

Mon Voisin Productions and Blueprint Film present

Official Selection

at the Tribeca Film Festival, New York, and the ColCoa Festival in Los Angeles

Sandrine Bonnaire Kevin Kline

Queen to Play (Joueuse)

a Caroline Bottaro film

French release 5 August 2009

97 mins.

SYNOPSIS

Hotel maid H el ene seems happy enough living in a small Corsican village with her husband, Ange, and her 15-year-old daughter, Lisa. A self-effacing and discreet woman, H el ene finds the days blur into one another in her predictable and uneventful life.

Then one day, H el ene is cleaning a bedroom when she catches a glimpse of two beautiful American holidaymakers playing chess on a hotel terrace.

Her initial curiosity for the game quickly develops into an obsession to master the rules of chess and become an expert. To do so, she employs the help of Dr. Kr oger, one of the village's more mysterious inhabitants. But this metamorphosis towards a new life for H el ene will also change her relationship with her family, her friends and the whole village.

INTERVIEW WITH CAROLINE BOTTARO AND SANDRINE BONNAIRE

Your film is inspired by Bertina Henrichs' novel "The Chess Player". How did you discover the book?

Caroline Bottaro - Bertina Henrichs was a neighbor in my apartment block. She gave me her book to read when she'd just finished it. I was the first person to read it and she wanted my advice before she set about finding a publisher. From the tenth page, I was absolutely convinced that in her text, aside from some very appealing characters, there was a fantastic subject for a movie.

What was it that motivated your desire to adapt it for the screen?

Caroline Bottaro - The female character, her metamorphosis through her discovery of a passion, the microcosm in which this character evolves: A little village, an island. As the script developed, the story transformed. In the novel, for example, Hélène is not an ex-pat – she's native to a Greek island, and Dr. Kröger is an old teacher, a closet gay. Despite many differences, I hope the film remains deeply faithful to the novel and I'm happy that Bertina Henrichs has said that she sees herself in the film as much as she recognizes me there too.

Sandrine, you've been on board with the project since the script was being written. Why the attachment?

Sandrine Bonnaire - I was already friends with Caroline, who co-wrote C'EST LA VIE by Jean-Pierre Améris. She gave me 20-odd pages to read and I really liked it. I encouraged her to pursue it and I followed the project at every stage. This story, which seems so simple, really appealed to me because it tells a truth about life: Whatever your social origins or education, you can change your own destiny. If you decide to pursue a passion, anything is possible. There's a line I like that sums up the film's theme: "If you take risks, you might lose, but if you don't take risks, you always lose".

Hélène suddenly discovers a consuming passion for chess – a game that was totally foreign to her – and this passion turns her life upside down...

Caroline Bottaro - Initially, Hélène doesn't think too much about her life as a married woman. I didn't want her to be a Madame Bovary who dreams of another life. Seeing the sensuality emanating from that American couple playing chess on the hotel terrace, she develops a passion for the game, as if a man had made her lose her head. Why this lightning bolt for this woman at this point in her life? Like Montaigne, I have to simply say: "Because it was her, because it was me".

Sandrine Bonnaire - Hélène is not an unhappy woman, nor is she submissive. She has chosen to follow her husband to live on that island. For a while, she's needed to find her feet in this new environment where she doesn't know anyone, but she made the choice for love. And, over time, her day-to-day existence has become a little humdrum. When she discovers this couple, lingering over a game of chess in the sunshine, she's surprised. The lightning bolt is also about how attracted she feels towards this man and this young woman who appear to love each other so much. She is touched by how

they take their time, how they savor their happiness at being together. The trigger isn't the game of chess but the intimate gentleness that comes from this couple. From the bedroom, she first watches them before her eyes fall on the chessboard. Moreover, the film is more about sensuality and love than it is about the game of chess.

Isn't this moment of crystallization on this idealized image also one of the pleasures of cinema – being fascinated by an image?

Caroline Bottaro - Yes. Hélène watching these lovers playing chess on the terrace is deliberately subjective. I wanted this vision to be an idealized image. It's the moment that triggers everything that subsequently happens to Hélène, who in addition to aspiring to the sensuality she perceives with this couple, identifies with this woman who is physically so different to her. She sees her again in a dream, puts on her silk underwear and, like her, puts up her hair in a sort of chignon. What fascinates Hélène about this American woman is that she beats her lover at chess. She's the first winner in the film.

Where did the idea come from to choose Jennifer Beals for the role of the young American woman?

