

C'est la Vie

("That's Life")

France : 1990 : dir. Diane Kurys : Alexandre / SGGC / Films A2 CNC-Electric : 100 min
prod: Alexandre Arcady : scr: Diane Kurys & Alain Le Henry : dir.ph.: Giuseppe Lanci

[Julie Bataille](#); [Candice Lefranc](#)

Nathalie Baye; Jean-Pierre Bacri; Richard Berry; Zabou; Vincent Lindon; Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi; Didier Benureau; Alexis Derlon; Emmanuelle Boidron; Maxime Boidron;
Benjamin Sacks

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	□	≠	Z	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
5394a	2½	5	1	1,251	-	-	-	-	-	No	Unseen



Julie Bataille (left) with Nathalie Baye and Candice Lefranc

Source: Film Review 1991-92

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
2001 review:

"Autobiographical coming-of-age chronicle, strikingly similar to Kurys' **"PEPPERMINT SODA"**, about a 13-year old girl (Bataille) and her experiences one long-ago summer at a beach resort. Despite the familiarity of theme, the film is provocative and charming. A sequel - or more precisely, companion piece - to **"ENTRE NOUS"**, which must be seen to fully appreciate

the character of the girl's mother (here Nathalie Baye, in **"ENTRE NOUS"** Isabelle Huppert). Shot in Panavision. *** "

Film Review 1991-92 review:

"1958, France. What looks like it's going to be an idyllic summer holiday on the beach is transformed into a period of mixed emotions for Frédérique, 13, and her little sister, Sophie,

6. At the very last moment their mother, Lena (Nathalie Baye), stays behind in Lyon, while the children journey on to the coastal resort of La Baule-les pins with their bossy governess. There they miss Lena but get on with the joys of childhood mischief, swimming and witnessing the high jinks of their uncle, Léon (Jean-Pierre Bacri). As Frédérique begins to fall in love with her cousin, Daniel, she gradually becomes aware of the friction in her own parents' marriage. **"C'EST LA VIE"** is just that – a big slice of life, complete with all its traumas, joys and discoveries. It is also a very rich, multi-layered film, superbly acted by an ensemble cast and beautifully lit by Giuseppe Lanci. This is the fourth chapter in Diane Kurys's autobiographical omnibus (following on from **"PEPPERMINT SODA"**, **"COCKTAIL MOLOTOV"** and **"COUP DE FOUDRE"**): here the director is interpreted by Julie Bataille as Frédérique."

The Virgin Film Guide review:

"Set in 1958, **"C'EST LA VIE"** is the third instalment, following the immensely popular **"PEPPERMINT SODA"** and **"ENTRE NOUS"**, of Diane Kurys' absorbing semi-autobiographical trilogy.

Having decided to divorce her husband Michel (Richard Berry), the beautiful Lena (Nathalie Baye)¹ puts her two daughters on a train in Lyon bound for La Baule Les Pins for a seaside vacation. The summer proves an eventful one, with the girls learning all manner of lessons in living. Lena eventually joins her daughters and engages in what she thinks is a secret affair with a young artist. Leon (Jean-Pierre Bacri), though the children observe her dashing off in the night to meet him. The tranquility of their idyll is shattered by the unexpected arrival of their father.

No-one can accuse Kurys of any real depth here; her strength as a director lies primarily in her sense of detail and in her ability to convey a nostalgic atmosphere. In its indolent sensuality and wealth of everyday observation, Kurys's work resembles some of the lighter, summery short stories of Colette. **"C'EST LA VIE"** is the merest trifle, but, given its sun-soaked ambience, the film is utterly painless and enjoyable.

¹ Beautiful to whom? She doesn't look "beautiful" to my sensibilities certainly.

Never more glamorous, Baye communicates a slightly neurotic, Jennifer Jones-like quality and makes an appealingly complex heroine². The scene where she first sees her lover on the beach and snakes her way through the cabanas to meet him is dizzyingly romantic. Bacri is properly sexy as Lena's lover, and Berry exudes the right amount of pained anguish as her husband.

Like Truffaut, Kurys has a precious, idealised view of children. They're all angelic, brilliant little paragons. The girls have a woman-in-a-child's-body beauty that is as much of a Gallic cliché as their huskily precocious³ voices are; the boys are budding artistic geniuses. Still, all of this sweetness and light leaves the viewer yearning for the youthful raunch and anarchy of a film like **"LIFE IS A LONG QUIET RIVER"**. **1½ "

City Limits review:

"13-year old Frédérique and her six-year old sister Sophie have been packed off with the relatives to the seaside while their parents (Baye and Berry) go through divorce throes. As a companion piece to Kurys's impressive **"COUP DE FOUDRE"**, this is a disappointment, losing its way in a mass of clichés about divorce French style (they do it loud, with wrecked cars, wherever possible) and adolescent agonies in summer landscapes."

- Jonathan Romney

Time Out review:

"The latest autobiographical slice of life from Kurys is a bitter-sweet recollection of summer at the seaside in '58. Packed off with their nanny, sisters Frédérique (13) and Sophie (6) are happy enough playing on the beach, but it's clear that all is not right between their parents. Léna (Baye) joins them only when summer is beginning to pall, and comes alone. For the most part Kurys concentrates on the childish hijinks of the sisters and their cousins, but she subtly incorporates other perspectives, too, exploring the ramifications of her parents' divorce through countless, quietly affecting details. The film retains an even, unblinking vision that allows for a great deal of humour as well as heartache. The performances from

² Or would do, if she were the central character of the film, which she plainly isn't.

³ How on earth can a **voice** be "precocious"?

children and adults alike ring absolutely true (Baye is at her best), while Giuseppe Lanci's 'Scope photography is remarkably sensitive to faces *and* feelings. This is champagne to Hollywood's Diet Coke." – Tom Charity

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "The Critics' Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993" or "Video Movie Guide 1993"]

No further information currently available. Reviews like that one from *The Virgin Film Guide* are exceedingly irritating. If the writer's contempt of children were not apparent from the text, he puts the central character of the film, Bataille, second from last in the listed players, and doesn't mention her by name anywhere in his review. And although she is evidently more beautiful than Nathalie Baye, who plays her mother, the beauty of a 13-year old girl represents some sort of "Gallic cliché", while the males, naturally, are incapable of possessing such a thing as beauty. The boys are (sarcastically) "budding artistic geniuses", while the men must content with being "properly sexy" or anguished. The heterosexist conceit of this language assumes that the reader is male and shares the writer's appetite. I for one do not.

Many young directors have produced films to a greater or lesser extent drawn upon their own lives, few have ventured to make a series of four (to date) autobiographical films in close succession. I have not yet seen "**DIABOLO MENTHE**" (Kury's first) or the subsequent titles, so whether this is a case of self-indulgence, or her life is indeed a rich mine of character and incident, I'm not in a position to say, but in that she chronicles her own girlhood in such detail her films have a self-evident importance to this archive. Nothing else is known of the tomboyish Julie Bataille, nor Candice Lefranc, and the cast above probably includes several additional child players. Alexis Derlon plays the cousin Daniel, for instance. One to watch out for, certainly.

See the other titles given above, and subject index under **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TITLES, BOY MEETS GIRL, DIRECTORS, NANNIES / GOVERNESSES / DOMESTIC SERVANTS, SEASIDE TRIPS & HOLIDAYS** and possibly **SWIMMING / BOATING**.