

SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

CHICKEN WITH PLUMS

a film by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud

Adapted from the graphic novel Chicken with Plums by Marjane Satrapi



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SYNOPSIS



Teheran, 1958. Since his beloved violin was broken, Nasser Ali Khan, one of the most renowned musicians of his day, has lost all taste for life. Finding no instrument worthy of replacing it, he decides to confine himself to bed to await death. As he hopes for its arrival, he plunges into deep reveries, with dreams as melancholic as they are joyous, taking him back to his youth and even to a conversation with Azraël, the Angel of Death, who reveals the future of his children... As pieces of the puzzle gradually fit together, the poignant secret of his life comes to light: a wonderful story of love which inspired his genius and his music...

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

By Marjane Satrapi & Vincent Paronnaud

Chicken with Plums is the story of a famous musician whose prized instrument has been ruined. Unable to replace his violin, he decides to die, and eight days later, he renders his soul, yet what seems like the end is really just the beginning. Under its romantic allure, this film is conceived as a thriller with flashbacks and flash forwards which shed light on Nasser's personality and the reasons for his despair. Death is used as a springboard to talk about life.

The central themes of our film are the complexities of the world and the mysteries of the human soul. That's why this film can jump registers from dramatic to comic to heartbreaking, because life is exactly like that. What interests us is not whether Nasser will die nor how, but why. We all share his universal quest to know, because it addresses the crystallization and the roots of our emotional life.

We have been working as a duo since *Persepolis*, and our collaboration demonstrates the absurdity of the term "culture shock". Coming from two different cultures, being of opposite sexes and not sharing the same background, we still managed to blend a mutual culture for ourselves. What interests us is this melting, this mixing – the choice of making this film which

takes place in Iran with French players such as Mathieu Amalric, Edouard Baer and Chiara Mastroianni, Italian actress Isabella Rossellini, Iranian Golshifteh Farahani and Moroccan Jamel Debbouze only emphasizes more the universality of our purpose and the richness of diversity. It's like Lubitsch who made films in America which took place in Prague or Warsaw with American actors. In any case, the stage is a place where someone plays someone else. Our Tehran is imaginary and it is not be anchored in the idea of reconstitution. The city is created entirely in a studio where the locations and the actors are treated sublimely, like in the magic of 50s Technicolor movies where realism was less important than aesthetics. This artistic choice helped us to avoid mannerism and helped us reinvent by using models, trompe l'oeil, backdrops, the artificial and the abstract which we needed to achieve the timelessness of our fable.

We also looked to German expressionism for inspiration, particularly playing with shadow and light. Our aesthetic choices are in the service of praising beauty and emotion. The film's music is a character in itself. At times minimalist, then symphonic, it is be of Russian inspiration (Korsakov, Rachmaninov). There are also bursts of traditional Iranian music, including the use of the zarb (Iranian percussion instrument) and the tar (traditional lute). Olivier Bernet, the composer of *Persepolis*, worked with us again on this new project.

Chicken with Plums is the second volume in a trilogy that began with *Persepolis* and which will end with *The Eleventh Laureate*. This trilogy traces several generations of a family and a country in the 20th century.

Persepolis tells the story of a family caught in the torments of war and revolution between 1974 and 1994. *Chicken with Plums* covers the history of this same family between 1930 and 1990. Always against a political background: the U.S. coup d'état of the 50s, the imprisonment of Nasser's brother Abdi (the grandfather and communist prince in *Persepolis*), and the female character Irâne referring to the country Iran (just as France is also a woman's first name), a symbol of a lost love and a lost dream. *The Eleventh Laureate*, the third volume, will address another part of this family between 1900 and 1960.

PS: Azraël is the name of the angel of death in biblical and Koranic traditions.

INTERVIEW WITH MARJANE SATRAPI



Was it an easy choice for you, after *Persepolis*, not to make another animated film?

Yes. The most interesting thing in any artistic project is rising to a challenge and doing things you're yet to do and don't know how to do. We made an animated film, we learned a lot, it was long and taxing, even if, of course, we took enormous pleasure from it. It was exciting to do something new. Vincent and I work like that; it's our engine, our driving force.




At the same time, *Persepolis* was an animated film with the intensity, depth and emotion of a "normal" film, while *Chicken with Plums*, which is a movie with actors and real images (well, in the most part!) has all the fantasy, invention and freedom of an animated film.


From the very outset, *Chicken with Plums* was a logical, coherent follow-on from *Persepolis* for us. One, because the movie's protagonist, this musician broken by love, is the brother of my grandfather, the revolutionary communist prisoner I spoke of in *Persepolis*. Here, we rediscover the jasmine flowers that floated in *Persepolis*, and the film set of Teheran is called *Persepolis*... Two, because neither Vincent nor I can forget the medium we come from. We are illustrators, so there are obviously certain things that it's normal for us to use – although without setting out to turn them into a demonstration or manifesto. It's simply a form of expression that's natural to us. And finally, because we both have absolute faith in film as a means of exploring the imaginary and estheticism. Realism doesn't interest us very much. When we want to tell a story, we both need to go beyond realism, to surpass it... To us, the movies are about dreams, glamour and fantasy. That comes from the films we've loved, which have fed our imagination – be they *The Wizard of Oz*, German expressionism, Hitchcock or Fellini... It's what made us dream, what gave us the desire to make movies. That's what we want to explore; that's what we want to pay homage to.



What inspired the writing of *Chicken with Plums*, the novel?

The starting point was the story of my mother's musician uncle, who died in strange circumstances that no one was ever able to explain. I went to Germany  to see my mother's brother, who was also a musician. He told me that this uncle was a remarkable man, one of the best *tar* players of his day, and he showed me photos of him. As I'm very sensitive to beauty, this man's romantic face inspired me and made me want to tell his story of broken love. Then there was also the need to talk about death. It's a notion that obsesses me, one that I can't accept... I'd wanted to do a book on it for a long time, to tell a nihilist story: in the end, there's nothing, no redemption, when it's over, it's over; it's all gone! As the Persian poet Omar Khayyam, whom I quote in the film, said, "My two ears have never heard anyone say/ Why I was brought here and why I will be taken away"... I started with those two desires, and the rest followed. There are invented things, family memories... I knew that the musician's wife was a teacher and that she was a pain in the neck. My mother had a female cousin who drank, smoked and gambled and had three heart attacks! I drew inspiration from familiar events, stories I'd heard... Whatever happens, all the stories you write clearly come from somewhere...