Caroline Bottaro - Hélène is, like me, from the generation who watched FLASHDANCE in their adolescence. What if it were the real Jennifer Beals that Hélène recognized, playing chess that day? I thought that possibility was fun. Especially as there are shared elements in the lives of Hélène and that young welder who becomes a dancer that Jennifer Beals played in FLASHDANCE.

Hélène's rebelliousness and determination to transform her life is appealing. What gives her that strength?

Caroline Bottaro – From the moment she starts playing chess, nothing else matters to Hélène, who needs to learn, to perfect her skill and satisfy her passion. She doesn't think twice about it, she just goes for it. That's her strength.

It's the same order, or the same disorder, as a love affair...

Sandrine Bonnaire - Absolutely. A passion is often unreasonable. Hélène is living in a bubble and she discovers a completely different world from the one she shares with her husband. This drives her husband mad – he understands she doesn't want to leave him but that now, there are three of them in their relationship – her, her passion and him.

The game of chess gives way to many metaphors. In the game, just as in Hélène's life, one movement leads to another...

Caroline Bottaro – It's a nice formula, but these parallels are serendipitous because I have to say that I didn't know and I still don't know much about the strategy of the game of chess. To prepare for the shoot, I talked to the French Chess Federation, I went to some tournaments and I met many players. All the games you see in the film are, of course, specially conceived by talented players. But the aspects that interested me most are the looks, the little gestures, the silences and the attitudes. They talk about a war, two armies taking on one another. The intimate tension between the two

players is palpable. For H  l  ne, this tension that she perceives with the American couple is what makes her want to play. For Ange, her husband, the tension is unbearable. After having seen H  l  ne play with Kr  ger, he says to her, "It's worse than if you were cheating on me". His wife is having an affair in a world in which he feels excluded, a world he feels he has no handle on.

One of the qualities of the film is managing to captivate those in the audience who don't know anything about the strategy behind chess. You simply get caught up in it...

Sandrine Bonnaire - Yes, it's a very tense film, very absorbing. One is kept in suspense by this woman's furious energy, by her will to learn and to win the game. It's also a challenge with herself. She says, "I'll get there at any price". In any case, H  l  ne has character. You can see it right from the start when she dares ask for a raise from Dr. Kr  ger, whose house she cleans.

Caroline Bottaro - I was very touched when after a screening, I was told that people were caught up in the story "as if it were an action film". Indeed, I'd tried to make sure something was happening all the time, even if I was careful to ensure there were neither spectacular effects or twists. H  l  ne is moving forward imperceptibly, and because she has to overcome all these many little obstacles, she ends up making a huge leap forward.

H  l  ne discovers a game where the only female figure – the Queen – is an incredibly formidable piece, the most powerful on the board. H  l  ne is just like her.

Caroline Bottaro - And yet this isn't a feminist film. Nor a film that is anti-men. It's the point of view of a woman, who shows that people's lives aren't predetermined. The fact that she's been a maid for years doesn't mean her life has been reduced to that and it's over. Thanks to her passion, this woman from a modest background manages to break through all the individual and social barriers. Finding oneself goes beyond a social function or identity.

You don't show the husband as a negative person – he has his good sides, we see him become loving, and reproach himself for not having encouraged his wife.

Caroline Bottaro - I don't like the vision of a binary world where everything is black and white. I wanted all the characters to be complex and the story to be subtle.

Being alone in the world still encourages a certain conservatism in terms of traditions, like machismo for example.

Caroline Bottaro - Yes, I wanted to let that emerge discreetly in the film, just as if you come from somewhere else, you're more or less accepted but whatever happens, you remain a foreigner for the rest of your life. The fact they are both isolated brings H  l  ne closer to Kr  ger. They are two little islands of solitude that meet on one big island.

Hélène's daughter, a 15-year-old, also feels isolated due to her mother's social status.

Sandrine Bonnaire - Yes, the child has an inferiority complex. She doesn't dare tell her boyfriend, who comes from a nice middle-class family, that her mother is a maid. Once again, as Caroline says, it's very difficult to change people's mentalities. But Hélène accepts her social status – she doesn't feel it's dishonorable to do cleaning. It's her job and her passion is separate. She is aware that what she's now doing is destabilizing her family and could break up her relationship but she doesn't feel guilty. Until now, everything she's done has been to suit her family, she's raised her daughter, looked after her husband. And in the end, this change does everyone good. Very quickly, her daughter encourages her to go back to playing chess with Kröger, because she herself has evolved thanks to having read "Martin Eden".

