

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

One reason why so many people, myself included, love radio - but I didn't realize this until long after I started to love it - has to do with the lack of images, the invisible nature of those who talk on it, just as the innumerable places it takes us to remain invisible. An invisibility that allows us to imaginarily identify with those who speak and which, without our having to leave home, allows us to travel on land, sea, in every strata of society, in every sphere of thought and human activity. But the radio is also our collective memory. Voices that we are familiar with, jingles, songs we know by heart, totally carefree moments, "slots" that shape our daily lives and ritualize them. And sometimes, it's just a backdrop that we do not listen to, a friendly, reassuring presence while we are doing something else.

© Nicolas Philibert, June 2010



FILMOGRAPHY NICOLAS PHILIBERT

LA MAISON DE LA RADIO (2012, 103 mn) • **NIGHT FALLS ON THE MENAGERIE** (2010, 11 mn) • **NENETTE** (2010, 70 mn) • **BACK TO NORMANDY** (2007, 113 mn) • **THE INVISIBLE** (2002, 45 mn) • **TO BE AND TO HAVE** (2002, 104 mn) • **WHO KNOWS ?** (1999, 106 mn) • **EVERY LITTLE THING** (1997, 105 mn) • **ANIMALS** (1995, 60 mn) • **IN THE LAND OF THE DEAF** (1993, 99 mn) • **LOUVRE CITY** (1990, 84 mn) • **BAQUET'S COME-BACK** (1988, 24 mn) • **GO FOR IT, LAPEBIE !** (1988, 27 mn) • **TRILOGY FOR ONE MAN** (1987, 53 mn) • **CHRISTOPHE** (1985, 28 mn) • **THE NORTH FACE OF THE CAMEMBERT** (1985, 7 mn) • **BOSSSES / TELEVISION** (1979, 3 X 60 mn, co-ré. avec Gérard Mordillat) • **HIS MASTER'S VOICE** (1978, 100 mn, co-ré. avec Gérard Mordillat)



SYNOPSIS

A journey into the heart of Radio France to discover what usually escapes our gaze: the mysteries and the wings of a media whose very matter, sound, remains invisible.

CREW

Photography **KATELL DJIAN** • Camera **NICOLAS PHILIBERT, KATELL DJIAN** • Sound **JULIEN CLOQUET** • Editing **NICOLAS PHILIBERT** • Mix **OLIVIER DÔ HÛU** • Executive producer **SERGE LALOU** • Line producer **VIRGINIE GUIBBAUD** • A coproduction **LES FILMS D'ICI, LONGRIDE INC., ARTE FRANCE CINÉMA** • With the participation of **ARTE FRANCE, CANAL +, CINÉ +** • In association with **COFINOVA 7** and **LES EDITIONS MONTPARNASSE** • With the support of **CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE**, and **LA RÉGION ÎLE-DE-FRANCE** • French distribution and International sales **LES FILMS DU LOSANGE** • © **LES FILMS D'ICI, ARTE FRANCE CINÉMA, LONGRIDE INC** - 2012.

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LA MAISON DE LA RADIO

A FILM BY NICOLAS PHILIBERT

Berlinale
63^e Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Panorama

LES FILMS DU LOSANGE



INTERVIEW WITH NICOLAS PHILIBERT

/ How did you get the idea for this film?

It was something that I had had in mind for a long while. The idea of filming voices. A film about radio is a little unnatural – how can you film radio without shattering its mystery? – but that is probably the reason why I wanted to make it.

/ At the start of shooting, did you know exactly what you wanted to film?

No, absolutely not. I don't make my films with a pre-existing desire to get a message across. When shooting begins, I usually think that the less I know, the better I feel! If I had to follow a schedule I'd be bored stiff and might miss out on the essential. The initial idea was to plunge the audience into the heart of this hive of activity known as Radio France, where the variety of stations offers an incredible range of programming, styles, tones, voices, accents and faces, without having to worry about balancing the stations or being trapped in a logic of "equal representation". It would thus be a free journey, free of all

institutional concerns. But once this basic principle had been established, everything still had to be done! When I started shooting, I had certain programmes and voices in mind, but that's about it. I had no idea how the film would be constructed. That's always the case. The journey unfolds through encounters, circumstances and occasional accidents. I need a starting point, a framework, a few rules and from then on I improvise.

/ How long did you stay on site and how many of you were there?

Most of the time there were four of us but I occasionally worked alone or with one other person. Filming took place over six months from January to July 2011, then I started to cut the footage and, during editing, I went back from time to time to shoot additional sequences since editing can reshuffle the cards and bring out new paths to follow.

/ Radio France produces and broadcasts a huge

amount of programming each week. According to what criteria did you choose to film one programme rather than another?