Unlike *Persepolis*, *Chicken with Plums* isn't your life story. So wasn't it easier for you to adapt it?

Yes. Firstly because it was a single book and not four! And moreover, there wasn't the same emotional burden. Working on *Persepolis* killed me a hundred times over! I lived the story, then  relived it to write the books, and then relived it again to make the film. Reliving all that had happened was tough... Not to mention seeing all the people who had started drawing like me, and also drawing ME! The emotional burden was very heavy. Whenever I saw a scene with my grandmother or with my uncle, I was always moved to tears. But I had to hold it in otherwise those working on the movie would have started treading too lightly. And that was unthinkable. What's more, there was all the political aspect: the Islamic regime, the accusations, the threats, the pressure... Plus also, it was the first time I hadn't worked alone. However wonderful the experience turned out to be, it wasn't easy for me who likes to have complete control over everything! For *Chicken with Plums*, it was much easier. It was just a lovely, sad love story. At

the same time, when I wrote and drew *Chicken with Plums*, I said that this hurt musician was the character who was closest to me; because as he's a man, I can hide behind him much more easily.

In what way is he closest to you?

All of what this story tells is close to me... And notably the questioning on what it is to be an artist. An artist is a wonderful being, but also hugely egocentric, hugely narcissistic... Being aware of that helps you progress. There's also the romantic dimension; because contrary to what one might believe, I'm very romantic. For twenty years, this man played music for the woman he lost, convinced that she was still thinking of him. When he meets her again and she doesn't recognize him – or rather, pretends not to recognize him, because it's too late for her – all meaning is lost and he can no longer play. No instrument can ever bring back the feelings he had had during those twenty years...

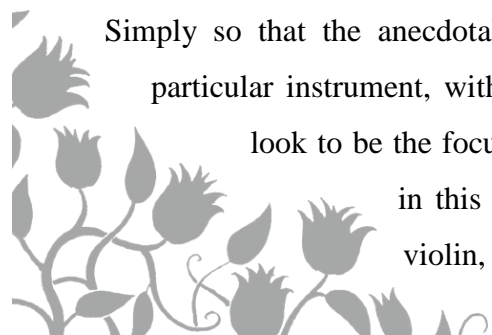


The music maestro tells him: "You are suffering; that's why you play so well." Do you also believe in the need to feel pain in order to create?

There are two sides to it. One, you clearly need to be in a particular state of mind to write, draw or make a movie. And two, I absolutely don't believe that you need to work in pain... On set, I prefer to have fun. I think that the more you laugh, the better you work. You don't obtain pain or emotion by putting people in positions of suffering. On the contrary, when you get them to trust you, when you take them into your consideration and when you develop complicity with them...

In the movie, the *tar* of the album became a violin...

Simply so that the anecdotal wouldn't detract from the essential. The *tar* is a very particular instrument, with a singular shape and sound. We didn't want its unusual look to be the focus of attention. It's not the instrument itself that's important in this story; it's simply a pretext to talk of something else. The violin, which is very present in traditional Iranian music, is more universal, and its music more readily accessible. In any



case, I never want to do folklore or Orientalism. That's of no interest to me. I always prefer to accentuate things we share rather than things that differentiate us...

You did, however, stick very closely to your novel, to the nonlinear storyline that mixes flashback, the leaps forward in time and the ellipses. But you decided to treat each episode which broke the narrative continuity in esthetically different ways... Did you and Vincent Paronnaud quickly agree on the style you would give to these "breakaways"?

The book did indeed have a drawer-like structure, which I wanted to be playful, and which was crucial to be in the film. And also, as I said earlier, Vincent and I both share an absolute belief in cinematographic language; so it was very exciting and great fun for us to play with all the possibilities, all the options and all the styles; we had fun with all the things that make us dream. We wanted to embark on a movie which, as it gradually progresses, takes more and more liberties with realism. We liked the idea of making a great love story, a Douglas Sirk-style melodrama, but with humor.

The movie swings between the burlesque and emotion, fantasy and seriousness, and advocates a mixture of genres. So you took "expression" in its primary meaning and played on the mixture of cinematographic styles...

We wanted a movie that married different narrative styles, different ways of telling things, different esthetics... We had a lot of fun switching between sitcom parody, Italian melodrama, fantasy films and nods to Méliès. We had a lot of fun, but not without serious thought. We had to switch from one narrative style to the next without noticing the mechanics. That was undoubtedly what we worked on most. For a drawer-type film to work, there was no other way. So we very quickly agreed on how to treat the sequences that would give the movie its style. Vincent and I discussed a lot, drew a lot, and we tried to get as close as possible to what we imagined. What made things easy was, Vincent and I have the same esthetic taste. Better still: we imagine the same things. There's no other person to whom I can say, "Imagine that" and be sure that he sees exactly the same image.

That doesn't seem so obvious since your graphic worlds are so different...



True. In drawing, I have a more sober side and Vincent a more baroque, more lavish side. But at the same time, our worlds are very complementary. Some things are our own and other things we share, like our sense of fun, and our unequivocally humoristic view of the world and the people who surround us. Faced with such-and-such a situation or behavior, we very often have the same flabbergasted reaction! We both share the same point of view of mankind. We're both big fans of Dostoyevsky, whom we think is THE supreme author. Like him, we believe that everyone is good and bad in equal measures! You may hate Raskolnikov at the beginning, but by the end you feel compassion for him. Faranguisse, Nasser-Ali's wife, played by Maria de Medeiros, is a dreadful woman, but at the end, you see her beauty and like her because you understand her. Everybody can be bad, but everybody should have the chance to show they are good... Also, Vincent makes me laugh a lot. A lot. So it's because we're different and complementary that things work so well between us. Besides, at the end of the day, it's hard to say who does what. On set, we shared out the jobs: Vincent saw to the framing, the lighting and the camera movements, while I the actors, their costumes and their acting. But it wasn't as clear-cut as that, since he gave his opinions on my work, and I on his. It truly was shared work. And the best thing is, we always manage to surprise each other.