Caroline Bottaro - The scene with the oriental dancing shows how the mother and daughter have managed to come together and understand one another within their own individual evolutions. The daughter realizes her mother isn't just a cleaner; this dance reveals something about her past. During adolescence, you just want to be like everyone else. It's normal that this girl is in opposition to her mother who ends up revealing she is her own woman.

There's also the start of a wonderful relationship between Hélène and Kröger. There is an attraction that goes beyond the simple pleasure of competing at chess. How did you want to set up this relationship?

Caroline Bottaro - There had to be a real complicity between them. What happens between them goes beyond their difference in age and social status, beyond their situation of employer and employee.

Sandrine Bonnaire - There is an interesting symbolism in their relationship, which is made a reality by the presence of the chessboard that marks a social frontier between master and servant, between mentor and student. Between the man and the woman too, because the narrow width of a chessboard encourages a certain intimate closeness between two players.

Caroline Bottaro - Initially, Kröger is intrigued, then touched, and finally totally seduced by this cleaning woman whose name he barely remembered in the beginning and who has the audacity to ask him to teach her to play. It is she that interests him. The chess is secondary to him; indeed, he put his chessboard away a long time ago.

Sandrine Bonnaire - Hélène feels attractive, and wants to be more and more pretty. Having this man look at her makes her feel important and more self-confident. She blossoms. And their attraction for one another adds to the passion of the game. Their conversation becomes more strategic, like the moves of a pawn on the chessboard.

Caroline Bottaro - When Kröger tells her, "I didn't miss you but I'm glad you're here", obviously, Hélène understands what he's playing at and she answers, "Me, too". At that point, they are equal. They both know the rules of the game. They both

know how to maneuver so as not to be found out, so as not to be beaten by one of their opponent's pieces on the chessboard and on the chessboard of love. This alchemy that I wanted to create between H  l  ne and Kr  ger when I was writing was hugely enhanced in shooting, thanks to the skill of the actors. Right from the first scene between them, when she asks for a raise, Sandrine's look carries extraordinary power that makes one feel, right back then, that she's stronger than he is, that he is going to give in to her on everything and that she will end up beating him at chess. I hadn't foreseen that look and it was a surprise, a gift. And there were a lot of those.

Just like during that blind game between them, one of the most beautiful sequences of the film. A fantasized game where the language of the game replaces words of love...

Sandrine Bonnaire - Yes, through mentally moving the pawns, they would like to allow themselves to tell each other of their love but... For me, H  l  ne starts to reveal her feelings a little, not openly as the queen would do, with the freedom to go straight to her goal on the chessboard, but indirectly, like the bishop, sideways, diagonally. She has always been someone to head straight for her goal but in the quest of her passion, something stops her from revealing her feelings.

Caroline Bottaro - What happens between them at that point is about pleasure, desire rendered finer. For a long time I sought to fulfill their relationship and I felt that it had to be linked to their way of communicating: Through chess. You can't imagine those two together in bed. If H  l  ne was reduced to an adulterous woman, everything would fall apart – the singularity and sensuality of their relationship would no longer exist. The day I experimented with one of those so-called "blind" games, where two players compete without a chessboard, just by speaking their moves out loud, I felt such emotion that I realized that's what I had to do. To me, H  l  ne and Kr  ger make love in that scene, but in a very unusual way!

At that moment, H  l  ne feels a sensual pleasure with Kr  ger, like that she observed at the start of the film with the American couple.

Caroline Bottaro - Yes, indeed, that "blind" game is an echo of her seeing the American couple playing on the terrace at the start of the film. But here, H  l  ne has passed over to the other side of the net curtain and become the heroine in her own story.

What was your strategy as a director putting this story into images?

Caroline Bottaro - I not only wanted this film to be realistic, that we should be constantly with H  l  ne in her daily life, but also in her subjectivity, in her internal world and in her dreams. Overwhelmed by her passion, subconscious images emerge and she becomes obsessed with them. Suddenly, she sees the floor tiles turn into a giant chessboard. Nightmarish dreams disturb her sleep – all the pieces turn black. Does she really see Jennifer Beals at the end of the film or is she an apparition? The direction was all about the tiniest details, the choice of how transparent a net curtain should be to barely make out the American couple on the terrace for example. Or creating a kind of silence around Kr  ger by removing the sound of his footsteps and

the ticking of the clock to give each of his appearances the sensation that time stops with him.