Every one of us has "their own" radio, their favourite shows, their pet hosts, their daily or weekly appointments with the airwaves. That also holds true for me but it isn't what determined the film's backbone. I wanted diversity and heterogeneity, as I said, but it couldn't become excessively varied or turn into a filmed catalogue without a guiding line. So how did I proceed? It's hard to say because I had to take numerous factors into account: the very nature of the programmes, their dramaturgy, their content on a specific day... And I soon realized that a quality programme did not necessarily provide a good sequence! And that the interest in filming such and such a programme was not proportional to the importance of its content or subject. Worse! The content as such could prove to be a trap: the "stronger" it was, the more likely it was to undermine the film, insofar as it might overshadow what interested me in the first place, namely the grammar and mechanics of radio. So I preferred seemingly more trivial but cinematic criteria: faces, looks, intonations, the fluidity or pitfalls of a word, the tone and the sensuality of a voice, the body that carries it, the accent of a guest, the gestures of a programme host, the atmosphere of a studio... In short, I often relied more on the "presence" of different people than on what they were saying. Finally, I had to try to keep a view of the whole and not film the programmes for themselves, but rather approach them as the raw material from which, in turn, I would build up a story. This is where the part of fiction inherent in writing any documentary comes into play.

/ Apart from the pre-title sequence, the news programming is not really developed...

And yet I was shooting in a particularly turbulent period, rich in events of a "global" scope: the Arab revolutions, the Fukushima disaster... These events are mentioned in the film but I did not want to give them too much space. They weren't the subject. Moreover, news is perishable. In order not to "date" the film and so retain a timeless dimension, we had to avoid sticking too closely to the facts.

/ What difficulties did you encounter during filming?

This is a film that required a great deal of flexibility and responsiveness from everyone. Given the huge amount of programming produced and broadcast each day on the different stations of Radio France, we had to be constantly on the alert. In some cases, I was able to get the theme of a programme and the names of the guests in advance, then I could anticipate and organize things ahead of shooting. But I often had to mobilize the crew at the very last minute each time the news made me want to shoot a morning programme. The crew was warned at eight or nine o'clock in the evening and summoned the next morning at five. Alongside these logistical problems, the main challenges that I faced were related to my own appetite and desire to film, which I needed to contain. In my previous films, I've noticed more than once that it is more difficult not to shoot than to shoot. Especially these days, with digital cameras. There, in the midst of that hive of activity, that seemed trued than ever! And so I was torn between the desire to shoot more and more in order to feed the diversity essential to the project while knowing that it was a bottomless pit. Hence the need to resist it and to continually refer back to the notion of writing. One final difficulty: how to avoid impeding the work of others and disturbing the sometimes delicate balance of a recording? Take *Ecléctik*, Rebecca Manzoni's programme: I repeatedly filmed the end of it at that unusual moment when Rebecca, after an hour of conversation, goes out and leaves her guest alone in front of the microphone, asking him or her to improvise. Our presence could not distort or make this "minute of solitude" impossible, so we managed to



film it without being physically present. That was the lesser evil. A little strange too.

/ There are a lot of characters and situations yet we move from one world to another with a great deal of fluidity. How did you approach editing?

In terms of construction, I opted for the simplest solution: the film unfolds over one day and one night. But it is a fairly virtual day that combines sequences shot in winter, in spring, or in summer with the Tour de France. In the middle of the day, there's even a brief sequence at night when the writer Annie Ernaux talks of her anger alone in her living room. This framework of a day helped me to build up the film, forming a sort of scaffolding, but there was no question of following it to the letter. After a while, I think it no longer bothers us. However, since the film has a very fragmented aspect, it was important to have recurring "characters" like Marguerite Gateau directing a radio play or Marie-Claude Rabot-Pinson in the France Inter newsroom. I think we enjoy coming back to them, seeing the shifts in situations and monitoring the progress of work over a single day. For me, editing is like a musical score: one note summons another, which summons a third, and so on. There are full and empty moments, long and short ones, silences, associations of ideas, breaks in the rhythm... I have

also played a great deal on what lies outside the frame: films must keep their secrets and if we want to feed the audience's imagination we must leave some shady areas.

/ Did the nature of this project lead you to work on the soundtrack in a specific way?

You could say that sound, voices and listening are the very subject matter of the film. However, the soundtrack is fairly simple, almost uncluttered and certainly without flourishes. I devoted a great deal of attention to it, especially during editing: the links, associations and passages from one sequence to another are often based on the sounds and owe a great deal to them. But that is not unique to this film. In my own way, I'm a filmmaker of language. From *His Master's Voice*, which exposed leading bosses' views, to Nénette, whose soundtrack is entirely off screen, via *In the Land of the Deaf*, *Every Little Thing*, *To Be and to Have* or even *Back to Normandy*, you can see most of my films as variations on speech and language. It is therefore not surprising that the question of sound occupies a decisive position since it embraces the subject here. ■