In what way had your collaboration evolved since *Persepolis*?

We worked more calmly and much better. There are never ego problems or power struggles between us. We're friends, we're no longer youngsters, and we know that anything we say is never directed at the other but for the good of the movie, in the interest of the movie. We have our own separate, fulfilling artistic lives. We have mutual admiration, and when we decide to work together, we totally combine our individual strengths.

You have said that for you, Mathieu Amalric was the ideal Nasser. What makes you think that?

Mathieu has that needed touch of madness and



extravagance, and the needed eyes, feverishness and edge... It was obvious it had to be him and no one else. He's such a talented actor. He can swing between a Desplechin film to a Bond movie... And play the violin too! He's a very open and available man. Out of 46 days of shooting, he must have been there for 44 of them, always concentrated and patient.



How did the idea for Isabella Rossellini come about?

She's an extraordinary artist and woman. When I called her, she said yes right away, without even reading the screenplay. She scared us the most, and we had to start the shoot with her! Isabella Rossellini, just imagine! We'd seen her do some amazing things for a long time... I mean, take *Blue Velvet*! Then suddenly she's in front of you, and she's really nice and has a laugh with you. What's more, she's very touching: she was scared of acting in French, and opposite Mathieu, because she'd just seen him in a movie and he terrified her...

And why Jamel Debbouze? Chiara Mastroianni? Edouard Baer?

Jamel is someone with extraordinary verve and intelligence. I had wanted to work with him for quite a while. I wanted him to play several characters, or rather the same character who, like in fairy tales, comes back in various forms. A kind of genie... He appears a first time as a friendly yet crafty grocer to tell Nasser-Ali to enjoy life's pleasures. Then he comes back in another guise to reproach him for having given up on life, and tell him there's nothing worse than giving up on life... Chiara, I like her a lot. We had already worked together on *Persepolis*. She has the potential to be this slightly sarcastic femme fatale, and I had fun playing around with that. Chiara has a booming voice and a loud laugh, and I was delighted that she accepted, even for just a small part. As for Edouard Baer, who did the narration and made two appearances, he was the perfect angel of death! Death, however scandalous it is, is part of life. So to us, the angel of death was never going to be an old, all-knowing sage. We imagined someone youngish, quite worldly, rather nonchalant, who has a job to do and does it despite occasionally making friends with someone and regretting his line of work! Edouard has that nonchalance, that charm and that both ironic and melancholic distance; and also a literary voice that I love. He's delightful and

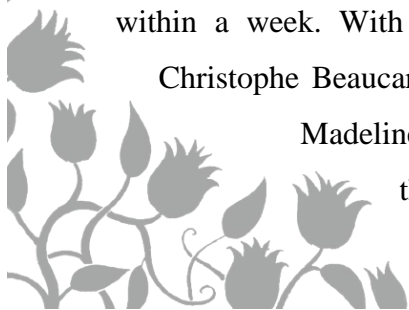
magnificent, cultured and intelligent. He put himself completely at the service of the film. He believed in it and played his parts fully, despite always telling me: "You only want me for my voice. You don't want me for my body otherwise you wouldn't paint me all black!"

And Golshifteh Farahani?

I thought of Golshifteh very quickly, because her husband is a childhood friend of mine. So I've known her a long time, I know her films, and it turns out that now, following the bother she faced from the Iranian state after *Body of Lies*, she lives in France. *Chicken with Plums* is set in the 1950s during the coup d'état mounted by the Americans, because Iran was the first country to nationalize its oil. The character she plays, who is central to the film, is called Irâne, meaning Iran, like you have girls in France called France... So it's not by chance. It's the dream of a bygone Iran, of a democracy that could have existed. All these dreams of a better world which flew away... If you know the history, you can draw the parallel; but if you don't know it, it works anyway. So for a character called Irâne, it just had to be her. She's drop-dead gorgeous and a marvelous actor with incredible emotional power.

And Maria de Medeiros?

Ah, Maria! Maria! I absolutely love that woman! I adore her filmography, the fact that she only does things she likes. She's not the slightest bit careerist. She was shooting in Canada when I offered her the part... She said yes the very next day. She immediately understood the complexity and beauty of her character and didn't baulk at making-up to be ugly for the role. She has extraordinary force and tells fantastic funny stories. Actually, the casting was practically done within a week. With the cast, we never had any problems. Same with the crew: Christophe Beaucarne, the cinematographer, Udo Kramer, the production designer, Madeline Fontaine for costume design, Nathalie Tissier for makeup... For the violin pieces, we were lucky enough to work with Renaud Capuçon, introduced to us by our music supervisor, Elise Luguern. When I attended the recordings in Germany, I



had goose bumps and tears in my eyes. There were also those who worked on *Persepolis* who returned: our composer Olivier Bernet, our editor Stéphane Roche, Damien Gaillardon, our story-boarder Nicolas Pawlowski...



Did you like working on set with the actors, which was new to you?

I thought the set was fantastic! I already have more adrenaline than most people, and there I had even more. I loved the energy that the shoot required. I was happy doing the animation, but that's a marathon, and I'm not a marathon runner. The shoot, however, is a series of short sprints, and I love that. It's exhausting, but so stimulating... I loved working with the actors. I must say they were very respectful of the script and what we asked of them... And the chemistry between them was magnificent.

Did you also follow all the post-production?