Indeed, there is a certain oddness about Kröger's character.

Caroline Bottaro - My vision of Kröger's character became honed through the many versions of the script. I had the idea at one point that he'd never leave his house and that Héléne would be the only person to see him. Then I wanted him to emerge in each of his scenes in an unexpected and mysterious way. His sets had to be timeless and ghostly. To me, he could be seen as much as a real person as the perfect partner invented by Héléne. I had in mind the very much embodied ghost played by Rex Harrison in *THE GHOST AND MRS MUIR*.

The tournament scene follows that logic...

Caroline Bottaro - Yes, the tournament scene was a real nightmare to conceive. We had to believe that Kröger was at home playing the same game as Héléne at the tournament; that he was there, with her in thought, and that he was influencing her game by telepathy. Thanks to some very careful preparation and precise cutting, the talent of the actors and skill of my editor, Tina Baz, the charm works and one doesn't doubt the reality of the situation. It's one of the scenes in the film of which I am most proud.

Sandrine, how did you tackle Héléne's character? You make her appealing right from the very first shots.

Sandrine Bonnaire - It was a painstaking task that progressed inch by inch, playing with small concrete things like tiny gestures and emotions, looks and little nothings. To define the shape of the character in the start, Caroline and I wanted Héléne to wear slightly austere clothes, have her hair tied back and flat shoes, implying a certain kind of approach. We figured this young woman has forgotten herself a little in the routine of daily life so she doesn't take the time to look at herself in the mirror when she puts her hair up. Simple things like that, which can seem like mere details but are very efficient.

How did you know Sandrine Bonnaire would be the ideal actor for this character?

Caroline Bottaro - The idea to use Sandrine came with the desire to make the film. Then we had the time to get to know each other and each new version of the film was nourished by what I discovered about her – things I wanted to show. The film project became inseparable from my desire to make a kind of portrait of Sandrine. In addition to their clear social origins that they each assume, Héléne and Sandrine share an unshakeable will and tenacity, and a huge capacity for concentration. Héléne blossoms thanks to chess and the attention she receives from Kröger; Sandrine's career has been marked by roles and encounters with directors. They are each very feminine and they are spontaneous, and thoughtful, intuitive and cerebral.

Sandrine Bonnaire - It's funny because after the film was screened, I realized this story is kind of like the tale of my destiny, told by someone who knows me well. The last

scene of the film with Hélène at the prow of a boat is like a deliberate nod to the opening credits sequence of Pialat's TO OUR LOVES. In a way, a circle is closed!

People will remember the Bonnaire - Kline partnership...

Caroline Bottaro - One cannot love movies and want to make them without also loving American cinema. When one sends a script to Kevin Kline and he replies four days later that he wants to meet you as soon as possible, you don't really realize what's happening but it starts to feel like the pleasure of movie making.

Kevin Kline is an extremely physical actor, and his talent has enabled him to excel equally successful at the theater, regularly appearing in the New York Shakespeare Festival as well as in mainstream comedies. For him, this film is a challenge because it's the first time he's acted outside the US, in a foreign language and in a new register. I directed him to perform in a restrained way which adds to his charm and increases his foreignness tenfold.

Sandrine Bonnaire - Moreover, we had to memorize the chess games together. Very soon, we felt like we were partners and we had fun too when he was practicing with me to find the rhythm, the right breathing for his lines, and how not to speak them word-for-word so as not to alter the meaning. During takes, Kevin tried little improvisations, a different way to make some gesture or other, and I'd respond, joining in with his music which was a real pleasure. Caroline allowed us a certain amount of freedom in our acting because she knows exactly what she's looking for from her actors. She uses everything available to serve the scene. She is also looking for coherence between the actor's personality and the character they are playing, which makes for some original casting decisions. The choice of Valérie Lagrange illustrates that.

Caroline Bottaro - An actor carries around their personal experiences which, to my mind, can be seen on the screen. For example, the tattoos you see on Valérie Lagrange's hands tell a story that adds to her character. This female hotel manager could have lived a previous life of travel to India during the 1970s. Why not?

Francis Renaud is increasingly making his presence felt...

Caroline Bottaro - Francis touched me hugely both as a man and as an actor. He has a lot in common with Sandrine – they could have been brother and sister in another story. When a man and a woman live together for a long time, they begin to resemble one another a little and there's some of that with Ange and Hélène. Francis doesn't simply play the nice guy who's slightly out of touch. Even if you can see that deep down, he's really sweet, he also gives off a kind of tension that brings a lot to the character. You wonder what would happen if things started to get out of hand between them.

