

A Cinema Guild Release

# AROUND A SMALL MOUNTAIN

a film by JACQUES RIVETTE

84 minutes / 35mm / 1.85 / Dolby Digital SRD / France / French with English Subtitles  
Not Rated / Stills available at: [www.cinemaguild.com/downloads](http://www.cinemaguild.com/downloads)

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## **Synopsis**

On a winding mountain road, Vittorio stops to help Kate, whose car has broken down. After gallantly making the repair, without a single word spoken, he speeds off. Later in town, Vittorio learns that Kate has returned to join her family's travelling circus after leaving under mysterious conditions many years ago. Intrigued by her story, Vittorio stays for the show, and the next one, and little by little, is ingratiated into the circus and the lives of its performers – all the while trying to discover the secret that led to Kate's sudden departure.

## **About the Film**

*Around a Small Mountain (36 Vues Du Pic Saint-Loup)* premiered at the 2009 Venice Film Festival and was an official selection of the 2009 New York Film Festival. It stars Jane Birkin and Sergio Castellitto.

**Filmography: 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

The story of Marie and Julien

The Duchess of Langeais

Around a Small Mountain

### **Select Filmography: Jane Birkin**

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-fu master 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

### **Select Filmography: Sergio Castellito**

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

### **Essay by Helene Frappat**

***Around 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.”

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.

## Cast

Kate	Jane Birkin
Vittorio	Sergio Castellitto
Alexandre	André Marcon
Marlo	Jacques Bonnaffé
Clémence	Julie-MarieParmentier
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 MartineMarignac, France 2 Cinéma (France), Cinemaundici (Italy), Luigi Musini, Roberto Cicutto and Ermanno Olmi, Rai Cinema (Italy), Alien Produzioni (Italy), Sergio Castellitto and Margaret Mazzantini

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