Of course! Vincent and I always need to be there. Stéphane Roche, too. In fact, we're a trio. Stéphane works with us all the time, during every stage. He worked with us on the animatic, on the motion and timing of the film upstream... So, very naturally, when he started the editing, we didn't leave his side!



On the release of *Persepolis*, you said you always remembered that snow-capped mountain that overlooks Teheran and that you always missed it... We see it again as *Chicken with Plums* opens...

How can I escape it? It's etched in my heart for ever. I talk about what I know. The milieu I depict in *Chicken with Plums* is the one I grew up in. At the time, for example, they all dreamed of having a western interior, especially in Teheran. In the 50s, Iran was very westernized. That's why, in our movie, the furniture in the family home is very western... Plus, beyond the esthetics of the movie, it's a way of saying certain things, especially these days when we hear that multiculturalism is a failure: as if all Iranians were identical, as if all French people were identical, too! An Iranian Guardian of the Islamic revolution and I will never understand each

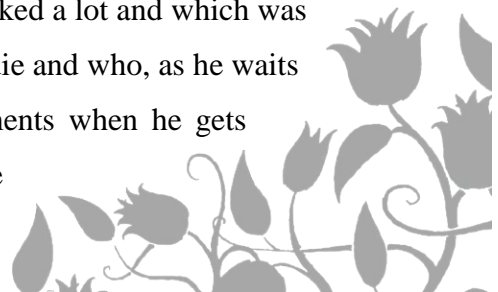
other. I better understand French people I meet in a café! It's not about country, language or religion; it's about human beings. The only clear divide that exists is between the fanatics in any country and those who communicate with others. Of course, this movie talks about multiculturalism, even if it primarily tells the story of people who can die of love. Anyway, it's high time we celebrated love and the human and made them central to everything. It's wonderful making a film in Germany, set in Iran, with Isabella who's Italian, Maria who's Portuguese, Golfshifteh who's Iranian, Rona who's Romanian, Serge Avedikian of Armenian origin, Jamel whose parents are Moroccan, Mathieu, Chiara... and the result: a French movie!



INTERVIEW WITH VINCENT PARONNAUD

Was it you or Marjane who came up with the idea of adapting *Chicken with Plums*? And, of not doing another animated movie?

I can't remember, but I do know that when we finished *Persepolis*, we both felt the need to think of something else, so we started looking to the future... Very soon, we got onto the subject of *Chicken with Plums*. Also very soon, we said we'd make a film with real actors to make a change from the austere, monastic work that animation is... Whereas the adaptation of the four *Persepolis* books was heavy on every level – practical, psychological, human – and we had to make lots of sacrifices with Marjane's narrative, the format of *Chicken with Plums* made our job so much simpler and clearer. This story had more air, more space to play around in, more available freedom. The album has an effective and rhythmic structure, as it's chopped into days, and, at the same time, its non-linear narrative, with flashbacks, leaps forward in time, digressions and dreams, allows you to go off in different directions and to give free rein to your imagination... The book has a puzzle-like quality which I liked a lot and which was very stimulating. I liked the idea of a man going to bed to die and who, as he waits for death, thinks of all kinds of things; I liked the moments when he gets bored and he lets his mind wander... I thought there were things we could try with the sets and settings.



Was it hard to work with a world that wasn't yours again?

Indeed, Marjane treats subjects that aren't akin to mine. Hers have a touch of the romantic, the sentimental, the naive, even, which aren't in my register at all. But it's exactly that which interests me intellectually. So the only question I ask myself is, "How do we tell that?" The idea of telling an old-fashioned love story, with its mix of exuberant feelings, and even a touch of burlesque, intrigued me. I wondered how we could draw the audience into the story by playing with different styles, how we could sweep them off, make them empathize with the characters while permanently shifting the narrative, how we could create emotion while remaining playful, and how far we could go... It was an exciting tightrope-balancing act.



Weren't you ever scared of getting lost, personally?

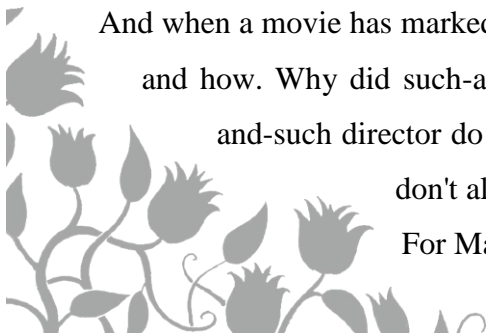
No, never. Because I knew exactly what I was getting into and I always approach this work with honesty. Plus, with Marjane, despite being very different, we're also very complementary; we do see eye to eye on some points. Even she is sometimes totally distraught! But we both love having a good laugh together, mixing seriousness and comedy, pretty-much-cheap ideas with something grandiose... In fact, you can't integrate someone else's world unless there's room for it. And in Marjane's, there is room. Even graphically, due to the sobriety of her drawing, there's room. The opposite would clearly be harder, due to my style and my very atheistic world! We love working together, we continue to surprise each other and we very quickly agree on the fundamentals and on the directions we want to take.



Talking of directions, with *Chicken with Plums*, one gets the impression that you really wanted to have fun with all the different possibilities, from melodrama to sitcom, by mixing genres and visual styles... As though you had conceived the film as homage to cinema.

