

# PHILIPPE KATERINE VOYAGES EN ITALIE



A FILM BY AND WITH

# SOPHIE LETOURNEUR



**BIG SCREEN  
COMPETITION**

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ROTTERDAM  
2023

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# VOYAGES EN ITALIE

**A FILM BY SOPHIE LETOURNEUR**

with Philippe Katerine & Sophie Letourneur

2022 | France | 91 min | 5.1 | 1.85 | DCP | VF

CAN A ROMANTIC ESCAPE REIGNITE A COUPLE'S FLAME? SHE TALKS HIM INTO GOING AWAY FOR A FEW DAYS WITHOUT THE KIDS. ANYWHERE HE WANTS EXCEPT ITALY, SINCE HE'S GONE THERE WITH ALL HIS EXES. SPAIN? THE HIKING TRAILS IN AUBRAC? THEY SETTLE ON SICILY — SINCE HE SAYS IT'S NOT EXACTLY ITALY.



# INTERVIEW WITH SOPHIE LETOURNEUR

## What was the starting point for *Voyages en Italie*?

It started with a real trip in 2016, to the same places as in the film and for the same reasons. I wanted to turn it into a story, a zany comedy inspired by my relationship, which sometimes seemed to me to be a caricature of itself, and also the relationships of those around me. On the trip, certain scenes or phrases caught my attention and I wrote them down on blank pages torn from the back of my Rough Guide.

Back home, I asked my partner to record the two of us remembering the trip right down to the tiniest details. This was my foundation: my notes and that recording. I began working on this project before I even shot *Énorme*, and I contacted Philippe Katerine at that time.

As I transcribed the recording and worked on it, I realized I had more than just an outline: “The story of the trip” was the heart of the project.

This led me to the idea for the final part of the film, in 35mm, when they’re remembering their trip in bed and we realize that everything we’ve seen thus far is their memories. And them remembering their trip together brings the film right into the heart of what had touched me: The closeness we’d felt talking about it. This film is a declaration of love. In the script, the question wasn’t “Will they stay together after this trip?” but “What is the nature of the bond that has united them all this time?” And also, I’ll admit: “When

are they finally gonna get it on?”

The film is also an opportunity for me to explore, with self-deprecation, the unsolvable equation of the marital bond and desire. And to laugh at that damn equation, which was the reason for the trip eight years ago, and which I still haven’t solved.

It’s that moment in a couple’s life when you look in the rearview mirror, because married life, parenthood and domestic routines have gradually replaced the passionate adrenaline of your beginnings. In a sense, the two phases are incompatible. And the marital bed becomes the location of an intimacy that is no longer particularly sexual.

In that bed, he says: “*I’ve had vertigo many times... many times... with you.*” You can go to a sunny place and drink Limoncello, but you can never turn back time. What you can do is develop something else - complicity, a closeness with less desire - which can be both sad and beautiful, and it’s what makes this couple at once strong, weak and hilarious as they attempt to reinvent themselves by retelling their story ad nauseam.

“*Just focusing in*”... In a sense, this seemingly anecdotal film is actually about what bonds this couple in the purest triviality and the miraculous complementarity of their neuroses. Their weariness may smell burnt, like rotten eggs or even like death, but these characters are fighting hard to overcome it.



And although she says “*I love you*” during the Jackie Quartz song in the car, at the end of the road another guy might get in and take her away. But that’s another film.

## What made you choose Philippe Katerine so early on in the project?

I’ve always felt a kinship with him, in what he does and the way he comes across, in the way he relates to seriousness, triviality and poetry. I really love who he is and what he does, and that was enough of a reason to dream of working with him.

I think he’s brilliant, a great artist. And that’s really important, because what inspires me in an actor is always, deep down, the person they are. That’s what I want to film, even though this character was in reality

**“The story of the trip was the heart of the project”**

my partner. And Philippe is both him, and not him. His musical voice, his gentleness, his complexity... He brought something more, and made him a character of fiction.

