

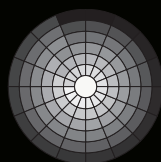
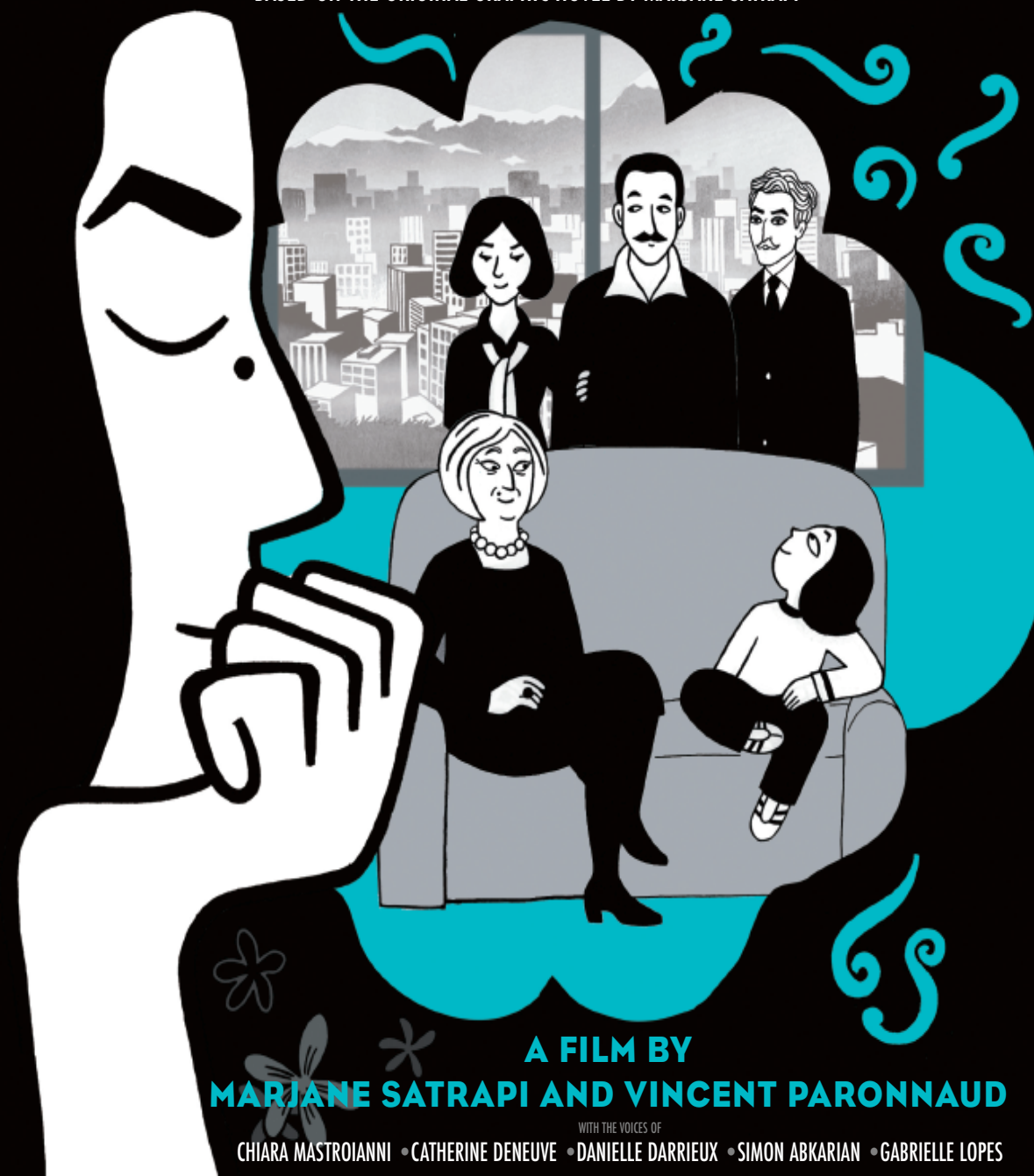
Marc Antoine ROBERT and Xavier RIGAUDY present



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
SÉLECTION OFFICIELLE
COMPÉTITION

PERSEPOLIS

BASED ON THE ORIGINAL GRAPHIC NOVEL BY MARJANE SATRAPI



dreamachine

A FILM BY
MARJANE SATRAPI AND VINCENT PARONNAUD

WITH THE VOICES OF

CHIARA MASTROIANNI • CATHERINE DENEUVE • DANIELLE DARRIEUX • SIMON ABKARIAN • GABRIELLE LOPES

What lingers on after those long, late-night talks with God and Karl Marx, those war-ravaged city streets and that brief and painful exile in a Europe which is both close and remote? A vivid, black-and-white picture, a realistic and imaginary picture of life in Tehran from the pre-revolutionary days to the present time. A gripping picture too, because it is seen through the eyes of a young girl whose body is growing even as her country is being crippled by intolerance and war. The intellectual elite flee their country in which they are persecuted, tortured and even killed, the martyrs become part of history books, a history re-written by the Mullahs. Distrust sets in while the Pasdaran control all activities especially those of women, who are daily harassed, blamed for their "misconduct" or "improper headgear". This tragic history is also part of our own history because our friend Akbar Ganji and Abdolfattah Soltani and many other victims are struggling against this repressive regime, so we are proud to take part in this admirable adaptation project.

It is because we can read, in the eyes of Karim Lahidji, president of the Iranian League for Human Rights, the grief and the anger of an exile, that we understand how endearing that country can be to those who were born there.

The 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner and a relentless lawyer, Shrin Eshad commented on her unflagging conviction: "Actually, the events, (the Islamic revolution and its aftermath) are simply an accident of history. This is not what Iran is about. Iran's history spans over 1,000 years. There won't be another revolution. Iranians have already experienced one and for them enough is enough. But one day, this country will become again what it has always been, a country of tolerance and of cheerful life. " Persepolis is the story of this " accident in history", it is a first-hand account of contemporary events, and also a message of hope for the future, a message brought to us by your forceful style and your strong words. Thank you Marjane and a big cheer to you and Vincent for achieving this amazing feat of breathing life into a splendid story, the story of your life.

Sidiki Kaba, President of the International Federation of Human Rights.



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Duration: 1h35 - 2007 - 1.85 - Dolby SRD

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A decorative floral pattern consisting of various stylized flowers and star-like shapes in different shades of gray, scattered across the left side of the page.

