



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Persepolis

Persepolis

Un film de: Vincent Paronnaud, Marjane Satrapi

©/Presented by: 2.4.7. Films

©/In co-production with: France 3 Cinéma

In co-production with: Kennedy/Marshall Co.,

Franche Connection Animation,

Diaphana Distribution

In association with: Celluloïd Dreams,

Sony Pictures Classics, Sofica Soficinéma,

Sofica EuropaCorp

With the participation of:

Centre national de la cinématographie,

Région Ile de France, Fondation Groupama Gan

pour le Cinéma, Procirep, Angoa

Produced by: Marc-Antoine Robert, Xavier Rigault

US Co-producer: Tara Jousset

Produced in collaboration with: Rémi Burah

Associate Producer: Kathleen Kennedy

Post-production Supervisor: Christina Crassaris

Artistic Director: Marc Jousset

1st Assistant Director: Denis Walgenwitz

Voice Casting: Sylvie Peyrucq

Story Artists: Jean-Charles Finch, Alexandre Hesse

Written by: Marjane Satrapi, Vincent Paronnaud

Based on the graphic novel by: Marjane Satrapi

Director of Photography: François Girard

Animation Studios: Perseprod, une association,

Je Suis Bien Content (Marc Jousset), Pumpkin 3D

(Pascal Chevé, Louis Viau)

Animation Director: Christian Desmares

Animation Supervisor: Olivier Bizet

2D Animation Supervisor: Christian Desmares

2D Animation: Damien Barrau, Franck Bonay,

Jean-Yves Castillon, Anaïs Chevillard,

Patrick Cohen, Odile Comon, Céline Coulibeuf,

Antoine Dartige du Fournet, Sandra Derval,

Serge Elissalde, Florian Fiebig, Emmanuel Guille,

Virginie Hanrigou, Marianne Lebel, Grégory Lecocq,

Alice Lia, Charlotte Mazeran, Benoît Meurzec,

Damien Millereau, Adeline Monin, Nicolas

Pawlowski, Jules Stromboni, Rémi Zaarour

Flash Animation: Stéphanie Delmas, Nilsen Robin

After Effects Animation: François Leroy

Animation Effects Supervisor: Alexis Venet

Animation Effects: Pierre Minoux, Adeline Monin

3D Animation Supervisor: Ahmidou Lyazidi

3D Animation: David Galante, Bruno-Evalie Hélie,

Nathalie Mathe

After Effects Compositing Supervisor:

Stéphane Roche

After Effects Compositing: Jean-Yves Castillon,

Serge Creste, Damien Gaillardon, Jean-Paul Guige,

François Leroy, Pierre Minoux

Layout Supervisor: Jing Wang

Layout: David Etien, Frédéric Martin,

Guy Quelquejeu

Trace Supervisor: Franck Miyet

Supervising Editor: Stéphane Roche

Editor: François Nabos

Compositing Editor: Stéphane Roche

Art Director: Marisa Musy (Zaza)

Art Department Research Supervisor: Marisa Musy

Scan Supervisor/Colour Design: Marion Crepel

Colour Design: Geneviève Mabire, Lara Bellini,

Geraldine Le Moigne, Arnaud Moritz

Toonz Compositing: Marion Crepel,

Sylvie Attoresci 'Toto', Fabrice Renaudin

Animatic: Stéphane Roche

Laboratory: LTC/Scan Lab

Colour Timer: Christian Dutac

Optical Report: CinéStéréo

Digital Operators: Pierre Madrolles, Rudy Siess

Music Composed and Conducted by: Olivier Bernet

Based on Marjane Satrapi's autobiographical graphic novels about a young girl growing up in Tehran around the time of the 1979 Iranian revolution, the big-screen *Persepolis* – which Satrapi co-directed with Vincent Paronnaud – zigzags between past and present, Iran and Europe, to create a deliciously mischievous portrait of life in exile. Satrapi's heroine Maui travels between colour and black and white, where colour represents the drab present of airport lounges and a rootless existence.