That was one of our starting points. Was it the fact that we were working with actors for the first time, shooting in a studio, recreating a world from A to Z, by building sets and playing with mock-ups? Whatever, it seemed to be coherent with the project and with the story. Just because it's a serious story set in 1950s Iran didn't mean we had to be realistic, that we had to abandon dreams, the imaginary, fantasy. That's where Marjane and I see eye to eye: we love to forestall things, to thwart fate. Indeed, one of the characters in the movie says, "I take fate and I break it." We wanted to do the same thing with the movie. Early on, we said we would make nods and winks to the movies we loved as children and teenagers. We said – even if Marjane hates the expression – that it was a chance for us to scream out our love for cinema. We're fascinated by the same movies. I recall, when I was 10 or 12, my father banning me from watching TV; so I used to watch *Ciné Club* in secret late at night. More often than not, they were foreign movies with subtitles. I'd watch all these classics with, as an extra, the feeling of breaking the law; so it was twice as good! We wanted to start with something quite classical so that after we could jump to more bizarre, more burlesque registers, while still allowing us to reflect on death... That's why there's both Sophia Loren and Murnau, both Lubitsch and Hitchcock, both puppets and animation... Our aim was to bring a modern view to this story, by playing with the references and esthetical features that belong to us. The big danger was creating a patchwork with no unity; so we worked a lot upstream on the transitions, so they would be smooth and not appear labored, so that the audience could have fun with us on this curious treasure-hunt and step through doors as they opened... As if the audience was active. We don't want to preach truths but to stimulate people. That's a fairly natural approach to us, perhaps because, not being movie professionals, we have no complexes. We're not innocent, however. I've seen tons of movies. Marjane, too.

And when a movie has marked me, I watch it several times to find out why it marked me, and how. Why did such-and-such editing work there but not there? Why did such-and-such director do something successfully, while another didn't? Of course, I don't always find the answers, but it's stimulating to look for them. For Marjane, it's quite similar. After that, we let our instinct guide us, tell us if something's good or not.



How did you prepare for the new experience of a live-action movie?

We knew it was a complicated movie and that we had to give it its own rhythm, which isn't the same as the book. So we gave a lot of thought to the images, the movements and the sets and settings, not just to the style... We made the whole movie as an animatic, we did tests and trials, we played scenes which we filmed and incorporated into the animatic, we started working on the music – which is crucial – with our composer Olivier Bernet who made us samples... I didn't want to find myself at editing totally unprepared! I also realized that it wasn't necessarily the most beautiful images that told best what we wanted to say. That made me very vigilant on the set, it stopped me from being subjugated by what you see live... So during the shoot, we had a pretty precise idea of the sequences! And just as well, because nine weeks of filming, with a huge number of sequences to shoot, with different sets, different lighting... it doesn't leave you much time to think. It was great to be able to rely on the work we'd done upstream. It was quite tough, but it worked out well. Also because we were surrounded by such good people.

What made you choose Christophe Beaucarne as your cinematographer?

Our producer, Hengameh Panahi, introduced him to us, and we got along immediately. I needed a cinematographer who could, in a way, teach me the job. He taught me the focals, the lighting... He was invaluable. We became close very quickly. Christophe isn't only very gifted, but he also handles very well the tension that arises when setting up the lights on set. Udo Kramer, our production designer, was also really impressive. He came on board with a kind of book of moods. He had imagined the movie from all the references we had quoted in the screenplay and he had gotten everything just right! And as we had budget problems, he found clever ways to recycle the sets without making things look restricted. He had a perfect grasp of the project. If the composer, the cinematographer, the production designer, the costume designer and the makeup artist are all in tune with your project, it makes things so much easier. Whereas with an animated film, you can make last-minute changes – and we did plenty of them on *Persepolis* – here, it was impossible. Once a set is built, it's no longer ours to interfere with.



You shot at Babelsberg...

Mentally, it was good to be somewhere other than Paris. Plus I adore Berlin... It was fantastic to see, in the vast hangar where we shot, bits of the set all over the place, like snippets of dreams. Sometimes, I was even transported elsewhere and what had been built seemed so magical; I'd forget it had been built for our movie!



What surprised you most on the set?

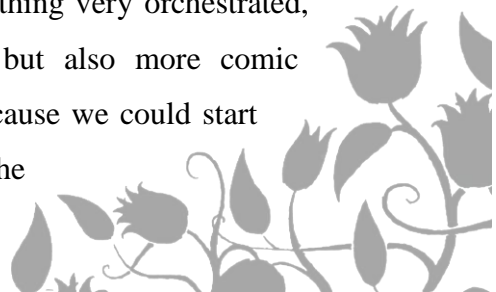
The actors, I think... Actors were something I wasn't at all familiar with... Of course, there were also the sets, the incredible house, the section of street... When we saw it, we went, "Wow, it's so beautiful!" But the actors were something else! Marjane and I chose them together, we discussed them a lot, we met them... But during preparation, it was more she who was in touch with them. And I don't think you really know what an actor is until you work with them. Seeing them at work is really impressive... I realized that even more while editing. I was staggered by their precision, their sense of timing, their way of talking... Maybe that was the biggest surprise: being moved by the actors during editing...

Was it easy getting them to understand what the movie would look like once finished?

For the actors, yes, it was fairly easy... When I spoke earlier about the instinct Marjane and I have about the people we work with, I meant them, to, of course. Their adhesion to the project was so strong that everything came naturally.

For *Chicken with Plums*, you worked with your composer for *Persepolis*, Olivier Brunet...

Our project was a little "old school", so we wanted something very orchestrated, very symphonic. We wanted pomp and romanticism, but also more comic moments. The work Olivier did upstream was crucial, because we could start the shoot already with a very rhythmic structure for the movie... It was both scary and wonderful for him to work with a philharmonic orchestra; but moreover, his music is



beautiful. We also worked again with our editor, Stéphane Roche. His first job on the movie was making the animatic. After, once shooting had begun, he gradually pre-edited it to see if it was working, or if we were missing any scenes... He was like a third eye which had the necessary objectivity to analyze what we were doing. Then he did the editing, for which both Marjane and I were present.



Did he manage to find his own place in-between you?

Yes, and that's not easy! But he was quietly obsessed by the work, by the project, which is how he got by, nervously! He's indispensable to our work... He's one of the people I met on a short movie with whom we worked on *Persepolis* and with whom we continue to progress.

Interviews conducted by Jean-Pierre Lavoignat.