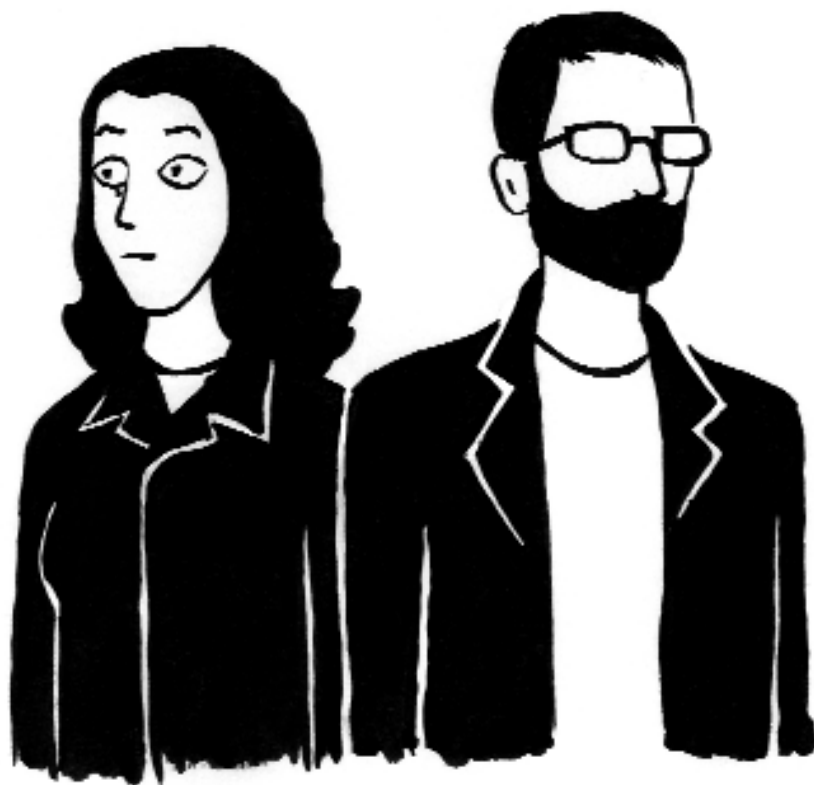
SYNOPSIS

Persepolis is the poignant story of a young girl coming-of-age in Iran during the Islamic Revolution. It is through the eyes of precocious and outspoken nine year old Marjane that we see a people's hopes dashed as fundamentalists take power - forcing the veil on women and imprisoning thousands. Clever and fearless, she outsmarts the "social guardians" and discovers punk, ABBA and Iron Maiden. Yet when her uncle is senselessly executed and as bombs fall around Tehran in the Iran/Iraq war, the daily fear that permeates life in Iran is palpable.

As she gets older, Marjane's boldness causes her parents to worry over her continued safety. And so, at age fourteen, they make the difficult decision to send her to school in Austria. Vulnerable and alone in a strange land, she endures the typical ordeals of a teenager. In addition, Marjane has to combat being equated with the religious fundamentalism and extremism she fled her country to escape. Over time, she gains acceptance, and even experiences love, but after high school she finds herself alone and horribly homesick.

Though it means putting on the veil and living in a tyrannical society, Marjane decides to return to Iran to be close to her family. After a difficult period of adjustment, she enters art school and marries, all the while continuing to speak out against the hypocrisy she witnesses. At age 24, she realizes that while she is deeply Iranian, she cannot live in Iran. She then makes the heartbreaking decision to leave her homeland for France, optimistic about her future, shaped indelibly by her past.

Interview with Marjane Satrapi



Did you adapt your graphic novel for the screen because you felt you weren't finished with this story?

I suppose it's my collaboration with Vincent (Paronnaud) which made things possible. When the graphic novels were first published, they had immediate success and I got several offers to adapt Persepolis, especially when the books were published in the US. I even got offered projects like a Beverly Hills 90210-type TV show and a movie featuring Jennifer Lopez as my mother and Brad Pitt as my father - things like that! It was just crazy. To be completely honest, it had been four years since I'd written and drawn Persepolis, I felt the work was finished. It was when I started talking with Vincent about the film project that I realised I not only had the opportunity to work with him, but also the possibility to experience something completely new. After having written graphic novels, children's books, comic strips for newspapers, murals, etc, I felt that I'd reached a transition period. I didn't want to make a film all by myself and I felt if I was going to do it with anyone, it should be

with Vincent and Vincent alone. He was game for it, and as excited as I was by the challenge. I thought we'd have fun... Sometimes, it's the little things that lead to decisions. As I already knew (Producer) Marc-Antoine Robert, we began working together. That was it!

Did you know from the beginning that it was going to be an animated feature rather than live-action?

Yes, I think we'd have lost the universal appeal of the storyline. With live-action, it would have turned into a story of people living in a distant land who don't look like us. At best, it would have been an exotic story, and at worst, a "Third-World" story. The novels have been a worldwide success because the drawings are abstract, black-and-white. I think this helped everybody to relate to it, whether in China, Israel, Chile, or Korea, it's a universal story. Persepolis has dreamlike moments, the drawings help us to maintain cohesion and consistency, and the black-and-white (I'm always afraid colour may turn out to be vulgar) also helped in this respect, as did the abstraction of the setting and location. Vincent and I thought the challenge was all the more interesting for this and exciting from an artistic, aesthetic standpoint.

What drove you to ask Vincent to share your studio six years ago?

At the time I hadn't met him. I'd seen his drawings at a friend's place and thought to myself "you'd have to cut this guy's fingers off to stop him from drawing!", his work was just fantastic. There is something totally off-the-wall and over-the-top about it, and yet it also has dignity and decency. I'd also seen two short films he'd made with Cizo [Lyonel Mathieu]: O Boy What Nice Legs and Raging Blues which I liked very much.

How do you complement each other?

When we shared the same studio, we did drawings together. We have different styles but they match so well. We come from totally different countries, cultures and backgrounds, yet we've always been on the same wavelength. You could say that together we shattered the notion of "the culture clash". I'm an outgoing kind of person, he's rather introverted, but when it comes to drawing, working together, it's the other way around. When we worked like madmen for three years, we never had a single row, although we were always honest with

each other.

Did you have difficulty choosing the material from the four novels you wanted to keep in the movie?

When I was writing the books, I had to remember sixteen years of my life, including things I definitely wanted to forget. It was a very painful process. I dreaded starting the script, and couldn't have done it on my own. The hardest part was the beginning, and distancing myself from the existing narrative. We had to start from scratch, to create something altogether different but with the same material. It's a one-of-a-kind piece. There was no point filming a sequence of panels. People generally assume that a graphic novel is like a movie storyboard, which of course is not the case. With graphic novels, the relationship between the writer and reader is participatory. In film, the audience is passive. It involves motion, sound, music, so therefore the narrative's design and content is very different.

Did you both agree on the look of the film from the very start?

Yes, I guess it could be defined as "stylized realism," because we wanted the drawing to be completely life-like, not like a cartoon. Therefore, unlike a cartoon, we didn't have that much of a margin in terms of facial expressions and movement. This was the message which I was determined to convey to designers and animators.