'It's not easy to squeeze 16 years of life into 90 minutes,' says Satrapi. 'Some people have thought the colour in the film represents Europe and Iran is black and white, but that's not the case. Colour does not represent happiness – it was more a code to make people understand the use of flashback.'

The action opens with a grown-up Marji waiting in Paris' Orly airport, where the plumes of smoke from her ever-present cigarette transport her to her past in pre-revolutionary Iran. In 2D black-and-white animation we see a pre-teen Marji stomp around her parents' apartment, showing off her kung-fu prowess in homage to Bruce Lee. Her intellectual, middle-class parents Tadj and Ebi eagerly await the fall of the Shah and the promise of greater freedoms, while the girl's grandmother feeds Marji a steady diet of worldly irreverence.

With the arrival of the revolution, however, the frames become filled with the silhouettes of young men, foregrounded against a clamouring mob, throwing stones at helmeted riot police, and then more plumes of smoke, this time from the teargas pellets launched by the representatives of the Shah's doomed regime. 'This was a revolution everyone believed in at the start,' says Satrapi. 'It was only when wearing a veil became compulsory in school that I understood there were changes coming. They were horrifying changes, but we were children and we played at making fun of the ideology. And then the Iran-Iraq war came.'

It is at such moments, as hope is replaced by a dawning fear, that the 'old-school' hand-drawn 2D animation of *Persepolis* works most vividly, capturing a country cloaked in chadors and terror as Ayatollah Khomeini's mullahs consolidate their grip on power in the wake of Saddam Hussein's western-backed attack. Satrapi and Paronnaud – an underground French comic-book artist who frequently works under the pseudonym of Winchluss – deftly contrast the everyday adventures of Marji and her classmates, their faces now framed by the oval of the hijab, with the brutality of the Islamic regime's purges, as bearded heavies assassinate political dissenters. There are also poignant depictions of young Iranian men sent to martyrdom in the minefields, plastic keys to paradise around their necks: the distant murmur of the battlefield is overwritten by the hollow sound of exploding corpses before a final freeze-frame captures one soul's ascent from earth, his extended limbs bordered by a kapow-style firebomb.

Marji's political maturation comes through conversations with her uncle Anouche, a communist forever in hiding or in prison who regales her with tales of Marx and the proletariat uprising. But Satrapi sidesteps political dogma or didacticism with such images as the young Marji imagining herself in conversation with the father of communism, his billowing white hair and beard conjuring a cross between Santa Claus and God, or nestling on a cloud

Orchestrations: Olivier Bernet
Music Recording: Amanita
Music Recorded/Mixed by: Stéphane Krieger, Christian Aduriz
Sound Supervision: Merjithur
Voice Recording: Éric Chevallier
Sound/Re-recording Mixer: Thierry Lebon
Re-recording Mixer: Samy Bardet
Sound Editors: Éric Chevallier, Samy Bardet
Foley: Philippe Penot, Jacques Defrance
English-language Version Director: Marjane Satrapi
Consultant: Céline Merrien
Pre-production Consultant: Aziza Ghalila
'Detection': Sylvie Gourgnér
'Concision': Jean-François Ramos
Screenplay Translation: Jodi Vérité, Andrew Vérité
Unit Publicists: Jérôme Jouneaux, Isabelle Duvoisin, Matthieu Rey
Voice Cast:
Chiara Mastroianni
(*Marjane, 'Marji' as a teenager/adult*)
Catherine Deneuve (*Tadji, Marjane's mother*)
Danielle Darrieux (*Marjane's grandmother*)
Simon Abkarian (*Ebi, Marjane's father*)
Gabrielle Lopes (*Marjane as a child*)
François Jérôme (*Uncle Anouche*)
Sophie Arthuys, Jean-François Gallotte, Arié Elmaleh, Mathias Mlekuz, Sacha Alliel, Virginie Antico, Sylvain Audi, Bénédicte Battesti, Hubert Benhamdine, Ninon Brétécher, Jean-Philippe Callet, Idit Cebula, Carlos Chahine, Eric Chevallier, Isabelle Chipot, Jean-Marc Couderc, Fanny Dalle-Rive, Fanny Daurat, Anne Deleuze, Gilles Duval, Stéphane Foenkinos, Marie Gilli-Pierre, François Girard, Lesceline Haase, Marc Jousset, Nicolas Leroy, Candide Lopes, Tilly Mandelbrot, Jean-Christophe Menu, Céline Merrien, Charlotte Miquel, Farida Ouchani, Vincent Paronnaud, Françoise Pavy, Emmanuel Payet, Xavier Rigault, Gaspard Robert, Marc-Antoine Robert, Stéphane Roche, Théo Sampaio, Marjane Satrapi, Denis Walgenwitz
France-USA 2007©
96 mins