CAST BIOGRAPHIES

MATHIEU AMALRIC (Nasser-Ali)

Selected Filmography

- 2012 ***Chicken with Plums*** by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud
- 2011 *The Rabbi's Cat* (voice) by Joann Sfar and Antoine Delesvaux
The Silence of Joan by Philippe Ramos
- 2010 *Adèle Blanc-Sec* by Luc Besson
Fantastic Mr. Fox (voix française) by Wes Anderson
- 2009 *Wild Grass* by Alain Resnais
Happy End by Jean-Marie et Arnaud Larrieu
Park Benches by Bruno Podalydès
- 2008 *Quantum of Solace* by Marc Foster
Mesrine: Public Enemy Public- Part 1 by Jean- François Richet
A Christmas Tale by Arnaud Desplechin
On War by Bertrand Bonello
- 2007 *A Secret* by Claude Miller
Heartbeat Detector by Nicolas Klotz
The Diving Bell and the Butterfly by Julian Schnabel
Actresses by Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi
Michou d'Auber by Thomas Gilou
- 2006 *Le Grand Appartement* by Pascal Thomas
A Curtain Raiser by François Ozon
The Singer by Xavier Giannoli
Munich by Steven Spielberg
- 2005 *I Saw Ben Barka Get Killed* by Jonathan Zaccai
The Moustache by Emmanuel Carrère
- 2004 *Kings and Queen* by Arnaud Desplechin
- 2003 *My Children are Different* by Denis Dercourt
- 2002 *Special Delivery* by Jeanne Labrune
- 2001 *Boyhood Loves* by Yves Caumon



- 2000 *The Marcorelle Affair* by Serge Le Péron
False Servant by Benoit Jacquot
- 1999 *Late August, Early September* by Olivier Assayas
- 1998 *Alice and Martin* by André Téchiné
- 1996 *My Sex Life... Or How I Got into an Argument* by Arnaud Desplechin

Awards & Nominations

- 2007 *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* by Julian Schnabel
Cesar Award for Best Actor
- 2004 *Kings and Queen* by Arnaud Desplechin
Cesar Award for Best Actor
- 1996 *My Sex Life... Or How I Got into an Argument* by Arnaud Desplechin
Cesar Award for Most Promising Actor



JAMEL DEBBOUZE (Houshang & The Beggar)

Selected Filmography

- 2012 *Chicken with Plums* by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud
- 2011 *Why I Did (not) Eat My Father* by Tanguy DeKermel and Thomas Szabo
- 2010 *Outside the Law* by Rachid Bouchareb
- 2008 *Asterix at the Olympic Games* by F. Forestier et Thomas Langmann
Let It Rain by Agnès Jaoui
- 2006 *Days of Glory* by Rachid Bouchareb
- 2005 *Angel-A* by Luc Besson
- 2004 *She Hate Me* by Spike Lee
- 2002 *Asterix and Obelix meet Cleopatra* by Alain Chabat
- 2001 *Amelie from Montmartre* by Jean-Pierre Jeunet
- 2000 *Granturismo* by Denys Thibaut

1999 *The Sky, the Birds and... Yo' Mamma!* by Djamel Bensalah
Les Petits Souliers by Olivier Nakache and Eric Toledano

1998 *Zonzon* by Laurent Bouhnik

Awards & Nominations

2007 *Days of Glory* by Rachid Bouchareb
Cannes - Best Actor

2003 *Asterix et Obelix meet Cleopatra* by Alain Chabat (2002)
Nomination: Cesar Award for Best Supporting Actor

2002 *Amelie from Montmartre* by Jean-Pierre Jeunet
Nomination: Cesar Award for Best Supporting Actor

GOSHIFTEH FARAHANI (Irâne)

Selected Filmography

2012 ***Chicken with Plums*** by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud

2011 *If you die, I'll kill you* by Hiner Saleem

2010 *There Be Dragons* by Roland Joffé
Shirin by Abbas Kiarostami

2009 *About Elly* by Asghar Farhadi

2008 *Body of Lies* by Ridley Scott

2007 *Half Moon* by Bahman Ghobadi

2006 *In the Name of the Father* by Ebrahim Hatamikia

2005 *Bab' Aziz, The Prince that Contemplated His Soul* by Nacer Khemir
The Fish Fall in Love by Ali Raffi

2004 *The Tear of the Cold* by Azizollah Hamidnezhad

2003 *Boutique* by Hamid Nematollah
Two Angels by Mamad Haghghat



EDOUARD BAER (Azraël)

Selected Filmography

- 2012 *Chicken with Plums* by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud
- 2010 *Mon pote* by Marc Esposito
Hitler in Hollywood by Frédéric Sojcher
An Ordinary Execution by Marc Dugain
The Barons by Nabil Ben Yadir
- 2009 *Wild Grass* by Alain Resnais
Le Petit Nicolas by Laurent Tirard
- 2007 *The Girl Cut in Two* by Claude Chabrol
Moliere by Laurent Tirard
- 2006 *Made in Paris* by Pascal Bonitzer
The Tiger Brigades by Jérôme Cornuau
- 2005 *How Much Do you Love me* by Bertrand Blier
Akoibon by Edouard Baer
- 2004 *A Boire* by Marion Vernoux
The Story of My Life by Laurent Tirard
French Spies by Gérard Pirès
- 2003 *Le Bison* by Isabelle Nanty
- 2002 *Cravate Club* by Frédéric Jardin
Asterix and Obelix Meet Cleopatra by Alain Chabat
- 2001 *God is Great and I'm not* by Pascale Bailly
Betty Fisher and Other Stories by Claude Miller
Of Woman and Magic by Claude Miller
- 2000 *La Bostella* by Edouard Baer
- 1999 *Nothing About Robert* by Pascal Bonitzer
- 1997 *Heroines* by Gerard Krawczyk
- 1994 *Loose Screws* by Frédéric Jardin

Awards & Nominations

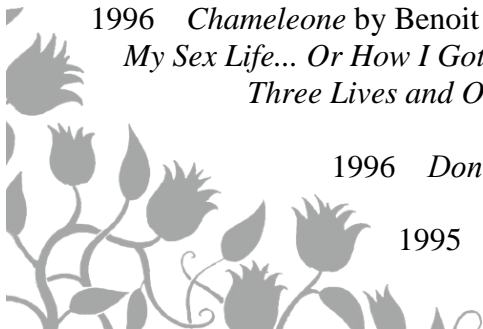
- 2002 *Betty Fisher and Other Stories* by Claude Miller
Nomination: Cesar Award for Best Supporting Actor