I've always been obsessed with Italian neo-realism and German expressionism and soon understood why, as they're post-war film schools. In post-WWI Germany, the economy was so devastated that they couldn't afford to shoot films on location, and so they were shot in studios using mood and amazing geometrical shapes. In post-WWII Italy, the same happened, but things turned out the opposite - they shot films in the streets with unknown actors because they had no money. In both schools, you find the kind of hope in people who went through the war and experienced great despair. I am myself a post-war person having lived through the 8 year war between Iraq and Iran. The film is a combination of sorts; of German expressionism and Italian neo-realism. It features very down-to-earth, realistic scenes, and a highly design-oriented approach, with images sometimes bordering on the abstract. We were also influenced by elements of movies we both loved, like the fast pace of Scorsese's *Goodfellas*.

When it came to the filmmaking, how did you split the work between you, Vincent and artistic director Marc Jousset?

We needed someone with an overview, someone who could control all stages of the filmmaking process. Vincent suggested Marc Jousset because he'd worked with him on *Raging Blues*. Marc was the only one who understood what we wanted to do. I wrote the plot and Vincent and I wrote and discussed the shooting of the script. Vincent then took care of the production design, the actual shooting, the props, the characters, and what was going on within each scene. However we all had a say on every stage of the filmmaking. Now I can barely tell where his work begins and where mine ends and visa versa. We complemented each other so to speak.

This is an animated film with a lot of characters...

600 different characters altogether! It's unusual to have so many! I drew them all, their fronts and their profiles. Afterwards, the designers and animators drew them from every angle developing their facial expressions and motions. To help them out, I was filmed acting out the scenes. It was the key to keeping the emotion intact, and finding the right balance between sobriety and fantasy. I also had the dreadful job of choreographing the "Eye of the Tiger" scene...

Was it hard for you to see other designers reinterpret your drawing and also drawing your face constantly?

It's a peculiar feeling. Your drawing is like your baby, and all of a sudden, it belongs to everybody! They didn't only reinterpret my drawings and my characters, but my face and life story. Unlike Vincent, I had always worked on my own. I even had my own corner in the studio, so you can imagine how I felt when I saw my face everywhere, in small, medium and large, as a little girl, a teenager, a young girl, a grown-up, front, back, profile, laughing, vomiting, crying etc. It was just unbearable! I had to say to myself "it's just a character." It was the same for the other characters because their stories are also real. My grandmother of course, actually existed and lived and died, as had my uncle. I couldn't let emotion get in the way, or else it would have become intolerable for everyone. If they'd seen me with tears in

my eyes, they wouldn't have been able to continue with their work. We needed them to feel free so that they could do their best, so I had no choice but to talk about myself and the people in my life as fictional characters: "Marjane does this, her grandmother's like that..." otherwise it would have been impossible. This doesn't mean that at times I wasn't overwhelmed by emotion, (notably the time when the designers were drawing my parents). It was only after the script was written that this story became fiction and went public. It wasn't exactly me anymore, and yet, paradoxically, it was still me...

Why did you choose Chiara Mastroianni for "your" voice?

We wanted to record the voices prior to the shoot so that the animation, motions and facial expressions could match the actors' dialogue and acting. The first name we thought of was Danielle Darrieux's as my grandmother. She was the only one who could do it justice; she's funny, intelligent and full of wit and sass. She loves to have fun and doesn't shy away from absurd situations. I'll always treasure the time we spent recording her voice.

I dreamed of Catherine Deneuve for my mother's voice. Back in Iran, the two most famous French actors at the time were Catherine Deneuve and Alain Delon. She was perfect for the part. When she was Chief Editor of Vogue, she picked twenty artists to work on the issue, including me. I was so proud. When I asked her to lend her voice, she said yes right away. I must say I was impressed when I directed and played opposite her.

At some point in the script, I was supposed to say: "Women like you - I just want to fuck them against the wall and throw them in the trash!" Fortunately it became easier after gulping down a few glasses of cognac! It was only after I picked Chiara that I realized I was adding a new chapter to a glamorous film mythology, as they'd already played mother and daughter on several occasions. As far as Chiara was concerned, she had actually heard about the film through her mother, and called me to do a voice test, after which we immediately connected. I loved her voice, her talent, her personality, her generosity. We worked hard and rehearsed for two months... She's a workaholic and perfectionist, like Vincent and myself. She followed every step of the filmmaking process and often dropped by the studio to visit us.

What was the most memorable moment of the whole experience?

The first screening for the whole team in a theatre on the Champs-Élysées. At the end, I was crying, and so was the whole audience.

Iran is still in the headlines today. Even though you want the film to be universal, you can't stop people from seeing it in this light...

True. Although in my eyes the most exotic section takes place in Vienna. The film is not judgemental, it doesn't say, "this is right and that is wrong" it just shows that the situation has many layers. This isn't a politically oriented film with a message to sell. It is first and foremost a film about my love for my family. However, if Western audiences end up considering Iranians as human beings just like the rest of us, and not as abstract notions like - "Islamic fundamentalists", "terrorists", or the "Axis of Evil", then I'll feel like I've done something. Don't forget that the first victims of fundamentalism are the Iranians themselves.

Do you miss Iran?

Of course. It's my homeland and always will be. If I were a man, I'd say Iran is my mother and France is my wife. Obviously, I can't forget all those years when I'd wake up with a view of an 18,700-foot high, snow-covered mountain that dominated Tehran and my life... It's hard to think that I'll never be able to see it anymore. I miss it. Then again, I have the life I wanted. I live in Paris, which is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, with the man I love, doing the job I like - plus, I get paid to do what I like to do.

Out of respect for those who have stayed there, who share my ideas but cannot express them, I'd find it inappropriate and distasteful to be complaining. If I had given in to despair, everything would have been lost. So up until the last moment, I'll hold my head high and keep laughing because they won't get the best of me. As long as you're alive you can protest and shout, yet laughter is the most subversive weapon of all.

Marjane Satrapi was born in 1969. She grew up in Tehran where she attended the Lycée Français (French high school). She then studied in Vienna before she relocated to France in 1994.