Why the choice of Nicola Piovani for the music?

Caroline Bottaro - I was really pleased to meet Nicola Piovani during the making of this movie. I love his music from seeing Nanni Moretti's films, he liked my script and he's a big fan of Sandrine's. He understood that I wanted a soundtrack that would

have a standalone character in the movie. His melodies, which are both low-pitched and light, corresponded perfectly to my desire to say things without seeming to.

QUEEN TO PLAY is one of the first films produced by Dominique Besnehard and Michel Feller. What was it like to work with them?

Caroline Bottaro - Great! Dominique Besnehard and Michel Feller allowed me to fully realize my dream. They were both very present, and very respectful of the film I wanted to make. But before settling with Mon Voisin Productions, my project experienced some pretty dramatic ups and downs. It was no easy task – five years went by, several producers pulled out who clearly weren't the right people. I knew I was going to finally make the film the day Dominique Besnehard, who had been my agent, told me, "We've known each other for 20 years, Sandrine will always be my little movie buddy. It's your first film, it's my first production – let's do it!".

Sandrine Bonnaire - First times are always wonderful !

INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN KLINE

What was your initial reaction when you read the script of “Queen to play”?

Kevin Kline: When I received the English version of “Queen to play” I read it straight through in one go. That’s an important sign for me as it rarely happens! It’s a very good read... I was immediately captivated by the story and the characters. And I knew that Sandrine (Bonnaire) was playing the lead. She’s a great actress, whom I’ve admired her for years. It would be an honor to work with her.

What’s more, I particularly appreciate love stories that don’t follow usual and conventional classic routes. Love stories have been told in a myriad of ways, but I’ve never read a script where a love affair occurs across a chess board. The path of this woman who comes to realize that something is missing in her life has a compelling quality that attracted me right away. Her search, and then the discovery of a blossoming, genuine talent bring with them self-discovery, a self-redefining epiphany of sorts ... I’ve always admired people who force the hand of destiny, who don’t readily accept a limiting life, but demand something more of themselves, challenge themselves to attain something beyond what has been offered or what comes easily. I think “Queen to play” is a film that identifies with fulfilment rather than frustration.

How did you meet Caroline Bottaro?

K.K.: My French agent Laurent Savry sent me the script. I read it and I wanted to meet her. I was intrigued by the idea of acting in French (I’ve never played in a foreign language before).

Sandrine (Bonnaire) came to New York a few weeks later, with Caroline (Bottaro) and Dominique Besnehard. So we met, and we spent a lovely evening together, but in my heart of hearts I’d already decided.

What was your first impression when you met Caroline Bottaro?

K.K.: We immediately found a very good communication using a melange of French and English. She struck me at once as intelligent, grounded, witty, responsible and determined. When we discussed the script and her method of working it was immediately clear that we were on the same wave-length. Having already a strong first impression from reading her script, I felt excited about the project very quickly.

It's Caroline's first feature, how did you get on during the shoot?

K.K.: I've worked with directors from all over the world. America, Rumania , Taiwan, France, Germany, England. I prefer "actors' directors": directors who see our professional relationship as a collaboration.

Everyone has his or her own style, of course... Caroline knows what she wants, she has visualized her screenplay, but not, it seems, in a closed way Her creative process is ongoing throughout the filming. She is open to the surprises which naturally arise from the actors doing it, from their instinctive response to what she's written. I think you have to leave room for the unexpected, the unconscious impulses, for everything that escapes our control. I like to try things out and experiment , I like rehearsing. (I worked in the theatre for ten years before I started playing in films, it must come from that). But there are times when I prefer not to rehearse at all too. It all depends. There's never only one way of working, nor of interpreting a part... As soon as we met in New York I knew Caroline had this open-minded attitude. So it all went very well.

It's the first time you're worked with Sandrine Bonnaire. Which films have you seen her in and what do you think of her as an actress?

K.K.: I've seen her wonderful performances in "Monsieur Hire" by Patrice Leconte, "La Cérémonie" by Claude Chabrol, "Sans toit ni loi" by Agnès Varda, "To our loves" by Maurice Pialat and also "Under Satan's Sun" by Maurice Pialat... and more recently in "Confidences trop intimes" by Patrice Leconte. I loved that film. It's also another highly original love story. Fantastic! I love Sandrine's intensity, her simplicity and directness, .. the delicacy,mystery. A beautiful actress. But then I have always found her extraordinary!