CHIARA MASTROIANNI (Lili Adult)

Selected Filmography

- 2012 *Chicken with Plums* by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud
- 2011 *Beloved* by Christophe Honoré
- 2010 *Homme au bain* by Christophe Honoré
- 2009 *Making Plans for Lena* by Christophe Honoré
Pardon My French by Sophie Fillières
Park Benches by Bruno Podalydès
- 2008 *The Beautiful Person* by Christophe Honoré
A Christmas Tale by Arnaud Desplechin
Crime Is Our Business by Pascal Thomas
- 2007 *Persepolis* (voice) by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud
Love Songs by Christophe Honoré
- 2005 *Akoibon* by Edouard Baer
- 2003 *It's Easier for a Camel...* by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
- 2002 *Carnage* by Delphine Geize
The Words of My Father by Francesca Comencimi
- 2000 *Six Pack* by Alain Berbérian
- 1999 *The Letter* by Manuel Oliveira
Liberio Burro by Sergio Castellitto
Time Regained by Raoul Ruiz
For Sale by Laetitia Masson
- 1997 *Nowhere* by Gregg Araki
- 1996 *Chameleone* by Benoit Cohen
My Sex Life... Or How I Got Into an Argument by Arnaud Desplechin
Three Lives and Only One Death by Raoul Ruiz
- 1996 *Don't Forget You Are Going to Die* by Xavier Beauvois
- 1995 *Diary Of a Seducer* by Daniel Dubroux
Prêt-A-Porter: Ready to Wear by Robert Altman



1993 *A la Belle Etoile* by Antoine Desrosières
My Favorite Season by André Techiné



Awards & Nominations

1994 *My Favorite Season* by André Techiné
Nomination: Cesar Award for the Most Promising Actress

ISABELLA ROSSELLINI (Nasser-Ali's Mother)

Selected Filmography

2012 *Chicken with Plums* by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud

2011 *Late Bloomers* by Julie Gavras

2010 *The Solitude of Prime Numbers* by Saverio Costanzo
Deauville by Miguel Cruz Carretero

2009 *My Dog Tulip* by Paul and Sandra Fierlinger

2008 *The Accidental Husband* by Griffin Dunne
Two Lovers by James Gray

2007 *Scandaleusement Célèbre* by Douglas McGrath

2006 *The Architect* by Matt Tauber
Infamous by Douglas McGrath

2005 *La fiesta del chivo* by Luis Llosa
Heights by Chris Terrio

2004 *King of the Corner* by Peter Riegert

1998 *The Impostors* by Stanley Tucci
Left Luggage by Jeroen Krabbé

1996 *The Funeral* by Abbel Ferrara
Crime of The Century (TV) by Marc Rydell
Big Night by Stanley Tucci and C. Scott

1994 *Wyatt Earp* by Lawrence Kasdan

- 1993 *The Innocent* by John Schlesinger
- 1992 *Death Becomes Her* by Robert Zemeckis
- 1990 *Sailor and Lula* by David Lynch
- 1989 *A Touch of Infidelity* by Joel Schumacher
- 1986 *Blue Velvet* by David Lynch

Awards & Nominations

- 1998 *Left Luggage* by Jeroen Krabbé
Berlin - Special Mention
- 1996 *Crime of the Century* (TV) by Marc Rydell
Nomination: Golden globe Best TV Actress
- 1987 *Blue Velvet* by David Lynch
Winner - Independent Spirit Awards - Best Actress

ERIC CARAVACA (Abdi)

Selected Filmography

- 2012 *Chicken with Plums* by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud
- 2010 *Qui a envie d'être aimé?* by Anne Giafferi
Comme Les Cinq doigts de la Main by Alexandre Arcady
The Counsel by Cédric Anger
- 2009 *La Petite Chambre* by Stéphanie Chuat and Véronique Reymond
Restless by Laurent Perreau
A Spot of Bother by Alfred Lot
Eden Is West by Costa-Gavras
- 2008 *Client* by Josiane Balasko
Family Values by Claus Drexel
- 2007 *Room of Death* by Alfred Lot
- 2007 *Waiting for Someone* by Jérôme Bonnell
- 2006 *The Stone Council* by Guillaume Nicloux
Ambitious by Catherine Corsini



- 2006 *La Raison du Plus Faible* by Lucas Belvaux
- 2005 *The Passenger* by Eric Caravaca
- 2004 *Inguélézi* by François Dupeyron
- 2003 *Hanging Offense* by Guillaume Nicloux
She Is One of Us by Siegrid Anoy
His Brother by Patrice Chéreau
- 2002 *Novo* by Jean Pierre Limosin
- 2001 *Officer's Ward* by François Dupeyron
- 2000 *Unleaded* by Muriel Teodori
- 1999 *What's Life?* by François Dupeyron (1999)

Awards & Nominations

- 2002 *Officer's Ward* by François Dupeyron
 Nomination: Cesar Best Actor
- 2000 *What's Life?* by François Dupeyron
 Cesar of Most promising Actor

MARIA DE MEDEIROS (Faranguisse)

Selected Filmography

- 2012 ***Chicken with Plums*** by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud
- 2011 *Viagem a Portugal* by Sergio Trefaut
Ni à vendre ni à louer by Pascal Rabaté
- 2010 *Hitler in Hollywood* by Frédéric Sojcher
- 2009 *Il Compleanno* by Marco Filiberti
O Contador by Historias de Luiz Villaca
- 2008 *My Stars* by Laetitia Colombani
- 2007 *Médée Miracle* by Tonino De Bernardi



- 2007 *Dans les Cordes* by Magaly Richard-Serrano
- 2006 *Je m'appelle Elizabeth* by Jean- Pierre Améris
- 2004 *Marlène de Sousa* by Toniono De Bernardi
- 2003 *My Life Without Me* by Isabelle Coixet
- 2001 *Water & Salt* by Teresa Villaverde
- 1997 *Le Comédien* by Christian De Chalonge
- 1996 *Le Polygraphe* by Robert Lepage
- 1995 *Adao e Eva* by Joaquim Leitao
- 1994 *Pulp Fiction* by Quentin Tarantino



CREW BIOGRAPHIES

MARJANE SATRAPI (Writer/Director)

Marjane Satrapi was born in Iran. Having studied at the French lycée in Teheran, she furthered her studies in Vienna before settling in France in 1994. On arrival in Paris, she joined the Atelier des Vosges, a haunt of the big names in modern comic-book illustration.