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info: sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk



BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

between Marx and God as the two work to restore her faith in humanity. 'I don't believe you can fight one form of fanaticism with another form of fanaticism,' she says. 'We have to use logic and pragmatism. If the goal of fanaticism is to push a button and produce an emotional response, the goal of anti-fanaticism should be the opposite. If fanaticism has the answer to everything, our duty is to ask questions.'

When *Persepolis* won the Jury Prize at Cannes in 2007 – an award it shared with Carlos Reygadas' *Silent Light* – a cultural advisor to Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad accused France of stirring up Islamophobia. That protest came only days after the head of the government-affiliated Farabi Cinema Foundation sent a letter to the French cultural attaché in Tehran claiming the French-backed film presented 'an unreal picture of the outcomes and achievements of the Islamic revolution.' *Persepolis* was withdrawn as opening film at the Bangkok International Film Festival, reportedly after pressure from the Iranian embassy in Thailand, and it has been denied a release in Lebanon for fear it may provoke unrest among supporters of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah.

Yet far from being anti-Iranian, *Persepolis* plays as a heartfelt paean to Satrapi's homeland. Indeed if anything, it's her adopted home of Europe that comes off worse, with British culpability for the political situation made clear as one image shows a marionette-like UK intelligence agent manoeuvring the Shah's father into power. And on a personal level Marji finds the French Lycée in Vienna where she's sent at age 14 to keep her out of trouble with the authorities casually racist and insipid in comparison with life in Tehran, where her parents and their friends hold illicit parties with flowing alcohol and black-market salesman hawk contraband copies of Pink Floyd cassettes.

'I never went to as many parties as I did in Iran,' says Satrapi. 'In France going to a party meant sitting around a table talking about politics: no food, no dancing, no music, nothing. In Iran we went to the hairdressers before, we made ourselves up, had lots of food and drink. But when it came down to a question of freedom of expression and thinking, these were things I couldn't deal with. If I can't say what I want, if I can't behave in a way that I am, if I have to lie to myself everyday, then it is not a life. This is why I left.'

During our interview Satrapi oscillates between serious and playful, and *Persepolis* too transcends its potential bleakness to offer a joyous celebration of Iran and Iranians, symbolised by the jasmine flowers whose scent pervades Marji's grandmother's bra and which cascade down the screen at the end of the final scene.

Persepolis was the name given to the 6th-century city founded by Darius I and destroyed by Alexander the Great. 'In order to understand what is happening you have to have some historical depth,' says Satrapi. 'Before the revolution we had a country with a king and a queen and flying carpets. After 1979 the king and queen become guardians of the revolution and the flying carpets become rockets. So we are stuck between these images.' With characteristic iconoclasm, though, she can't help but add a final remark about why she chose her title. '*Persepolis* is an easy name to remember.'

Marjane Satrapi interviewed by Ali Jaafar, *Sight and Sound*, May 2008