

**STRAND  
RELEASING**

*presents*

# MORE THAN EVER

A FILM BY  
**Emily Atef**

*Starring Vicky Krieps, Gaspard Ulliel, and Bjørn Floberg*

## **PRESS NOTES**

*OFFICIAL SELECTION  
Cannes Film Festival*

Country of Origin: France, Germany, Luxembourg, Norway  
Format: DCP/2.39:1/Color  
Sound: 5.1 Surround  
Running Time: 123 minutes  
Genre: Drama  
Not Rated  
In French, English and Norwegian with English Subtitles

### **National Press Contact:**

Marcus Hu  
Strand Releasing  
Phone: 310.836.7500  
[marcus@strandreleasing](mailto:marcus@strandreleasing)

### **LOGLINE**

Hélène and Mathieu have been happy together for many years. The bond between them is deep. Faced with an existential decision, Hélène travels alone to Norway to seek peace, an act that will test the strength of their love.

## **SYNOPSIS**

Hélène, a 33 year old woman, has been in a happy relationship for many years with Mathieu in Bordeaux. Their lives are turned upside down when Hélène has to face a complicated event in her life. In search of answers, Hélène goes online and comes across the website of a Norwegian blogger under the name of Mister. He is sick and uses his blog like a diary, veering between sincerity and quirky humour. This discovery and the incredible Norwegian landscapes attract Hélène. She decides to contact Mister. This is the beginning of a decisive encounter; suddenly she feels capable of articulating how she feels. Despite her difficulty in leaving Mathieu in Bordeaux, Hélène follows her instinct for the first time in her life and crosses Europe to Norway, alone, in search of a new path. The spectacular vastness of these spaces and this unusual friendship with Mister do her good. In the heart of those imposing fjords, facing high mountains and under the bright light of the North, Hélène feels like a new breath of fresh air. Mathieu worries about her and travels to Norway to bring Hélène back to Bordeaux.

## **INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR**

**More Than Ever tells the story of a young woman who refuses to follow conventional treatment in hospital in order to complete a journey. How did the desire to tell this story come about?**

My mother suffered from multiple sclerosis for twenty-two years, between the ages of fifty-five and seventy-eight. Two years after I started thinking about this project, more than ten years ago, she got cancer. We were very close. We talked a lot about her condition, she herself was thinking about how to accompany the sick, how to help them "let go". She was suffering during the writing. She passed away in 2015. During her illness, it was the work on the film that helped me find the right attitude, to find the strength to tell her, even if it cost me personally: "you don't have to do chemo if you don't want to, you do what you want." Ever since I was a little girl, I have often thought about this moment at the end of life. How can I leave feeling as good, free as possible? How can emancipate from the pressures of society or the wishes of our loved ones, but find our own way of accepting illness and, if necessary, death? Hélène's story is about this.

**Her journey is, against all odds, very luminous. Was it a clear desire on your part to make a sunny film on a somewhat tragic subject?**

Yes. In our Western society, death is always described as something terrible, dark, demonic. I don't see it that way. For me, death is not something funereal and macabre. Of course, I don't deny that for us, the living, losing a loved one is extremely sad, it's heartbreaking. But for the person who is leaving, it shouldn't be. Unfortunately, in our society, death has a bad reputation. It's a shame. Even though we know we're going to die - it's our only certainty! - we prefer to avoid the subject. But we should talk about it. If I have a desire with this film, it is that the audience who will see it will have, perhaps, the desire to discuss this subject with their close relations. The end of life should not be a taboo.

**Hélène chooses to go to Norway. Why this country rather than another?**

For its light. In Norway, in summer, there is no night. The sun does not set, does not dim. This seemed to me to interact in an interesting way with a book I read, *The Near-Death Experience*,

which gathers testimonies of people who have experienced a medical death. They all talk about this light at the moment of leaving this world, and about white shapes. During the shoot in Norway, I tried to find a light that evokes this somewhat mystical revelation. At the same time, when H el ene arrives there, the light is so strong and omnipresent that it assaults her, prevents her from sleeping. It's an experience that at first has a hostile, unpleasant aspect.

### **What does this natural environment allow you to show?**

It allows us to show that nature is bigger than ourselves - bigger than H el ene and her illness. Nature is impressive and timeless. It is indifferent to our problems to our fears. In the middle of the fjords, one becomes humble.