Based on his artistic trajectory, I felt Philippe would understand my way of composing my scenes like music and trust my process enough to let himself go while simultaneously appropriating the material. His



## “The film explores, with self-deprecation, the unsolvable equation of the marital bond and desire”

intelligence and sensitivity to the work, the way he understood all the layers in every detail, gesture and word and brought subtle nuances as he discovered the lines practically in real time... On the shoot, Philippe and I had the soundtrack for each sequence in our ears and were listening to the scenes as we played them, an exercise which demands a great deal of concentration so you don't lose the live thread. It puts you in a kind of trance.

Also, I'd decided to play myself in the film, and Philippe was the person I instinctively felt I would gel with. In a way I felt close to him before we even met. I sensed a complicity, and I think it reinforces the bond we feel between these characters.

**After a whimsical fable like *Énorme*, you seem with this film to be returning to a more raw and realistic form.**

For me the foundation is always the same, even if the device varies with each film.

I always start with loads of notes in notebooks, as others might start with a sketch of a scene that will then be fleshed out with improvisations specific to each project. My note-taking approach was every bit as much a part of *Énorme*, which may seem far more “fictional” than this one.

And although this film may seem like less of a fiction to some, it is still a story, carried by one event - the voyage - with a beginning and an end. We tell each other the story in bed.

I don't think I created this couple with a view to making them realistic: I wanted them exaggerated, sometimes to the point of cartoonish. It's a question of tone. And that's precisely how I insisted we play it. I finetune my dialogue in the extreme, doing major rewriting during long improvisation sessions that are carefully directed, then a sound edit of these improvisations, which becomes the basis for the script dialogue.

Well in advance of the shoot, there is the essential phase of composing a sort of “musical” score (rhythm, overlaps...) followed by a re-transcription. I was already working this way when I made *La Vie au Ranch*, for example to create cacophony where there wasn't any.

By sifting through the material repeatedly, my co-screenwriter Laetitia Goffi and I arrive at something that is alive and organic and feels spontaneous even though it is written right down to the last comma, and every sentence, every spoken word, contains something beyond its primary meaning and participates in the overall arrangement. That part is underground, like the deep roots of a tiny, useless weed unfurling and linking up to create a sort of network. Since my story originates in details and not a broader idea, those details bouncing off of each other come together somewhat subconsciously in the beginning, and gradually their internal coherence emerges with something to say, something fluid.

### For example?

When Jean-Fi (Philippe Katerine) says: “*WeenieJet had a crash*”, the childish pun appeals to me, but clearly it's also a reference to the breakdown of the couple's libido (“*We need to put gas in our...*”) and ties in with other threads that weave the fabric of the film's meaning, the subconscious Freudian slips, a poetic construction built on little “nothings”. Like the word “*envie*” that comes up repeatedly in the French dialogue, scene after scene, in different contexts, with all the complexity that the word implies: “*en vie*” (literally: “in life”), desire, death, time, etc. Darker allusions bring a morbid dimension to the film, and even to the most archaic questions: Alone or in a couple? Sedentary or nomadic? Travel to discover something new, or stay home to face your problems? The passage of time, loss, and what we do with it. For example, at the end of the film, referring to the embalming of Rosalia, Sophie says: “*But how did they keep her like that?*” and Arnaud's girlfriend says: “*Well, they have techniques.*” This is the entire mechanism of the film to me: The embalming of life's moments through oral retelling, and beyond that, through writing and cinema. That's the central theme of the trilogy I'm currently writing, of which *Voyages en Italie* is the first installment. These three films are organized around questions of desire, the couple formed by Sophie and Jean-Fi, the children, and also autofiction, creation and different forms of storytelling.

### How much does the finished film resemble the raw material you started with?

By the time we arrived for the shoot, five years after the “facts”, that material had ripened considerably and found its form and its universality. I was not at all interested in simply recreating situations I had experienced in my life and putting them in a film. When I feel a need to dive back into this or that event, the pleasure - and in a sense, the relief - I feel

replaying these events comes from understanding them, dissecting them, mastering them technically and artistically through form. Perhaps I'm embalming my love story using a fictional technique.