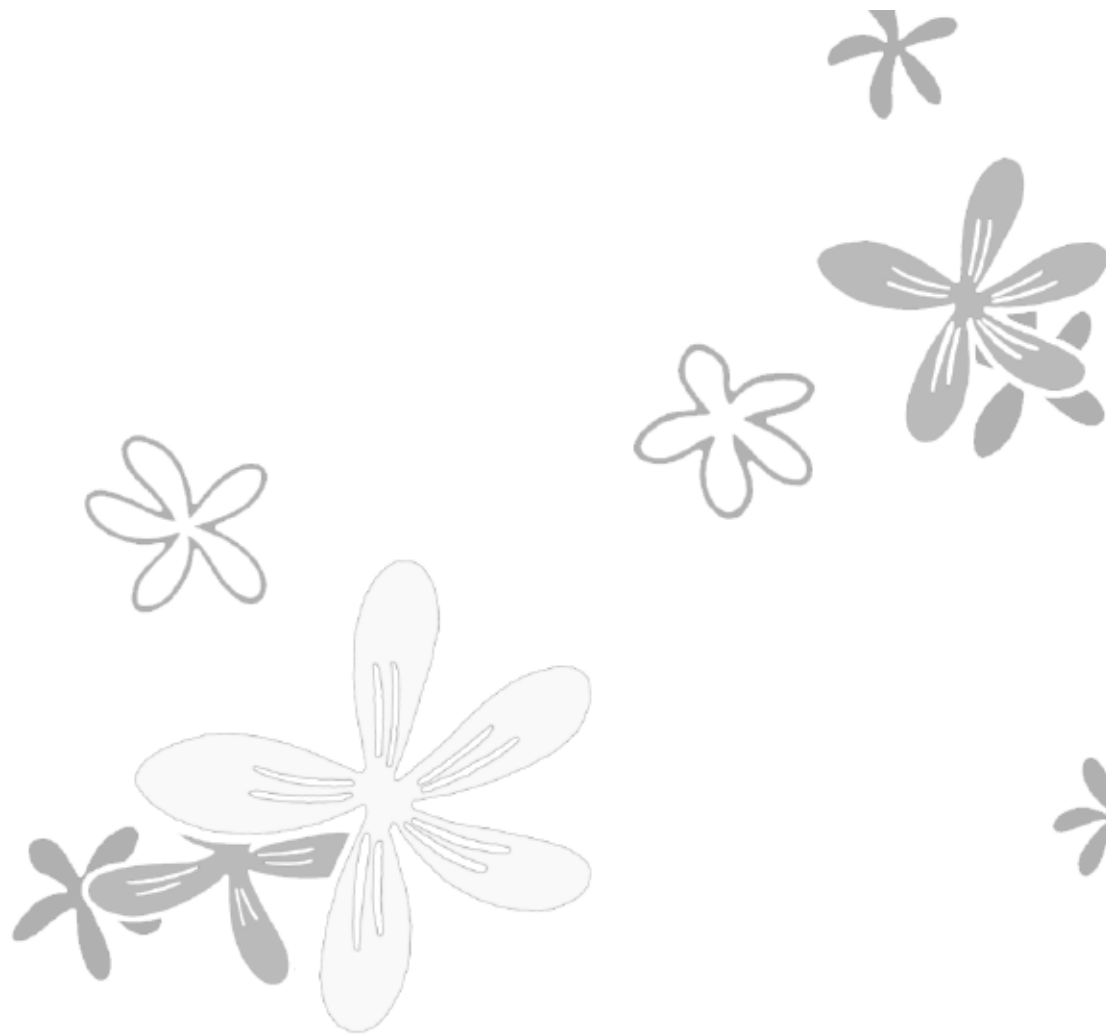
In Paris, through fellow comic book artists, she was introduced into the Atelier des Vosges, an artist studio which gathered major, contemporary comic book artists.

In her first graphic novel, **Persepolis 1**, published by L'Association in November 2000, Marjane told the story of the first ten years of her life until the overthrow of the Shah regime and the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war. In **Persepolis 2**, published in October 2001, she described the Iraq-Iran war and her teenage years until she left for Vienna at the age of fourteen.

Persepolis 3 and Persepolis 4 dealt with her exile in Austria and her return to Iran.

Since then, she has published **Embroidery** (Broderies) and **Chicken with Plums** (Poulet aux Prunes).

Persepolis is co-directed with Vincent Paronnaud, and is her first feature film.



Interview with Vincent Paronnaud

Do you remember your first meeting with Marjane Satrapi?

Six years ago she asked me to share her design studio. I had heard of Marjane, as she was beginning to get a name for herself. I was a bit wary at first, but I reluctantly accepted her offer.

Why?

I'm distrustful by nature! What's more, when she rang me up, although we had never met or talked, she sounded overly enthusiastic!

What had your career been like until then?

After dropping out of school at 17, I dabbled in quite a few things; drawing, music, etc... I began publishing graphic novels [under the penname Winshluss], writing serial storyboards and working on animated shorts.

When you read the Persepolis novels, what was your reaction?

Amazed. I was in the studio when Marjane was completing the second volume. In the beginning, I was afraid of her ethnic "Not Without My Daughter" style, and of the girly comic aspect, which, according to the media, characterized Marjane's work. It was in fact, just the opposite, I was swept off my feet. Her work has a strong, genuine power; the content is as valuable as the design, and it combines humour and emotion, which is quite rare.

Do you remember when she first asked you to make an animated feature based on the Persepolis books?

When Marc-Antoine Robert offered to produce Persepolis, she asked me to make the film with her. She was reassured because I had already directed black and white animated shorts. I couldn't refuse, I loved the book, and I loved Marjane. It was a wonderful opportunity for me to do something I had never done before, to work on such an artistically challenging-project. It was both appealing and risky.

What sources did you draw upon when you started to think of the film?

We knew we had to keep the energy of the novels. We couldn't be content with filming one panel after another. In fact our sources were live-action films. I had seen a lot of Italian comedies because my mother loved them. Marjane is very fond of Murnau and German expressionism, so we drew our inspiration from that and then put together what we both liked. Marjane's book is about family life, so the film was going to be based on a central family theme also. The usual codes in animation didn't seem to fit, so I used movie-style editing, with a great many jump-cuts. Even from an aesthetic viewpoint, we drew our sources from cinematic techniques.

Did you watch films together before starting to work on Persepolis?

I did watch a few films like The Night Of The Hunter and Touch of Evil, and some action films like Duel which taught me a lot about editing. When films are well-made, whatever the genre, there are always things to learn.

More specifically, how did you manage to write the script together?

For three months, we met everyday for three to four hours. Neither of us can type, so we used a pencil because it can be erased. We'd read what had been written, crossing out, rewriting, cutting, etc... We had to strike the right balance between the crucial moments and the insignificant details of everyday life; it was hard to choose what had to be kept and what to leave out. After a while we forgot about the book and worked on the script.

Unlike the books, the film is a long flashback. How did you come up with the idea of the opening scene in colour?

Marjane had told me that one Friday (Friday is the day for flights to Tehran), she was feeling so low that she went to the airport with the intention of leaving. She spent the whole day there, crying and watching the planes taking off. We thought it would be a great opening scene. It conveys a sense of distance, of nostalgia for the story. It was all the more obvious as the film was about exile...

What do you think of her wish to deal with the story again, from a different artistic approach?

Apart from the artistic challenge, Marjane is leading a fight, so naturally she wanted to make it into a film. But she's a demanding person, with an honest intellectual purpose. It's rare to find autobiographical books like Persepolis, written with such modesty, and such little self-indulgence. She wants to make a statement, and hopes for people to get a different view from the one they watch on TV or read in the papers. Furthermore, she wants to address the meaning of exile, and what it means for a young girl to be thrown into the midst of historic events that she cannot comprehend...

Given the personal, autobiographical aspect of Persepolis, was it hard to find your place when you were writing the script?

It was not only hard, it was horrendous! Tinkering with somebody else's work is difficult but this was also somebody's life. Somebody sitting opposite me, somebody I know and love. I could see it was affecting Marjane, so I had to tread carefully, but she was extremely encouraging. The same for the visual aspect of the film; artistically speaking, she gave me free rein. We complemented each other, and there was always a moment when you needed the other's viewpoint or opinion.