### **Can you tell us about H el ene's illness? Can we see a more existential metaphor in it?**

H el ene suffers from a rare disease, "idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis". The lungs harden, they become less elastic, until the air no longer enters and the person can no longer breathe. It is not known where this disease comes from or how to treat it. An organ transplant can help for a while, but not always. This disease symbolizes H el ene's life. She is a young woman who has never really lived the life she wanted to live. She has never been able to "breathe" the way she wanted to, she has done things for her mother, her husband... In the end, she is more and more claustrophobic. She can breathe less and less. But paradoxically, this illness will allow her to make a choice of emancipation. By deciding to leave, she finally starts to breathe. She becomes herself.

### **More Than Ever is also a film about a couple. Was your goal to tell a love story?**

Yes, this dimension of the film is very important. There is no greater proof of love than to love while letting the other go. Matthieu, her lover, played by Gaspard Ulliel, is for me the hero at the end of the film. Because he allows H el ene to live this end of life as she really wants. And even if for himself, it is terrible, he can look at himself in the mirror and say: "I did what she wanted". He understands that he has to leave her, to let her go.

### **At first, however, he finds it very hard to accept the fact that she refuses to take care of herself ...**

Yes, at the beginning. He is a human who fights for what he wants. We, the living, never seem to ask the dying for their opinion. We think we know what they want, because, out of selfishness, we don't want them to go, to leave us. We want to be there until their last breath. Often the people around the dying seem to suffer almost more than the person who is ill and the invalid spends their time reassuring them. And it is exhausting for H el ene. She has to draw on a crazy energy to convince Matthieu, who does not understand her, to reassure her friends who walk on eggshells, to cheer up her mother who is collapsed... The words of Mister, played by Bjorn Floberg, sum up everything: "The living cannot understand the dying".

### **Mister is H el ene's Norwegian host. Why is his role important?**

He is the "ferryman". Thanks to him, to his blog where he makes fun of his illness and death, H el ene makes a decision, the decision to leave. He himself has experienced a trauma, during an accident on an oil rig where thirty-three people close to him, lost their lives. He has a very clear and ironic way of dealing with his situation. For him, nobody can choose the conditions of our

death for us. He is completely on the side of free will. He will allow H  l  ne to find herself, to make her own journey without ever pushing her in any direction.

**What the film shows in a rare and powerful way is how a couple can reinvent themselves and endure through the greatest trial of all ...**

That's why there is only one love scene, and it comes at the end. H  l  ne and Matthieu are finally on the same page. They can love each other "more than ever", because he finally accepts what she wants. A sensuality is finally possible between them. In this scene, we are close to their skins, we capture their carnal intimacy, and the incredible love they have for each other at the very moment when they accept the idea of death and not ending their lives together.

**In the role of H  l  ne, Vicky Krieps is deeply moving. How did you meet?**

Vicky is my neighbor; we live two minutes' walk from each other in Berlin. We have known each other for almost ten years. Our daughters are the same age and are great friends. She made a cameo in my last film, *Three Days in Quiberon*, where she played a maid. We had a meeting one day in a caf  , and in one hour I pitched her the whole film. At the end, Vicky was crying. She told me: I don't need to read the script, I'll do it. And then she introduced me to Gaspard... Vicky is an extraordinary actress. She has something so strange and timeless. She is here, and already elsewhere. Physically, in her way of being... She is both sensitive and very strong. She inspired me so much.

**The camera allows us to be close to H  l  ne, without being immersive. How did you think about the framing?**

We discussed a lot with Yves Cape, the cinematographer. For us, the important thing was to give her space, to give her time. She is a sick character who is short of breath, who has to take breaks, who coughs, who has a very soft voice, even when she says terrible things. I needed a close and calm camera that would give her that space.

**What about the rest of the mise en sc  ne? The film is sort of cut in two, with the first part in the city and the second in the middle of nowhere ...**

In the part in Bordeaux, we tried to set up a very claustrophobic world, where H  l  ne never goes out. They are only interiors. We thought about all this with Yves Cape and Silke Fischer, the decorator. We filmed her apartment, with the shutters closed, when H  l  ne is lying on her bed, with the muffled sound of the city. She is locked in a kind of depression, because the living don't understand her, except for Mister, the Norwegian blogger who is going through the same thing: he is alive and he knows he is going to die.

H  l  ne's arrival in Norway is filmed like a birth. The images open up. Vicky becomes very small, and blends in until she disappears into the landscape. She immerses herself in the water. She becomes one with nature.

**There are many poetic, aquatic moments. How did this motif of water come about? What is it a metaphor for?**

I call them visions. They are images from H  l  ne's inner subconscious. They take her to where she needs to be, to nature. There are images of immersion, of the ocean. The motif of the sea is

the raw journey to the other world. A difficult and beautiful journey. It is also a birth, when one comes out of the amniotic liquid, but to go towards one's death.