In addition to the precise writing of the *mise-en-scene* and the device of a narration within the narration, I approached the editing like a collage and the sound like the weaving of a delicate lace around expressive sound effects. I wanted the film to be an artistic object that constantly reinvents itself, a blend of genres.

**How did you come up with the *mise-en-scene* for this film? Your directing choices here are quite different from your previous films.**

There's an important phase in the process when I make a sort of demo of the film. My collaborators Laetitia Goffi, François Labarthe and I act out all the parts, sequence after sequence. For example, I'll put them in the bed and have them lip-sync to the already-edited soundtrack of the characters' dialogue, while I use the camera to figure out the shots and angles. Or, for the opening scene where the couple is arguing about whether to take the trip, for the demo, I asked them to be both still and fidgety as this bus goes through Paris, an infinitely touristic place - the world capital of romanticism for a majority of visitors - while these two are beaten down by their routine. It's also a film about circulation, through landscapes, hotel rooms and restaurants... and the circulation of desire - or lack thereof.

Then Laetitia, François and I went to Sicily and "shot" all the scenes of the film, armed with the well-honed dialogue from the improvisation sessions and using ourselves as stand-ins. We took turns playing the roles and shooting the scenes, and also details and "subjective" shots. We used this opportunity to scout locations and cast supporting roles. This is when I intuitively figure out how I want to film different situations (distances, zooms...) and determine how to compose both the comedy and the meaning in

## "I finetune my dialogue in the extreme"

ways that, beyond the dialogue, will nourish the film's grammar.

Back home, we edit a demo of the film, which becomes the proverbial "hunk of clay" for me to work with as I cut and polish the script. This becomes not only the soundtrack that we'll have in our ears but also the foundation for my work with Philippe Katerine and director of photography Jonathan Ricquebourg. A few shots from the demo even made it into the film (an Italian man on the street in Catania, a boat captain in Milazzo...).

**So the film is not particularly altered by what you discover on location during the shoot?**

I filmed the scenes in Italy to tell a story, not to recreate a particular reality. I'm not looking for chance encounters or happy accidents on a shoot, although the filming of the demo can lead to some such things making their way into the film. For example, in 2016 my partner and I had hiked up the big white cliffs of the "Scala dei Turchi" because they were open. When I returned with François and Laetitia, we came to a fence with a sign saying it was closed to the public. We had to improvise an alternative, since the characters couldn't go up there anymore. So when we returned with Philippe to shoot the film, this scene illustrates their disappointment. But then I spied a couple embracing at the top and asked the DP to film them. That was not at all planned, but I think it's a beautiful moment in the film. This old couple that can't turn back time sees the image of their youth perched on high - two lovers who may have just met and are kissing in a physical and emotional place where the



protagonists of the film can no longer go: "*We can't go.*"

The shot of the bride too, caught on the fly, rhymes with a shot of a bride we'd zoomed in on during location scouting, and then on the shoot, on a little scooter before the lemonade scene. As Jean-Fi says, this is a story of "*everything twice.*" The elements exist and find their meaning in repetition, and in the connections that gradually form.

**We also find these rhymes, this writing, almost in verse, in the back-and-forth between Paris and Italy, the time of living and the time of remembering, in these increasingly present roundtrips between the Italian vacation and the Parisian apartment where the characters remember their trip after the fact.**

In a way it's that tension - established from the first scene as one of the central questions of the film - between the ordinary and the extraordinary, the banality of everyday life and the voyage that is supposed to heighten and beautify life. But at the same time, everything is reversible. They leave their routine in a city reputed to be one of the most beautiful in the world and head for places that are certainly spectacular, but they discover them through the lens of the Rough Guide and all the codes of mass tourism. The film doesn't judge: In a way, they're both kind of right. He's right when he says it's ridiculous to think four days away will solve their problems. And at the same time, this trip she insists they take does give them new experiences together, things to talk about. It keeps their bond going, alive and reenchanting,



even though they're just two of the many people who visit those same places and have those same experiences, and the memories they make are in no way extraordinary. In the end, there's the idea that we should be able to find the extraordinary in the ordinary, and vice-versa.

