’s possible, where eyes are opened and my eyes were opened.” Like *Lola Montes*, fully aware that she risks her life in the ring, Kate (Jane Birkin) must perform the whip number in order to be excised of her grief. “I feel like I’ve had an operation. I’d become used to my sickness, to my grief.” Interpreting Rilke’s advice to a young poet, Vittorio, who stages the risky number designed to free Kate of the memory that stops her from living (the tragic death fifteen years earlier of the man she loved), provides one of the keys to the puzzle: “All the dragons in our lives are perhaps princesses in distress asking to be released.”



Photo © MOÏNE JAMET



Photo © MOÏNE JAMET

In Jacques Rivette’s oeuvre, the circus becomes the image of the peril that art compels us to confront in order to release our fears. Unlike the heroines of *Haut Bas Fragile* who develop “terrifying games” because “there’s no bigger thrill than fear”, Vittorio, the accidental stage director, gives himself the mission of saving princesses.

In this respect, *Around a small mountain* is an encapsulation or even, to employ an expression rarely used today, poetic art: Jacques Rivette provides his audience with a stunning opportunity, in 84 magical minutes, to experience the existential test to which art (occasionally) raises us.

All it took him was a few blue-dyed cloths floating on the surface of a river, a makeshift table where the fruit stands out like a still life, lovers looking for or dodging each other in the undergrowth, a clown looking us in the eye (“All’s well that ends well!”) a circus tent framing the trees’ green foliage, a full moon, over the mountains, watching over our dreams. All is well that ends well: as Jacques Rivette allows us to discover today, “it’s art that makes life” and not the contrary. ■

HELENE FRAPPAT



Photo © MOÏNE JAMET

## JANE BIRKIN (SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY)

**Blow-up** by Michelangelo Antonioni • **La piscine** by Jacques Deray • **Slogan** by Pierre Grimblat • **Le mouton enragé** by Michel Deville • **La moutarde me monte au nez** by Claude Zidi • **Sept morts sur ordonnance** by Jacques Rouffio • **Je t’aime moi non plus** by Serge Gainsbourg • **La fille prodigue** by Jacques Doillon • **L’ami de Vincent** by Pierre Granier-Deferre • **La pirate** by Jacques Doillon • **L’amour par terre** by Jacques Rivette • **Dust** by Marion Hänsel • **Le neveu by Beethoven** by Paul Morrissey • **Soigne ta droite** by Jean- Luc Godard • **Comédie !** by Jacques Doillon • **Kung-fumaster !** by Agnès Varda • **Jane B. par Agnès V.** by Agnès Varda • **Daddy Nostalgie** by Bertrand Tavernier • **La belle noiseuse** by Jacques Rivette • **Noir comme le souvenir** by Jean-Pierre Mocky • **On connaît la chanson** by Alain Resnais • **Reines d’un jour** by Marion Vernoux • **Boxes** by Jane Birkin • **Around a small mountain** by Jacques Rivette

## SERGIO CASTELLITO (SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY)

**Magic moments** by Luciano Odorisio • **La famiglia** by Ettore Scola • **Alberto express** by Arthur Joffé • **La carne** by Marco Ferreri • **Rossini Rossini** by Mario Monicelli • **Toxique affair** by Philomène Esposito • **L’uomo delle stelle** by Giuseppe Tornatore • **Le cri de la soie** by Yvon Marciano • **Quadrille** by Valérie Lemerrier • **Que la lumière soit !** by Arthur Joffé • **A vendre** by Laetitia Masson • **Va savoir !** by Jacques Rivette • **Ne quittez pas !** by Arthur Joffé • **The wedding director** by Marco Bellocchio • **The Chronicles of Narnia : Prince Caspian** by Andrew Adamson • **Around a small mountain** by Jacques Rivette