

Negrini's cinematic journey into Europe's lost catastrophe: the Vajont disaster

The award-winning documentary *The Moon Beneath the Water* premieres at the 30th Portobello Film Festival in Notting Hill



London, United Kingdom Sep 13, 2025 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Alessandro Negrini's hauntingly beautiful documentary *The Moon Beneath the Water* (original title: *La luna sott'acqua*) is coming to London for the first time, revealing an incredible story almost unknown outside Italy. The film will screen on **Tuesday, 9 September at 6:00 PM at The Muse Art Gallery in Notting Hill**, as part of the **30th Portobello International Film Festival**, with the director in attendance.

The documentary tells the story of **Erto**, a small village forever marked by the **Vajont disaster of 1963** - one of the deadliest man-made tragedies in peacetime.

Despite its enormous scale, the disaster remains little known outside Italy. Authorities bear responsibility for the disaster, both for failing to prevent it and for their delayed response. The dam, hailed as an engineering masterpiece, should never have been built there. On 9 October 1963, over **260 million cubic meters of rock** from Mount Toc collapsed into the reservoir, unleashing a wave that destroyed the valley. A massive landslide plunged into the Vajont dam reservoir, sending a wall of water over the valley below and claiming nearly 2,000 lives. Afterward, Erto's people were forcibly displaced so the basin could still be exploited, even with the dead beneath the rubble. Though marked for disappearance, the Ertans defied the plan, returned, and rebuilt their community.

Filmed in the very village that survived, *The Moon Beneath the Water* is the result of a decade-long collaboration with the local community. Negrini's work blends reality and dreamlike imagery to create a visual ballad of **memory, resilience, and survival**, giving voice to a community that endured unimaginable loss yet remained vibrantly alive.

The film features the villagers themselves, whose stories intertwine with dreams and the natural landscape, guiding viewers through a narrative suspended between reality and imagination. The film adopts a **docu-dream style**, blending documentary realism with dreamlike, poetic imagery. It captures both the harsh reality of the disaster and the haunting memories of the survivors. Adding to the cinematic experience is the narration by **Maria Pia Di Meo**, the historic Italian voice of Meryl Streep, Jane Fonda, and Audrey Hepburn. **Oddgeir Saether**, known for his collaborations with David Lynch, provides the cinematography, while the screenplay was co-written by Negrini and Italian author **Fabrizio Bozzetti**, while the original soundtrack is by Andrea Gattico.

Since its premiere, the film has won **ten international awards**, including Best International Feature and Best Director at India's **Roshani International Film Festival**, as well as top accolades at Italy's **Post Cinema Film Festival** and **Sibillini Film Festival** for its poetic and powerful storytelling. In the UK, it was praised as "an enchanting ballad" at the **Crossing the Screen – Eastbourne International Film Festival** and has also been selected for festivals in Portugal, Ireland, Turkey, and Brazil.

A co-production between Italy and Slovenia, *The Moon Beneath the Water* is produced by **Incipit Film** and **Casablanca Film**, with support from the **Friuli Venezia Giulia Film Commission**, the **Film Commission Torino Piemonte**, the **Norwegian Film Institute**, and the **Italian Ministry of Culture (MiC)**.

This London screening is a rare opportunity to witness an almost forgotten chapter of history brought vividly to

life on screen, a story of human courage, survival, and the enduring spirit of a community that rose from the ruins of one of the most catastrophic man-made disasters in modern history.



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