### **The sound is also important ...**

Nicolas Cantin is an extraordinary sound engineer. It's a very quiet film in the end. We worked a lot on it in post-production. Nature has its language. We let it have its place. Vicky's voice is very soft, almost like a breath, but it is also capable of exploding in a moment of release, when she tells Mathieu she can only leave this life alone. I call this scene "the white scene" because all the sounds of nature are erased. Everything is in "mutation", the water, the wind in the trees, a passing bird, even he is silent! This wasn't planned, it just was. It's as if nature fades away to give Hélène/Vicky her big scene.

### **While dealing with complex feelings, More Than Ever exudes a great fluidity, a simplicity even. Did you find the rhythm right away or later, in the editing?**

I started editing in October 2021. Sandy Bompar, the editor, came on to the project after a first edit draft, while I was shooting episodes of Killing Eve in London. She brought the film to a less conventional narrative. Initially my film was much more story-driven. We didn't hesitate to cut scenes. It was her idea to use collages to evoke Mister's past. It was a beautiful collaboration.

### **Can we say that your film is not the story of suffering but of emancipation, a film about freedom?**

Exactly. It is a film about a woman who frees herself by choosing to leave this world as she wants.

### **Hélène's revelation is accomplished in large part, as you said, through the beauty of the landscape. It is impossible not to think of Ingrid Bergman in Stromboli ...**

It's a film that I saw with Vicky quite late, shortly before shooting. I admit that I had never seen it and it was my assistant Guillaume Bonnier who advised us to watch it. Bergman in Stromboli is unbearable with her fisherman husband and the other inhabitants of the island, and it helped us to imagine a heroine who is not necessarily sympathetic, nor politically correct. Another film that I found very inspiring was Hiroshi Teshigahara's The Sand Woman. I love this invasive natural world that expresses the character's subconscious.

### **Your previous beautiful feature film, Three Days in Quiberon, also showed a woman adrift, alone in front of the sea... It was Romy Schneider when she started to get very sick. Why this desire to film women at this moment in their lives, when they seem on the verge of disappearing?**

I'm interested in this moment in a woman's existential journey, when she tries to get out of this hole where she has lost herself. It is a moment when she is not understood, when she is constantly told what to do. She has to find a way to find her centre and free herself from the gaze of others, to know what she really wants. For Romy, it was to stop shooting and be with her children, to take a break. For Hélène, it is looking for the place where she can let go, live her last moments on earth. This journey is accompanied by a certain uneasiness. But at the end there is a light, a liberation.

**The film carries a very heavy burden: it is the last role of Gaspard Ulliel.**

It was terrible. When we got the news, we were with Sandy in Berlin, finishing the editing. We were so close to him in the edit, we were with his image all the time. The day he died, I had a last exchange with him by voice notes. During the shoot, Gaspard had shared his doubts with me; he was afraid that he had not been as good as he would have liked in the film. He was such a perfectionist! He was a demanding actor who doubted himself, the character, the film perhaps. I answered him in this voice mail that I was so happy with the film, with him and with the chemistry he had built together with Vicky.

In the last shot of the film, it is he who disappears on a boat. We were overwhelmed because it seems like a foreshadowing. This ending is so important. We edited it very early on. I didn't want it to be melodramatic or too distant. I wanted it to be emotional but, in the end, bright. He leaves on this boat and she stays on land.

I think about Gaspard all the time. I think of his happiness during the shoot. Because of the pandemic, only a very small group of the French team were allowed in Norway. We were like a family stuck in quarantine in Norway in an absolutely magical place! So we spent our time from morning to night (which didn't exist because the sun never set) outside, in the middle of the fjords; we went for walks, kayaking, eating outside, rehearsing, dancing. Gaspard was different from the Gaspard I had met in Paris. He joked all the time. We all felt amazingly vibrant in these extremely intense natural surroundings. It was wonderful.

Interview by Emily Barnet

## **Emily Atef | BIOGRAPHY**

Émily Atef is a French-Iranian director born in Berlin. At the age of seven, she moved with her parents and brother to Los Angeles. At the age of thirteen, they moved again to the Jura, France. Later, she lived in London and worked in the theatre. Finally, she moved to Germany to study filmmaking at the German Film Academy in Berlin. Her first feature film 'Molly's Way', like her next two features, was co-written by Esther Bernstorff and won the Best Screenplay Award at the Munich Film Festival in 2005 and the Grand Jury Prize at the Mar del Plata Film Festival, the only A-Festival in South America, as well as several other awards. Her second feature film, 'The Stranger in me', about a young mother suffering from postnatal depression, also received several awards and was screened at the 'Critics Week' section at the Cannes Film Festival. She then received a grant from the Cinéfondation de Cannes, which she used to write her next film 'Kill me'. This film was voted best foreign language drama at the 2013 Bradford Film Festival. In 2017, Emily Atef wrote and directed the feature film '3 Days in Quiberon'. It depicts three emotional days of Romy Schneider where she gave her last German interview to 'Stern' magazine. '3 Days in Quiberon' had its world premiere in the competition section of the 68th Berlin International Film Festival and competed for the Golden Bear and the film won 7 Lolas at the German Film Academy Prize 2018, including Best Film and Best Director.