What were your main concerns when you started making the film?

As Marjane's characters couldn't be anything but sheer black and white, we focused on the production design. As we couldn't have a black or white background we had to start from scratch. I used pictures of Tehran and Vienna to draw on reality, without being totally dependent on them, and integrated various grey shades. At the same time we had to bear in mind not to soften the graphic strength of Marjane's universe. We focused on fluent lines, talked a lot with Marc Jousset, and finally came up with a classic design.

As time went by, what was the most difficult hurdle to clear?

Keeping the enthusiasm going. Being under pressure for nearly three years, and trying to sustain our overall vision of the project was difficult. Marjane and I had a rather atypical approach to the codes, and even the work habits of animation. Marc-Antoine knew exactly what we wanted and he had been fighting hard on our behalf. So had Stéphane Roche who was in charge of the compositing. Nothing was ever definitive. We were constantly changing*

things, testing new ideas, relentlessly improving what had been done. To keep things moving along, a lot of people helped us carry out our project because they understood our goal. The big plus was that everything was within reach at the one point where we worked all together in the studio. If I needed to change something I just went to the office next door and told the person in charge of the sequence. Even if it doesn't sound very original, I think human relationships are key when you make a film.

What surprised you most during the making of the film?

First and foremost, Marjane and I never had a row, despite there being a lot of stress. Marjane was under a great deal of strain. People didn't notice, because she's so enthusiastic and so full of passion and energy, whilst I'm a bit of a pain in the ass! Marjane has often told me that. Nothing is ever quite right for me. That's the way I am. What also surprised me was the way I became emotionally involved. I used to think I was rather detached from the subject matter of my work, but there was something so intrinsically emotional about this story. Marjane manages at once to convey these emotions and to remain modest. I wonder how she does it.

You're the one who suggested that Olivier Bernet write the score. Why did you pick him?

He understood what we wanted and was there, with us, from the very beginning. I even changed some images in accordance with his suggestions. In Persepolis, music plays a crucial role; it connects the sequences and gives unity to the film.

What particular memory will stay with you from the experience?

Perhaps the first screening of the rough cut. Marjane was sweating, and nearly passed out when she saw herself on screen. She tries hard to forget it's her life being told. It's better that she forgets, otherwise it would be unbearable, both for her and me.

**(Compositing: digital techniques combining images from several sources to create a single shot.*

Compositing has replaced the celluloid technique which consisted in superimposing several images to obtain a final single image.)

Vincent Paronnaud a.k.a. Winshluss, was born in 1970 in La Rochelle. He is a major underground comic book artist.

Together with his friend and collaborator Cizo, he invented the character of "Monsieur Ferraille", the emblematic figure of the comic "Ferraille Illustré", which he co-edited with Cizo and Felder.

His solo projects include Super Nègre (1999), Welcome to the Death Club and Pat Boon - Happy End (2001).

He gained public recognition when he earned a nomination for Smart Monkey in 2004 and for Wizz and Buzz (with Cizo) in 2007 at the Angoulême Comic Book Festival.

Winshluss and Cizo have also co-directed two shorts animations:

O'BOY, WHAT NICE LEGS (B&W - 1 min - 2004)

RAGING BLUES (B&W - 6 min - 2003).

He co-directed PERSEPOLIS with Marjane Satrapi. It is his first feature length film.



Interview with Danielle Darrieux

Were you surprised when Marjane Satrapi called you to be the grandmother's voice in PERSEPOLIS?

Yes, nobody had ever asked me to do something like this before. When Marjane came to tell me about her project, I was immediately won over by her energy, her good nature, her wide eyes... She explained that she wanted to record the voices before she started work on the drawings, so that our acting could match the characters' expressions. She had dreamed I would play her grandmother, Catherine Deneuve her mother and Chiara Mastroianni herself. I liked the idea and said yes right away.

Did she ask you to read the script?

No, but she gave me the books which I devoured and loved!

I like her drawing, her characters' expressions, the way she plays graphically, say, with the headscarves and the way she draws herself with a mole, which she beautifully makes fun of. Her story has the gift of making people laugh and cry.

What she's been through is terrifying. When you've gone through so much and can still laugh about it, that's really unique. That's probably what gives her that wide eyed look of kindness, energy, and consideration.

What moves you about the grandmother?

She's an uninhibited character, who's not afraid of anything. She's politically incorrect and a straight talker. I love talking dirty, so I felt really comfortable with the character! What moved me most was the kindness with which Marjane described her. Quite obviously, her grandmother meant a lot to her.

How did you want to play the part?

Just as Marjane describes her in her books. Not any differently. When you have a writer that writes so movingly and inspiringly, all you have to do is act. She is definitely a writer through and through.

Can you tell me about the recording?

I recorded my voice before the other actors. When I came to the studio, I'd only read her books, so I knew more or less what it was about, but hadn't yet been given a script. Marjane sat next to me and before each take, she'd brief me on the situation, giving me my lines and playing opposite me to stand in for the other roles. I don't like rehearsing much, usually going by instinct, so with Marjane I enjoyed relying on that immensely. Marjane knew exactly what she wanted, I readily did what she asked, and it went very quickly. Later, Marjane and her producers showed me a short excerpt of the film, when I saw the grandmother's face and heard my voice. It was an odd feeling, but I was really surprised. I thought it matched perfectly!

You once again play Catherine Deneuve's mother...

It's become a regular thing to play mother and daughter, although we don't look that much alike. What may bring us together is our way of handling drama in a light-hearted fashion. Her voice remains calm, she doesn't indulge in saccharine expressiveness. Her acting is both deep and light-hearted. Her voice and her eyes are so expressive. The three of us have been building a kind of film mythology, passed down through generations. After PERSEPOLIS, where Chiara plays my granddaughter, we were reunited for Pascal Thomas' upcoming film. I got to know her better and I've grown very fond of her.

What memory of Marjane will stay with you?

I once asked her to meet me in a hotel room. It so happened that there were bars on the window. When she left, I thought it would be fun to say goodbye from behind the bars. It felt like a scene from PERSEPOLIS. We both had a great laugh.

Interview with Catherine Deneuve

How did you find out about Marjane Satrapi?

I read her comic strip a while back in Libération. Then I read all four PERSEPOLIS novels which I just loved. I like her graphic black and white visuals and the way she uses them, it's totally surreal and realistic at the same time. I like her spirit. I like her freedom. I like her story which she tells with wistfulness, humour, self-mockery and emotion. The freshness, ambition and success of her work, as well as the strong statement she makes, reminded me of Art Spiegelman's Maus. Anyway, it's a unique graphic novel. I loved it so much, I even said in a newspaper that Marjane was my favourite fiction writer. When I was asked by Vogue magazine to act as Chief Editor for a special issue three years ago, I asked her to come on board. She did a wholly unconventional one-page comic strip which I found hilarious.

Do you remember the first time you met?