How was your relationship during the shoot?

K.K.: Really very good. She was very patient with me and very helpful. We had a lot of fun together. Working with her was a joy, she's wonderful! We laughed a lot.

How would you describe your character Doctor Kröger?

K.K.: My description of Kröger would be far too subjective. I can say how I see him, but I won't be at all satisfied with my description, and I would prefer that the audience have whatever impressions they have of the character without my tedious

explanations. In any case, so much of it is out of the actor's exclusive control: that is the nature of film. I can generalize and say that my first impression was to see Kröger as a malcontent, a misanthrope, a recluse. He is someone who has pushed away the rest of the world to find a sort of "haven of peace". He has closed many doors behind him, and now someone is pushing open a door or two. The film doesn't tell us much about what this retired American doctor does in Corsica, we don't know much about his past, he remains mysterious... Kröger is secretive . He can be arrogant too, and he doesn't seem to give a damn about what people think of him, which makes playing him very enjoyable A character like Kröger is a wonderful gift for an actor. It's liberating!

Do you think you have things in common with Kröger, and how did you "encounter" your character?

K.K.:... Well, my process, if you can call it that, starts with encountering the character on the page, in the text, which becomes a sort of blueprint. But then I suppose I encounter him through a process of discovery during the filming, from scene to scene, moment to moment, situation by situation. It's through wearing all these different masks that an actor can discover things about himself. But I'd rather not say too much about what we have in common other than that our names begin with "K". And that we both like to teach, and that we learn from teaching. *Docendo Discimus* (We learn by teaching), as they said in ancient Rome.

This is the first time you've played entirely in French. How did you prepare for it?

K.K.: I did say a few sentences in French in "French Kiss" by Lawrence Kasdan, in brief scenes with François Cluzet and Jean Reno, but I've never played a whole part in French and I had to work on it a lot. Several people helped me: two different coaches in New York, and then my dear friend Claudio Todeschini, with whom I had worked before in France, who was with me throughout the shoot.

Do you think that playing in a language that isn't your native language changes your way of acting?

K.K.: I think it changes everything. It changes the way you express yourself and the way you think.

In your opinion, are there still differences in the way actors in America and French actors approach their work?

K.K.: For me it's hard to define a French actor's approach to his or her work simply because its context is different culturally and linguistically. Anyway, I've finally come to the conclusion that every experience is different. It doesn't matter which drama school you went to, who you learned acting with, whether you come from theatre or films, if you're a trained actor or a natural born actor... For me, the notion of acting is personal and it evolves all the time! Let's say we try to redefine it as often as we can, if not each time we act!

And it's very different if we're playing Shakespeare, Molière, contemporary drama a "genre" film, or a Bottaro film.... What matters is bringing the written idea into its best possible expression on film. Obviously differences do exist, a style, a mode of expression that's European or French. It's a subject we could explore at length but in the end it all comes down to human behaviour. In fact I believe the notion of acting is completely individual.

Did you play chess before the film? How do you feel about the game today?

K.K.: I'd dabbled in chess before, but I really learned it for "Queen to play" as Krüger is an excellent chess player. So I had another teacher for that! In fact I had no idea of the true complexity of the game. It's absolutely fascinating!

I've read quite a bit about it, and I now think there are two schools. The people who consider chess as a pastime or a simple game, and those who see the intellectual challenge. We're not addressing the problem of "who" wins any more, it's far more complex. It involves the mind and the will. At this level, you need to be extremely strong psychologically as you don't only play the board, you also play the man! A beautiful way of combining the right and left sides of the brain! But obviously what appeals to me the most is the metaphorical aspect of chess in the film... a game or a love story?

The idea of surpassing oneself is important in the script, do you believe it's a *sine qua non* condition for fulfilment?

K.K.: That's an interesting question... I don't know the answer but I like it when Kröger says: "*When you take a risk you may lose, when you don't take a risk you always lose!*"

He knows it's essential to make this effort, to search... The notion of commitment is also very important for me. I think it's vital to commit oneself in order to advance towards fulfilment and attain a sort of happiness. Whether it's in your work, the practice of an art, a friendship or a marriage, it's a sense of responsibility to yourself and to society. I'm not saying I always get there! But I try...

The whole of your role was filmed in Corsica in a stunningly beautiful natural

setting... Did you know that area?