## **Emily Atef | SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY**

- 2022** *More Than Ever*
- 2018** *3 Days in Quiberon*
- 2012** *Kill Me (Tue-moi)*
- 2008** *The Stranger in Me (L'étranger en moi)*
- 2005** *Molly's Way*

## **Vicky Krieps | BIOGRAPHY**

Having studied at the Zurich University of Arts, Vicky has featured in a variety of European film projects. Vicky was part of the ensemble at the Schauspielhaus Zurich for many years. Vicky came into international spotlight with her supporting role in Eileen Byrne's LA NUIT PASSÉE for which she was awarded "Best Youngster" in 2008 at the Busho Festival Budapest. Vicky Krieps' International breakout role was in THE PHANTOM THREAD, opposite Daniel Day Lewis in Paul Thomas Anderson's masterpiece about the couturier 'Reynolds Woodcock', set in 1950's London. The film received awards recognition and introduced audiences to the power of Vicky's talent; critics were spellbound by her performance. In 2020 Vicky starred in Govinda Van Maele's GUTLAND Vicky was also seen in THE YOUNG KARL MARX, directed by Raoul Peck, the film follows the early years of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Jenny Marx, between Paris, Brussels and London. Vicky starred in WE USED TO BE COOL, directed by Marie Kreutzer. 2021 was an extremely busy year for Vicky who starred in several high-profile film projects, two of which received their world premiere at Cannes in 2021. Mia Hansen-Løve's drama BERGMAN ISLAND, opposite Tim Roth was part of the Main Competition lineup and received outstanding reviews, many spotlighting Vicky for her performance. Vicky starred in Mathieu Amalric's drama about loss and abandonment, SERRE MOI FORT (HOLD ME TIGHT), which screened in the Cannes Premiere Sidebar. In July, Vicky took on a central role in M. Night Shyamalan's thriller, OLD, which featured a weighty cast including Gael Garcia Bernal, Thomasin Mackenzie and Alex Wolff. Vicky is becoming a regular Cannes fixture, with two feature films receiving their worldwide premieres at Cannes Film Festival this year. MORA THAN EVER directed by Emily Atef has been selected for the Un Certain Regard section. Vicky will also be seen in CORSAGE, directed by Marie Kreutzer. Vicky takes on the leading role as Empress Elisabeth of Austria. Vicky can currently be seen in THE SURVIVOR, directed by Barry Levinson. The film received its world premiere at Toronto International Film Festival and is available on HBO Max in the US. Vicky is currently filming BACHMANN & FRISCH, directed by Margarethe Von Trotta. Vicky recently wrapped production on THE WALL, directed by Philippe Van Leeuw and see Vicky taking on the role of a US border officer, and THE THREE MUSKETEERS, a big budget two feature film series, starring Eva Green and Vincent Cassel.

## **Gaspard Ulliel | BIOGRAPHY**

Biography In 2002, Michel Blanc offered Gaspard Ulliel his first film role in Embrassez qui vous voudrez, with Charlotte Rampling, Jacques Dutronc, Carole Bouquet, and Karin Viard. This role earned him his first Cesar nomination for Best New Male Talent and the Prix Lumières for Male Revelation in 2003. He was then chosen by André Téchiné to play alongside Emmanuelle Béart in Les Égarés. Thanks to this performance he was again nominated for the Césars, which he finally won in 2004 for his role in Jean-Pierre Jeunet's film, Un long dimanche de fiançailles. He then follows eclectic projects by working under the direction of Gus van Sant in Paris Je t'aime, Peter Weber for the prequel Hannibal Rising, Rithy Pahn in the film based on the novel of the same name by Marguerite Duras A Dam Against the Pacific, or Bertrand Tavernier in The Princess of Montpensier. We find him in 2011 in The Art of Loving Emmanuel Mouret and in 2013 in You honor your mother and your mother Brigitte Roüan, then in 2015 in the biopic of Bertrand Bonello Saint Laurent, in which he plays the designer Yves Saint Laurent. He received