We had a cup of coffee together, and I noticed that she smoked as much as me! She's a wonderful person, bright and very funny. I love her oriental charm and her sweetness that's tinged with self-mockery. She's both very cheerful and deep. Her take on life is very particular. When she asked me to be her mother's voice in the film, I instantly said yes because it was her and because I'd wanted to do a voice for an animated feature for a long time.

Can you tell me about the recording?

Marjane's script was terrific. It was not only very true to the books, but it also included a genuinely cinematic narrative. We met at the studio, and she played and directed opposite me. She was always there for me, paying close attention. She was very specific, yet gave me a great deal of freedom playing the scenes with no visual back-up or specific schedule.

What is your take on the mother's character?

She's just like every other mother dealing with their teenage daughter, facing life and its challenges. She's understanding, caring and concerned.

Persepolis also adds a new chapter to a film tradition as you once again play Danielle Darrieux's daughter.

It's now become inevitable, and Chiara plays my own daughter!

What memory of Marjane Satrapi will stay with you?

She's a smooth talker. She says one thing with her voice and something different with her eyes...

Interview with Chiara Mastroianni

You called Marjane Satrapi to be part of PERSEPOLIS...

Yes. I had read all four PERSEPOLIS novels and loved them. The combination of design, humour, hindsight and self-mockery, with no trace of self-indulgence or victimisation was irresistible. I'd been thinking about doing a voice in an animated feature for quite some time, so when my mother mentioned PERSEPOLIS to me, I called Marjane and asked to do a voice test.

How did you first meet?

We met at my place. At the time, her voicemail message was quite off putting. I thought "Considering all she's been through, she must be very tough!" When I saw her large glasses and her smile, I thought there was something punkish about her, and I knew we'd get along fine. I'd only thought about Marjane's adult voice, but she told me she wanted the same person to do Marjane as a teenager. All the more reason to do the tests! I became even more afraid when I realised I had to do the voice-over with no visual back-up. We worked together and then did a recording session. Thankfully, she found my voice convincing enough to carry on with me. During rehearsal we tried to hone my voice, to make it sound more subtle and rich.

Was it stressful or inspiring playing Marjane?

Both! At the beginning, it was a bit stressful. I imagine it must have been strange for her too after having written the books by herself, she suddenly finds strangers interfering with her work. I could tell that certain scenes reminded her of emotional memories, and sometimes I found that testing. Yet, I think she toned them down, both in the books and in the film. When we recorded the last scene with her grandmother, (where she tells of how she put Jasmine flowers in her bra), the atmosphere in the studio was wholly different to when we did the scene at school where she meant to beat up the little boy! When you spend time with her, you realise she's vibrant, yet demanding and decent. She was wonderful in easing the tension and the embarrassment you naturally feel when you're playing her life out in front

of her. This was truly inspiring. When heavy moments came, she'd shrug them off with dirty jokes. It was very helpful to be around Marjane between the first and second recording sessions to get a better sense of who she was.

What impressed you the most about her?

Her freedom. She's not caught up in conventions; she went through so much at a very early age and remains insatiable. She's always eager to learn, and never lectures you. With Marjane, I had the feeling of being a teenager again, but at the same time, she's undoubtedly wise. It's an interesting combination. When she's fond of you, she showers you with affection and attention, yet, she has clear-cut ideas about what she wants. She's afraid of nothing and is a real go-getter. She's like a magnet both in life and in work.

What was the funniest part of the recording?

Recording the theme "Eye of the Tiger" from ROCKY . Marjane asked me to sing it out of tune. I asked her to sing it first, and we both broke loose and had a lot of fun.

What was the most difficult part?

Finding the right tone and rhythm for the voice-over. The scenes with dialogue weren't a problem, it was the narrating that was more difficult. It was a really different skill, and was hard with no back up. This was the part we worked on most, as soon as the footage was available, as I wanted to be able to hone my voice to match the pace of the scenes better.

Do you remember the first time you met Vincent?

Not exactly, but it had to be at the studio. He's a shy guy who needs to be won over. At the beginning, he was a bit wary of me, however, it only strengthened my determination to do the voice tests. In the end, his misgivings helped me do a good job. When he was eventually convinced, I knew for a fact it was for good reason. I like Vincent's hard-boiled personality. I believe they make a great team together because they're on equal footing. He has a strong sense of propriety too. I looked for Vincent Paronnaud's graphic novels everywhere, but they were nowhere to be found! It took me weeks before I found out his penname was Winchluss...

How complementary are they?

They couldn't have managed without each other on this film. They were totally inseparable. They made all the decisions together. They have admiration and respect for each other and are true friends. They're both very demanding, but for good reasons. Ego is never an issue, all that matters is the film. For the rest of us, nothing could have been more inspiring than such freedom and rigour. Marjane and Vincent wanted to make PERSEPOLIS in an "old-fashioned" way, based on actual drawings and not computer images. For all of us, it turned into an amazing challenge, both artistically and professionally.

Your mother has often portrayed Danielle Darrieux's daughter, but it was the first time you played her granddaughter ...

Yes, I liked the idea. The funny thing is, I played opposite Danielle again soon after - on Pascal Thomas' L'HEURE ZERO. That was when we really got to know each other. She's stunning. I can understand why Marjane wanted to work with her. There's a connection between them. Danielle also has a strong sense of self-mockery and propriety. There's a spark in her eyes, and she always has a positive and inquisitive approach to others

What memory of Marjane and Vincent will stay with you?

It was definitely the time when we were recording the voices in the studio with Marc, Stéphane and Denis. They were all working on snippets of dialogue and on the sound effects. Marjane was playing around touching the sound effects console and playing with the props. I also remember Marjane and Vincent having fun making short, crazy films on their cell phones! They looked like whiz-kids cooking something up!

Interview with Olivier Bernet

Composer of the film's original score.

What was the appeal of this project for you? Did you know Marjane Satrapi's graphic novels?

I liked Marjane's books, the way she draws, and her sense of humour. It was also the first time I had been asked to compose a musical score for a feature film. The fact that it was an animated movie made it all the more challenging. The production of such films always takes a very long time, and they constantly need adjusting, editing, honing ... especially when you work with Vincent, who is never totally satisfied! So I knew that I would have to adapt too.

Where and when did you meet Vincent Paronnaud?

In the high-school toilets in Pau! He was doing some beat-boxing with a friend. So we met through music and were together in a few different bands before creating Shunatao in the mid-90s.

How would you define Shunatao's music?

Well, it's a bit hard, because we released seven albums, and from one album to the next, the music changed drastically. Let's say it's rock, with some blues, jazz, and electro...

What kind of a musician is Vincent? What instrument does he play?

Guitar. He's a skilled musician with plenty of ideas. For the movie, I suggested lively music to illustrate Marjane's feelings when she discovers the joy of shopping and supermarkets in Vienna. He thought it was a good idea to emphasize the fact that it becomes her main pastime because she grows bored. Then, he decided to have the music repeat itself, like a scratched record. That's typical of Vincent! The only thing is that you need to work out, is when to start the scratched music, and make sure you stop on the right image etc ... It's a lot of work!