In her first novel, Persepolis 1, published by L'Association in November 2000, Marjane retraces part of her family's history through the story of her first ten years until the fall of the Shah's regime and the start of the Iran-Iraq war. The book received the prize for the best first album at the Angoulême festival. In Persepolis 2, released in October 2001, she recounts the Iran-Iraq war and her adolescence until her departure for Vienna aged 14. Persepolis 3 and Persepolis 4 tell of her exile in Austria and her return to Iran.

She has since published two further novels, Embroideries and Chicken with Plums. The latter won the 2005 prize for the best album at the Angoulême festival.

She has also published children's books, notably Sagesses et malices de la Perse in partnership with Lila Ibrahim-Ouali and Bahman Namwar-Motalg, Monsters are Afraid of the Moon, Ulysse au pays des fous in partnership with Jean-Pierre Duffour, released in 2001; Ajdar, released in 2002 and Le Soupir, released in 2004.

In 2009, she appeared in Riad Sattouf's movie, *Les Beaux Gosses (The French Kissers)*, co-wrote the lyrics of "Poney Rose" with Philippe Katerine for the album by Arielle Dombasle, *Glamour à mort*, and illustrated the cover of the Iggy Pop album *Préliminaires*.

Chicken with Plums is her second full-length movie co-directed with Vincent Paronnaud after *Persepolis*.



VINCENT PARONNAUD (Writer/Director)

Vincent Paronnaud, alias Winshluss, was born in La Rochelle. He's a key figure in underground comic books.

He and his friend and partner Cizo co-created "Monsieur Ferraille", the emblematic character of the magazine Ferraille Illustré (of which he is co-chief editor, along with Cizo and Felder). Together, they published Comix 2000 in 2000, then Wizz et Buzz, Volume 1 of which appeared in 2006 and Volume 2 in 2007.

Solo, he published 7 Façons d'en finir avec l'humanité and Super Negra in 1999, Welcome to the Death Club and Pat Boon - "Happy End" in 2001, Smart Monkey in 2004 and Pinocchio in 2008.

He has been nominated three times at the Angoulême festival: in 2004 for Smart Monkey, in 2007 for Wizz et Buzz (with Cizo) and in 2009 for Pinocchio, for which he received the Fauve d'Or (prize for the best album).

In film, Winshluss directed a mid-length movie, *Villemolle 81*, which he co-wrote with Frédéric Felder; two short animated movies: *Raging Blues* (B&W/6 min/2003) and *O'Boy, What Nice Legs!* (B&W/1 min/2004); and a mockumentary: *Hollywood Superstars Avec Mr. Ferraille*.

Chicken with Plums is his second full-length movie co-directed with Marjane Satrapi after *Persepolis*.





CHICKEN WITH PLUMS

A film by

Marjane Satrapi & Vincent Paronnaud

Written by

Marjane Satrapi & Vincent Paronnaud

based on the graphic novel Chicken with Plums by Marjane Satrapi
published by Editions L'Association

Produced by

Hengameh Panahi

Executive producer

François - Xavier Decraene

Co-Producers

Christoph Fisser
Charlie Wobcken
Torsten Poeck

Henning Molfenter
Adrian Politowski
Gilles Waterkeyn

First Assistant Director

Jérôme Zajdermann

Production Manager

Jasmina Torbati

Composer

Olivier Bernet

Cinematographer

Christophe Beaucarne - A.F.C /S.B.C.

Editor

Stéphane Roche

Production designer

Udo Kramer

Costume designer

Madeline Fontaine – E.F.A – A.F.C.C.

Makeup

Nathalie Tissier

Hair

Stéphane Malheu

Sound

Gilles Laurent
David Vranken
Emmanuel de Boissieu

CAST

Nasser-Ali	Mathieu Amalric
Azraël	Edouard Baer
Faringuise	Maria de Medeiros
Irâne	Golshifteh Farahani
Abdi	Eric Caravaca
Adult Lili	Chiara Mastroianni
Cyrus	Mathis Bour
Lili	Enna Balland
The Music Teacher	Didier Flamand
Irâne's father	Serge Avédikian
Soudabeh	Rona Hartner

with the participation of

The Beggar and Houshang	Jamel Debbouze
and	
Parvine	Isabella Rossellini

Mirza	Fred Saurel
Cyrus (at 22 years old)	Christian Friedel
Nancy	Julia Goldstern
Young Faringuise	Julia Camps Y Salat
Irâne's grandson	Jaouen Gouevic
Young Nasser Ali	Timothé Riquet
Young Abdi	Angus Boulaire
Schoolmaster	François Legrand
Cyrus's daughter	Laura Baade
Cyrus's son 1	Dustin Graf
Cyrus's son 2	Nomi Kaiser
Socrates	Jean-Michel Dagory
Socrates' student	Christian Sengewald
Rasht Bazaar man	Adolfo Assor
Old woman bus driver	Ilse Strambowski
American doctor	Tim Williams
Cards player	Dietmar Rüttiger
Anonymous cemetery patron 1	Louis-Marie Audubert
Anonymous cemetery patron 2	Bruno Paviot
Anonymous cemetery patron 3	Philippe Béglia
Family doctor	Luc Gentil