And this is also a big part of the film's spirit. It could be said that this story is too mundane to be told. That this middle-class couple with their imperfect bodies is as dull as the expired chicken in their fridge. But I'm convinced there is power in the simplest of things. Jean-Fi doesn't initially see the appeal of the volcano rocks in the dust, but back home he says, "*Cleaned up, they're quite pretty. Very black. They look quite different from other rocks.*" And it doesn't mean we

can't take a deep dive on volcanic symbolism with dormant Vulcano "*that could wake up anytime*" but is currently only spewing "*fumaroles and sulfurous emissions*" while in the distance, inaccessible Stromboli is "*erupting every 20 minutes.*"

Finding time and space outside of "home" because Italy and the Mediterranean also have the power of beautification and reconciliation. The water, the hot climate, the colors, smells, strong sensations: It all creates a very sensuous atmosphere. It's a perfect place to awaken the flesh. And of course there's the legacy of Rossellini, so important to me as a director who also loves the marriage of documentary and fiction, of which he was the great pioneer.

# SOPHIE LETOURNEUR

After studying at L'École Duperré and then L'École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, Sophie Letourneur directed her first short, *La Tête dans le Vide*, in 2004. Then came two mid-length films, *Manue Bolonaise* and *Roc et Canyon* (Directors' Fortnight, Rencontres de Brive, Côté Court) which led to her first feature, *La Vie au Ranch*, acclaimed by critics on its theatrical release in 2010. In 2011 she presented *Le Marin Masqué* at the Locarno Film Festival, where she filmed her second feature *Les Coquillettes*, presented there in 2012 and released in France in March 2013. The following year, Sophie Letourneur directed Lolita Chammah and Benjamin Biolay in *Gaby Baby Doll*, a bucolic and comedic fairytale. In 2019 she made *Énorme* with Marina Foïs and Jonathan Cohen, exploring the vicissitudes of maternity from conception to birth. *Voyages en Italie* is her fifth feature.

## VOYAGES EN ITALIE (91', 2022)

ROTTERDAM INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL — BIG SCREEN COMPETITION 2023

## ÉNORME (91', 2019)

ROTTERDAM INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL - BIG SCREEN COMPETITION 2020  
FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DU FILM INDÉPENDANT, BORDEAUX - OFFICIAL SELECTION 2019

## GABY BABY DOLL (88', 2014)

CINEPANORAMA HONG KONG — OFFICIAL SELECTION 2015  
FRENCH CINEMA NOW — SAN FRANCISCO FILM SOCIETY 2015  
FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DU FILM INDÉPENDANT, BORDEAUX — OFFICIAL SELECTION 2014  
LES ARCS FILM FESTIVAL 2014  
FESTIVAL ENTREUVES - BELFORT 2014

## LES COQUILLETTES (75', 2012)

NEW DIRECTORS/NEW FILMS, NEW YORK 2013  
BAFICI, BUENOS AIRES — OFFICIAL SELECTION 2013  
FESTIVAL PREMIERS PLANS, ANGERS — OFFICIAL SELECTION 2013  
LOCARNO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL — OFFICIAL SELECTION 2012

## LE MARIN MASQUÉ (35', 2011)

NOMINATED FOR BEST SHORT CÉSAR 2012  
LUTIN AWARD FOR BEST SOUND AND SPECIAL EFFECTS 2012  
VILA DO CONDE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2012 — IN COMPETITION  
FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE SAN FRANCISCO 2012 — IN COMPETITION  
LOCARNO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL — LEOPARD OF TOMORROW 2011  
GRAND PRIX, PRESS AWARD AND YOUTH JURY AWARD, CÔTÉ COURT, PANTIN 2011  
GRAND PRIX — IMAGES EN RÉGION, VENDÔME 2011  
BEST DIRECTOR, AUDIENCE AWARD — SILHOUETTE FESTIVAL, PARIS 2011