K.K.: No, it was my first visit. Unfortunately I didn't have time to sightsee or travel around. Like Kröger, I was "shut away"! There was always a lot of work on set, then in the evenings back in the hotel I rehearsed my dialogue for the next day. The shoot was intense but we shared some privileged moments. We all lived together in the same hotel and there was a very friendly atmosphere. I find that the French have a different attitude to Americans who are solely driven by the rhythm of the work. Here the quality of life is more important. A glass of wine, a good dinner: these things matter after days like that! I had a wonderful time but I'll have to come back again to discover Corsica... and plan a stay without a film shoot!

We have seen you in comedies and in tragedies, have you any favourite interpretations?

K.K.: No, I've always loved the variety. In the types of roles, styles, settings, and media: Hamlet, Cyrano, Falstaff, Shakespeare, Chekhov, Comedy, Tragedy, classical and contemporary theatre, the cinema... It's the variety that stimulates me.

Would you like to work in France again?

K.K.: Yes, absolutely, and it would certainly be easier as I speak better French now! But not Corsican yet, sorry!

FILMOGRAPHY

Sandrine Bonnaire

ACTRESS

- 2009 *QUEEN TO PLAY* by Caroline Bottaro
- 2007 *MARK OF AN ANGEL* by Safy Nebbou
A SIMPLE HEART by Marion Laine
- 2006 *KID POWER* by Eric Civanyan
COULD THIS BE LOVE? by Pierre Jolivet
- 2004 *THE LIGHT* by Philippe Lioret
THE GIRAFFE'S NECK by Safy Nebbou
INTIMATE STRANGERS by Patrice Leconte
- 2003 *RÉSISTANCE* by Todd Komarnicki
- 2001 *C'EST LA VIE* by Jean-Pierre Ameris
MADemoISELLE by Philippe Lioret
- 1999 *AT THE HEART OF THE LIE* by Claude Chabrol
EAST-WEST by Régis Wargnier
César Nomination for Best Actress 2000
- 1998 *STOLEN LIFE* by Yves Angelo
SECRET DEFENSE by Jacques Rivette
- 1997 *THE DEBT OF LOVE* by Andréas Gruber
- 1996 *NEVER EVER* by Charles Finch
- 1995 *A HUNDRED AND ONE NIGHTS OF SIMON CINEMA* by Agnès Varda
A JUDGEMENT IN STONE by Claude Chabrol
Best Actor, Venice 1995
César Nomination for Best Actress 1996
- 1994 *SECRETS SHARED WITH A STRANGER* by Georges Bardawill
JOAN THE MAID 2 – THE PRISONS
by Jacques Rivette
César Nomination for Best Actress 1995
JOAN THE MAID 1 – THE BATTLES
by Jacques Rivette
César Nomination for Best Actress 1995
- 1992 *PRAGUE* by Ian Sellar
THE PLAGUE by Luis Puenzo
- 1991 *THE SKY ABOVE PARIS* by Michel Bena
TOWARDS EVENING by Francesca Archibugi
- 1990 *CAPTIVE OF THE DESERT* by Raymond Depardon
- 1989 *MONSIEUR HIRE* by Patrice Leconte
Official Selection, Festival de Cannes 1989
César Nomination for Best Actress 1990
- 1988 *QUELQUES JOURS AVEC MOI* by Claude Sautet
THICK SKINNED by Patricia Mazuy
- 1987 *THE INNOCENTS* by André Techine
JAUNE REVOLVER by Olivier Langlois
UNDER SATAN'S SUN by Maurice Pialat

Palme d'Or, Festival de Cannes 1988
César Nomination for Best Actress 1988
1986 *THE PRUDE by Jacques Doillon*
1985 *POLICE by Maurice Pialat*
A BETTER LIFE by Renaud Victor
WITHOUT ROOF OR RULE by Agnès Varda
César for Best Actress 1986
1984 *FIRE ON SIGHT by Marc Angelo*
BLANCHE AND MARIE by Jacques Renard
1983 *TO OUR LOVES by Maurice Pialat*
César for Best Female Newcomer 1995

DIRECTOR

2006 *HER NAME IS SABINE*
FRANCE 3
Télévision de la Critique 2008 prize for Best Documentary
Syndicat de la Critique 2008 prize for Best First French Film
France Culture Cinéma 2008 prize
Globe de Cristal 2008 for Best Documentary
Official Selection, Directors' Fortnight, Festival de Cannes 2007