What did Marjane and Vincent tell you about the kind of music they wanted for PERSEPOLIS?

Vincent and I spoke about it first. I finally met Marjane quite late in the process, when the score was already quite advanced. Vincent's instructions were clear: no world music, nothing

too overtly oriental. He told me: "Don't pretend you're Peter Gabriel, just do what you do best."

Did you work from the books? From the script? From the visuals?

All of the above. When Vincent told me about the movie, I read the books again, and I started trying things out. Then, I was able to work on the "animatic"*. Whenever a scene was ready, they would send it to me. I then adapted my work around it. It was a bit unsettling at first, but quickly became very exciting!

PERSEPOLIS' world is extremely varied, between drama and imagination, irony and emotion. Did you try to include this variety in your music, or on the contrary, did you on the try to instil some unity?

A bit of both. You could say that the movie contains four distinct parts, so naturally I created four different musical atmospheres. The first and second ones are quite sober, and chiefly with string instruments. The dream scenes, (or the dialogues with God) are plainer: a piano, a few string instruments. I also had fun in the first half of the film when we see people dancing to disco music. It had to sound like Iranian disco music, well, at least, what I figured the music sounded like! For other scenes, I drew my inspiration from an Iranian rock CD that Marjane had lent me. The third and most diverse part is the one taking place in Vienna with the rock concerts, the hippies in the woods with their guitars, the night-clubs, etc... The music plays an active part in the movie. It becomes part of the setting and the action. In a night-club, one of the characters even says: "What shitty music!", so it becomes a challenge, a sort of aesthetical exercise, and it's quite exciting for a musician.

How would you say that Marjane and Vincent complement each other?

It's a bit hard for me to say, since I don't know Marjane that well. What I can say about Vincent is that he's innovative, demanding, and a hard worker. When I watched the movie, I was able to pick up on his style, because I've known him for a long time. I can easily imagine the kind of complicity and cooperation that exists between them.

*(Animatic: animated script in images which gives an initial idea about direction and camera movements).

THE ANIMATION

Persepolis' animation was created by two specialised studios: "Je suis bien content" and "Pumpkin 3D".

Interview with Marc Jousset

(JE SUIS BIEN CONTENT)

Why did you decide to produce PERSEPOLIS almost completely in a "traditional" way, not using computer generated images?

The question of which technique to use, arose very quickly when we discussed the movie. We started with 2D images on pen tablets, but we were not totally happy with the result. The lines lacked definition. It also seemed logical that Marjane should be able to work with the animators using the tools of her trade; paper and ink. It was clear that a traditional animation technique was perfectly suited to Marjane's and Vincent's idea of the film.

It's an animation film with many characters...

Development took a long time, because of the sheer number of characters. For Marjane's character, there were five separate steps: little girl, pre-teen, teenager, young woman and adult. Since it was also based on real events, and took place in Tehran under the Shah's regime, then under Khomeini's revolution, (not to mention Austria), we had to take into account the way people were dressed. There are scenes taking place at the university, in airports, at a punk concert, so it was impossible to draw only two or three characters. We had to animate a good deal of extras. However, we were lucky. Marjane drew all the characters. I thought we would have 200 model sheets to do, each character seen through different angles, so there was no discrepancy from one shot to the other, but actually we made over 600! I think it's a record for an animated movie.

Did the use of black and white make things particularly difficult for an animated movie?

Using only black and white in an animation movie requires a great deal of discipline. From a technical point of view, you can't make any mistakes. As soon as an eye isn't in the right

place, or a pupil not perfectly drawn, it shows up straight away on the large screen. It's even more obvious in this particular film since it's not a cartoon with codes, conventions and distortions. We were closer to Japanese animation because of the story's realism, but we couldn't apply the techniques used in manga. As a result, we had to develop a specific style, both realistic and mature. No bluffing, no tricks, nothing overcooked. With animation director Christian Desmares, twenty animators worked on the movie. Marjane had quite an unusual way of working. Each sequence (1,200 shots) was given to an animator. Marjane insisted on being filmed playing out all the scenes. Given that she's a genuinely talented actress, it was a great source of information for the animators, giving them an accurate approach to how they should work. It was also very encouraging for them that she was so committed and passionate. Usually, in animated movies, directors are rarely so concerned with the day-to-day work on the film. After animators, the assistant animators put the finishing touches to the drawings and check them against the original. Marjane's drawings look very simple and graphic, but they're very difficult to work on because there are so few identifying marks. Realistic drawings require outstanding accuracy.

How many drawings were needed for PERSEPOLIS?

About 80,000 drawings for around 130,000 images. That's quite reasonable for a feature made in the traditional way.

What do you think are Marjane Satrapi's best attributes?

It's a combination of rigour and generosity. She was always there for you, and never acted like a diva, like filmmakers who pop in once a week to hand out praises and criticisms do. Not thinking about what it could rekindle in her, she was totally committed and involved. She even animated certain scenes in the movie. It brought a unique atmosphere to the team and the collaborative effort.

What about Vincent Paronnaud?

His rigour, his eye and his daring. Marjane and Vincent have always favoured content, whilst being very respectful to the visual work done. The story always came first. It's not a movie made by technicians. They went to work on PERSEPOLIS as though it were a live-action film.

Vincent is very good at artistic direction, composition, playing with black and white, and Marjane masters that as well. She was, however, more focused on the accuracy of emotions and feelings. Each had enough hindsight with his or her work, so that their advice stimulated the other. It's quite amazing to see them work together. They are a true two-some.

What was the main challenge for you?

To be on schedule, and to stay within budget, whilst maintaining our requirement for high quality. The budget was 6 million Euros, which is reasonable for a 2D movie made in France. I've rarely seen a team so focused on a project, not only for the technical challenge, but also for the story itself. I think the culmination of the fact that it was a true story, that the main character worked with you, that an animated movie dealt with a current issue and that it was intended for adults was tremendously exciting for the team.



Interview with Pascal Chevé

(PUMPKIN 3 D)

You were the one who suggested to work with a team of traditional animators (trace animators), who hardly exist in France anymore. Why?

It was essential to be true to Marjane's line. An animation studio is a team of over 100 people, all with their own style. An animator will be more focused on trying to make the character move in the right way. Assistant animators will then put the final touches to the drawings, to make sure they're true to the original. Then the "trace" team comes in, and they work on each drawing with a quill pen, a paintbrush or, (as it was the case here), a felt pen, to ensure that they are consistent with the line that runs throughout the movie. Our philosophy was to work on this movie in a traditional way.

What was the most challenging aspect of Persepolis?

I think it was the design of a novel way to make the characters move. For once, we had with us the person who had experienced the events, who could tell us about the characters we were drawing, and the way they would react. Our work was to find a credible way to make them move. We were producing a real movie, with characters who had true feelings and who were living tragic events. The movie brims with emotions, and the whole team felt that and shared it throughout. It's probably one of the reasons why everybody was so committed.