for this role the Prix Lumière for best actor and a nomination for the Césars. He made his theater debut in 2012 under the direction of Michel Fau in Joe Orton's Que Faire De Mister Sloane? In 2015, he played to a full house alongside Romain Duris, Marina Foïs and Anaïs Demoustier in Démons directed by Marcial di Fonzo Bo at the Théâtre du Rond-Point. In 2016 he starred in Stephanie Di Giusto's The Dancer and Xavier Dolan's Just The End Of The World, for which he received the César for best actor. The following year he joined Isabelle Huppert in Eva by Benoit Jacquot. We find him in 2018 in Les confins du Monde by Guillaume Nicloux with Gérard Depardieu, 9 fingers by F.J Ossang and Un peuple et son Roi by Pierre Schoeller. He will work again the same year with Guillaume Nicloux in the mini-series Il était une seconde fois broadcast on Arte. In 2019, Gaspard will star in Sibyl by Justine Triet, alongside Virginie Efira and Adèle Exarchopoulos, in competition at the Cannes Film Festival. Gaspard Ulliel is part of the cast of Alex Lutz's film broadcast on Canal +, La vengeance au triple galop with Leïla Bekhti, Marion Cotillard, Audrey Lamy, Izia Higelin and others. He joins in 2021 the TV mini-series Moon Knight created by Jeremy Slater. He is in Emily Atef's More Than Ever alongside Vicky Krieps.

## **Bjørn Floberg | BIOGRAPHY**

Bjørn Floberg is one of Norway's most well-known and recognized actors in both film and theater. Since his breakthrough as leading actor in the Norwegian feature "Telegrafisten" (1993) he has starred in nearly 60 features. Hans Petter Moland's "Out Stealing Horses" which premiered in competition at the Berlinale in 2019 was the third film Bjørn Floberg and Stellan Skarsgaard have done together, the previous two being "Insomnia" (Erik Skjoldbjærg) and "A Somewhat Gentle Man" (Hans Petter Moland) the latter also featuring in the Berlin 2010 competition. Internationally his latest film are "Kingsman: The Secret Service" (Matthew Vaughn), and Emily Atef's "More Than Ever" where he stars alongside Vicky Krieps Gaspard Ulliel. Floberg received the Norwegian Film Academy Honorary Award Amanda in 2011. He works at the National Theater in Oslo, latest plays being "Three Sisters" and "The Cherry Orchard" by Anton Chekhov. Floberg has also started directing at the National Theater, his debut 2016 was "Motortown" by English playwright Simon Stephens.

## **CAST**

<b>Hélène</b>	Vicky Krieps
<b>Mathieu</b>	Gaspard Ulliel
<b>Mister (Bent)</b>	Bjørn Floberg

## **CREW**

<b>Director</b>	Emily Atef
<b>Producer</b>	Xénia Maingot
<b>Script</b>	Emily Atef, Lars Hubrich
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Yves Cape
<b>1st Assistant Director</b>	Guillaume Bonnier
<b>Production Manager</b>	Cécile Remy-Boutang
<b>Editing</b>	Sandie Bompar, Hansjörg Weißbrich
<b>Casting Director</b>	Sarah Teper
<b>Set Design</b>	Silke Fisher



<b>Costumes</b>	Dorothee Guiraud
<b>Make-up artist</b>	Nathalie Tabareau
<b>Composer</b>	Jon Balke
<b>Sound</b>	Nicolas Cantin
<b>Sound Editing</b>	Capucine Courau
<b>Dialogue Editing</b>	Nicolas Cantin
<b>Mixing</b>	Emmanuel Croset
<b>Publicist</b>	Monica Donati

**Production Companies:** Eaux Vives Productions SARL

**Co-production Companies:** Niko Film, Samsa Film, Mer Film

**With the support of:**

Cine+, Arte France Cinéma, Mediafondet Zefyr, Département de la Gironde en partenariat avec le CNC, Film Fund Luxembourg, Eurimages, Norsk filminstitutt, Filmförderungsanstalt, Centre du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée, Deutscher Filmförderfonds,, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, MOIN Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein, La Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine en partenariat avec le CNC

**© 2022 EAUX VIVES PRODUCTIONS-NIKO FILM -SAMSA FILM-MER FILM-BAYERISCHER RUNOFUNK - ARTE FRANCE CINEMA-JOURSEETE-BIOCA PRODUCTIONS-RAMONA PRODUCTIONS. All rights reserved.**

Distributed by STRAND RELEASING

For more information, please contact [strand@strandreleasing.com](mailto:strand@strandreleasing.com)

~