## LA VIE AU RANCH (92', 35 MM, 2010)

ROTTERDAM INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2010 — IN COMPETITION  
GRAND PRIX - INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, ABYCINÉ, SPAIN 2010  
SELECTION ACID CANNES 2010  
AUDIENCE AWARD AND FRENCH FILM AWARD — ENTREUVES FESTIVAL, BELFORT 2009

## ROC ET CANYON (55', SUPER 16 MM — 2007)

SPECIAL JURY PRIZE — CÔTÉ COURT, PANTIN 2008  
SPECIAL JURY PRIZE — IMAGES EN RÉGION, VENDÔME 2007

## MANUE BOLONAISE (45', SUPER 16 MM - 2005)

SPECIAL JURY PRIZE — RENCONTRES DU MOYEN MÉTRAGE, BRIVE 2006

## LA TÊTE DANS LE VIDE (12', SUPER 8 MM, COPIE 35 MM, 2004)

AUDIENCE PRIZE — PREMIERS PLANS, ANGERS 2005  
SPECIAL JURY PRIZE — ITINÉRANCES, ALÈS 2005  
YOUTH JURY PRIZE — TOUS COURTS, AIX-EN-PROVENCE 2004

# PHILIPPE KATERINE

Musician, singer-songwriter, actor and director Philippe Katerine is an essential artist in France today.

In 2022, he celebrated 30 years in music with a special concert at the legendary Parisian concert hall L'Olympia and *Le Bon Marché* department store gave him *carte blanche*, or more accurately *carte rose*, to present monumental artworks and other creations (paintings, sculptures, performances) with the aim of glorifying his manifesto «*Mignonisme*».

In the cinema, he garnered praise for *Le Grand Bain* by Gilles Lellouche, for which he won numerous awards: a César for Best Supporting Actor, the Romy Schneider and Patrick Dewaere Award, and a *Globe de Cristal* for Best Actor in a Comedy.

Since then, we've seen him shine in a number of films, including *Le Monde est à Toi* by Romain Gavras, *Le Poulain* by Mathieu Sapin, *Yves* by Benoît Forgeard, *Merveilles à Montfermeil* by Jeanne Balibar, *Notre Dame* by Valérie Donzelli, *Le Lion* by Ludovic Colbeau-Justin and more recently *Le Test* by Emmanuel Poulain-Arnaud and *Petite Solange* by Axelle Ropert.

We can see him this year in *Astérix et Obélix – L'Empire du Milieu* by Guillaume Canet, *Un Homme Heureux* by Tristan Séguéla, *La Plus Belle Pour Aller Danser* by Victoria Bedos and *Voyages en Italie* by Sophie Letourneur.

# ARTISTIC AND TECHNICAL LISTS

DIRECTOR | **SOPHIE LETOURNEUR**

CAST | **SOPHIE LETOURNEUR & PHILIPPE KATERINE**

SCREENPLAY & DIALOGUE | **SOPHIE LETOURNEUR & LAETITIA GOFFI**

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF **JEAN-CHRISTOPHE HYM**

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS | **LAETITIA GOFFI & FRANÇOIS LABARTHE**

IMAGE | **JONATHAN RICQUEBOURG** ASSISTED BY **CYRILLE HUBERT**

SOUND | **CHARLOTTE COMTE**

EDITORS | **SOPHIE LETOURNEUR, LAETITIA GOFFI & THOMAS GLASER**

SOUND EDITORS | **MICHEL KLOCHENDLER & CAROLE VERNER**

MIX | **DOMINIQUE GABORIEAU**

COLOR GRADING | **YOV MOOR**

PRODUCTION | **CAMILLE GENTET & SOPHIE LETOURNEUR – TOURNE FILMS**