Interview with Marc-Antoine Robert and Xavier Rigault

(2.4.7. FILMS)

PERSEPOLIS is your first production. What is your background?

Marc-Antoine Robert – *We have different backgrounds that complement each other. I started working in distribution, then I worked at the CNC in the production department, and finally I was CFO at France 3 Cinéma for five years.*

Xavier Rigault – *I joined Pathé 14 years ago where I held several positions first within the cinema programming division, then as manager of the first French multiplex, and then within the management of the Pathé-Gaumont grouping. I'm still heading the Pathé-Gaumont programming division, whilst being Marc-Antoine's partner at 2.4.7. Films.*

Did you become a producer for this movie specifically, or were you just waiting for the right moment to start producing, and saw this film as a good opportunity?

Marc-Antoine Robert – *Denis Château introduced us and we decided to create 2.4.7 Films together. We wanted to produce movies, but we weren't in any great hurry because we both had fulfilling jobs. We were looking for the right project. I happened to know the new generation of French comic book artists quite well, and I'm a friend of Marjane's. I offered to write an original script for her, because I didn't want to work on an animated movie at all! At France 3 Cinéma, we'd produced a few of them, so I knew how complicated it was. Finally, we ended up having this crazy idea to adapt PERSEPOLIS, and turn it into a black and white animation movie!*

Xavier Rigault – *We were convinced by the power of the subject matter, the originality of the project, and Marjane's and Vincent's artistic drive. I don't read that many graphic novels, but I remember reading PERSEPOLIS, and feeling it was something new and unprecedented. Beyond the strong statement it makes on the rise of fundamentalism in the East, PERSEPOLIS tells a deep, universal story about integrity. As for the black and white, we stopped fretting when Marc-Antoine dug up a letter from Truffaut, written at the time of Confidentially Yours (Vivement Dimanche), in which he listed all the recent masterpieces in black and white...*

What was the budget of the movie?

Marc-Antoine Robert – Six million Euros. It's slightly above average for a French movie, but it's a regular budget for an animation film.

Xavier Rigault – For a movie that was entirely made in France, and not using CGI, it's quite reasonable.

Kathleen Kennedy, who is a friend and producer of Spielberg's, is credited as associate producer. How did she get involved in the project?

Marc-Antoine Robert – She'd sent an email to Marjane to buy the rights to *PERSEPOLIS*.

Xavier Rigault – We told her that we had already acquired it, and that the movie was in pre-production, but we'd left some room open for discussion. Kathleen Kennedy is one of those few people whom you can't ignore! We sent her the script, she thought it was fantastic, and told us she'd do her best to help us out, and she did. She found us an American distributor, Sony Classics. They bought the movie before it was finished, which is extremely rare. She then helped us find American voices for the movie.

Did you decide at the beginning that this film would be made in a traditional way, and that you needed to open an animation studio for that?

Marc-Antoine Robert – It became obvious very quickly. When you see the original graphic novel, you can't envisage a Pixar adaptation! When we wrote the script, it was really about adapting the story for the screen. We decided with Marjane and Vincent that there would have to be an adaptation of the graphic feel of the book, not simply a transposition. Having just black and white hues was not possible, it would have been too much of an artistic constraint.

Xavier Rigault – That was probably what took us the longest: to find the right graphic charter to bring the novel's atmosphere to the screen. For three months, Marjane and Vincent did quite a bit of research, testing ideas to find out how they looked like on a big screen.

Marc-Antoine Robert – At the same time, we were making headway on the animation front. Marjane and Vincent are creative and responsible. As soon as we got the first piece of funding, we considered opening a studio. It was as if the autobiographical aspect of the film made it necessary. We thought that all the animators and artists needed to be able to speak to Marjane and Vincent on a daily basis... Both of them were present at the studio, and always available for everyone.

Xavier Rigault – What I found very moving, was Marjane's ability to recreate her own work in a different way. It was a second personal and artistic adventure for her.

Marc-Antoine Robert – Obviously, the story does belong to Marjane, but when you're familiar with Vincent's work, you sense the introduction of pieces of his own world.

What memory of the whole adventure will stay with you?

Marc-Antoine Robert – There are so many, but I would go for our very first session of work in December 2004. Marjane introduced us to Vincent, and they told us the storyline. They kept talking and talking and told us everything. There was a guy at the table next to us, and when he got up to leave, he said: "I hope your project works out, it sounds amazing!" I've never forgotten this man.

Xavier Rigault – It was a beautiful moment of human experience...

Marc-Antoine Robert – There was an interesting feel to the project. On the one hand the staggering workload, and on the other, people who were totally involved and focused, and still having heaps of fun! I also remember the first 35 mm screening of the footage on a wide screen. Marjane almost passed out, and she probably drank five cognacs afterwards to feel better!

Interviews by Jean-Pierre Lavoignat, March-April 2007.



CAST

WITH THE VOICES OF

Chiara MASTROIANNI Marjane (as a teenager and adult)
 Catherine DENEUVE Marjane's mother, Tadj
 Danielle DARRIEUX Marjane's grandmother
 Simon ABKARIAN Marjane's father, Ebi
 Gabrielle LOPES young Marjane
 François JEROSME Uncle Anouche

CREW

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Marjane SATRAPI and Vincent PARONNAUD
 BASED ON THE ORIGINAL GRAPHIC NOVELS BY Marjane SATRAPI

PRODUCED BY Marc-Antoine ROBERT and Xavier RIGAUT
 ASSOCIATE PRODUCER Kathleen KENNEDY
 ORIGINAL MUSIC Olivier BERNET
 ART DIRECTOR Marc JOUSSET
 EDITOR/COMPOSITOR Stéphane ROCHE
 ANIMATION COORDINATOR Christian DESMARES
 1ST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Denis WALGENWITZ
 PRODUCTION DESIGNER Marisa MUSY
 TRACE Franck MIYET
 ANIMATION ASSISTANT Thierry PERES
 LAYOUT ARTIST Jing WANG
 ANIMATION PRODUCTION MANAGER Olivier BIZET
 SOUND Thierry LEBON

ANIMATION STUDIO PERSEPROD
 A JE SUIS BIEN CONTENT (MARC JOUSSET), PUMPKIN 3D (PASCAL CHEVE, LOUIS VIAU)

A 2.4.7. FILMS production

Co-produced with FRANCE 3 CINEMA - THE KENNEDY / MARSHALL COMPANY - FRANCHE CONNECTION ANIMATIONS
 DIAPHANA DISTRIBUTION - In partnership with CELLULOID DREAMS - SONY PICTURES CLASSICS
 les SOFICA EUROPACORP et SOFICINEMA.
 In collaboration with CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA CINÉMATOGRAPHIE - With the support of LA REGION ILE-DE-FRANCE
 FONDATION GROUPAMA GAN POUR LE CINEMA - LA PROCIREP - L'ANGO

NOTES