FILMOGRAPHY

Kevin Kline

- 2009 *QUEEN TO PLAY* by Caroline Bottaro
- 2008 *DEFINITELY, MAYBE* by Adam Brooks
- 2007 *TRADE* by Marco Kreuzpaintner
- 2006 *THE PINK PANTHER* by Shawn Levy
THE LAST SHOW by Robert Altman
- 2004 *DE-LOVELY* by Irwin Winkler
- 2002 *ORANGE COUNTY* by Jake Kasdan
THE EMPEROR'S CLUB by Michael Hoffman
- 2001 *THE ANNIVERSARY PARTY*
by Jennifer Jason Leigh and Alan Cumming
LIFE AS A HOUSE by Irwin Winkler
- 2000 *THE ROAD TO EL DORADO* by Don Paul (voice)
- 1999 *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* by Michael Hoffman
WILD WILD WEST by Barry Sonnenfeld
- 1997 *FIERCE CREATURES* by Fred Schepisi
THE ICE STORM by Ang Lee
IN & OUT by Frank Oz
- 1996 *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME* by Gary Trousdale (voice)
- 1995 *FRENCH KISS* by Lawrence Kasdan
- 1993 *DAVE* by Ivan Reitman
- 1992 *CONSENTING ADULTS* by Alan J. Pakula
CHAPLIN by Richard Attenborough
- 1991 *SOAPDISH* by Michael Hoffman
GRAND CANYON by Lawrence Kasdan
- 1990 *I LOVE YOU TO DEATH* by Lawrence Kasdan
- 1989 *THE JANUARY MAN* by Pat O'Connor
- 1988 *A FISH CALLED WANDA* by Charles Crichton
Oscar for Best Supporting Actor
- 1987 *CRY FREEDOM* by Richard Attenborough
- 1985 *SILVERADO* by Lawrence Kasdan
- 1983 *THE BIG CHILL* by Lawrence Kasdan
THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE by Wilford Leach
- 1982 *SOPHIE'S CHOICE* by Alan J. Pakula

FILMOGRAPHY

Mon Voisin Productions

Mon Voisin Productions is a company created in June 2006 by Dominique Besnehard, a former casting director and agent for over 20 years at Artmedia; and Michel Feller, former agent and producer at EuropaCorp. In November 2007, Anne Derré, a former businesswoman joined Mon Voisin Productions as the third associate.

PRODUCTIONS

- 2007 Coproducer with Cinémaginaire (Canada) and Ciné@ of DAYS OF DARKNESS, directed by Denys Arcand
- 2008 Coproducer with Epithète of A DAY AT THE MUSEUM directed by Jean-Michel Ribes
QUEEN TO PLAY, directed by Caroline Bottaro, a coproduction with BluePrint Film (Germany)
L'AMOUR DANS LE SANG, fiction by Vincent Monnet for France3

IN PRODUCTION

- 2009 OÙ VAS-TU JUDITH? (working title), directed by Sophie de Daruvar and Yves Thomas, with Isabelle Carré and Sergi Lopez

IN DEVELOPMENT

- AVANT L'AUBE directed by Raphaël Jacoulot
LES GRANDS-MÈRES directed by Anne Fontaine, based on the novel, "The Grandmothers" by Doris Lessing, Nobel Prize for Literature
PROVIDENCE by Lionel Mougin, based on the novel by Valérie Tong Cuong

CAST

Hélène
Kröger
Ange
The American woman
Maria
Lisa
Natalia
Marie-Jeanne
The American man
Club president

Sandrine Bonnaire
Kevin Kline
Francis Renaud
Jennifer Beals
Valérie Lagrange
Alexandra Gentil
Alice Pol
Elisabeth Vitali
Dominic Gould
Daniel Martin

CREW

Directed by
Based on the novel by

Screenplay, adaptation, dialogues
In collaboration with
Original music
Director of photography
Set design
Costumes
Assistant director
Casting
Sound

Editing
Production manager
Executive producer
Coproduced by
Produced by

Caroline Bottaro
Bertina Henrichs,
“The Chess Player”
published by Éditions Liana Levi
Caroline Bottaro
Caroline Maly
Nicola Piovani
Jean-Claude Larrieu, AFC
Emmanuel de Chauvigny
Dorothee Guiraud
Julien Zidi
Tatiana Vialle
Erwan Kerzanet,
Sélim Azzazi,
Emmanuel Croset
Tina Baz Le Gal
Rémi Bergman
Jean-Philippe Laroche
Amelie Latscha, Felix Moeller
Dominique Besneard, Michel Feller