

FIDÉLITÉ
presents

GÉRARD DEPARDIEU EDOUARD BAER GUILLAUME GALLIENNE
VINCENT LACOSTE VALÉRIE LEMERCIER FABRICE LUCHINI CATHERINE DENEUVE
CHARLOTTE LE BON BOULI LANNERS *and* DANY BOON

Asterix & Obelix

IN BRITAIN

A film by
LAURENT TIRARD

From the works of **RENÉ GOSCINNY** *and* **ALBERT UDERZO**

Screenplay by **LAURENT TIRARD** *and* **GRÉGOIRE VIGNERON**

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SYNOPSIS

The year is 50 B.C. Caesar is hungry for new conquests. At the head of his glorious legions he decides to invade the island that lies at the very edge of the known world, that mysterious land known as Britain.

Victory is swift and total. Or... almost. One single tiny village manages to resist, but its forces are growing weaker so Cordelia, Queen of the Britons, decides to send her most faithful officer Anticlimax to seek aid in Gaul, in another little village famed for its dogged resistance to the Romans...

At the village in question, Asterix and Obelix already have their hands full. The Chief has entrusted them with the task of making a man of Justforkix, his young pain-in-the-ass nephew, recently arrived from Lutèce. And their task is far from accomplished.

When Anticlimax arrives to ask for help, the Gauls decide to give him a barrel of their famous magic potion. Asterix and Obelix will accompany him back to Britain - as will Justforkix. After all, the voyage seems to offer an excellent opportunity for completing the young man's education. Unfortunately, nothing ever goes quite to plan...

THE CHARACTERS

THE GAULS

ASTERIX, OBELIX & IDEFIX

Asterix, the hero of these adventures, a smart and crafty warrior, is always entrusted with the most perilous missions. Obelix is his inseparable friend. A menhir delivery-man by trade, a great lover of roasted wild boar and punch-ups, he is ready to drop everything to follow Asterix in his new adventure. They are accompanied by Dogmatix, the only eco-dog known to man, who howls with despair at the sound of a tree being cut down.

JUSTFORKIX

Justforkix, a trendy young Lutecian, who writes poetry and songs when the fancy takes him, will never forget this trip to Britain that will help him become a man.

THE ROMANS

JULIUS CAESAR

Julius Caesar, General-in-Command of the Romans, the author of *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars*; his comments on Asterix however, while less famous, are somewhat sharper in tone.

ACADEMUS

A young aide-de-camp who has recently joined Caesar's staff, he is very ambitious and dreams of glory and wealth. It's his idea to enlist the fearsome Northern warriors to defeat the British resistance. For Academus, everything will quickly head south...

THE BRITONS

QUEEN CORDELIA

Each day at five in the afternoon, Cordelia, the Queen of the Britons, stops whatever she is doing to drink warm water. Nothing will stop this tradition; not even the Roman armies besieging her village populated by invincible Britons.

ANTICLIMAX, OPHELIA & MISS MACINTOSH

Anticlimax, a British gentleman through and through, comes to Her Majesty's rescue. In order to repel Caesar's legions, he embarks on a secret mission to Gaul to ask Asterix and his friends for some magic potion. Ophelia, a sublime young woman who lives in Londinium, Britain's capital, is engaged to Anticlimax. But it's not easy to tell since the gentleman maintains his reserve and

indulges only in polite conversation with her. Ophelia secretly dreams of a passionate declaration of love... Miss Macintosh, Ophelia's strict and austere governess, ensures British decorum is respected at all costs, so much that she attempts to make a perfect gentleman out of Obelix.

THE NORMANS

TIMANDAHAF

Timandahaf is the fearsome head of the Normans, who destroys everything in his path and cannot feel fear. But as everyone knows, fear gives you wings and Timandahaf dreams of flying. It would take a real coward to teach him, and as luck would have it, Justforkix is more terrified of Normans than anything else in the world...

NEEDSABAF

What does a Norman warrior do when he visits a foreign country? He finds the nearest village and slaughters everyone in sight! Needsabaf is one of those, until he meets Miss Macintosh, who is hell bent on educating him. Will the austere governess manage to find the heart of a gentleman inside the barbarian?

A CONVERSATION WITH LAURENT TIRARD

(Director)

How did you react to the suggestion that you could direct the next *Asterix*?

I was both terrified and excited. It's a massive project but I knew this was the opportunity of a lifetime. In the end two reasons pushed me to throw myself into this venture: the artistic challenge, and the adventure it represented. The idea wasn't to approach *Asterix* as a director would an episode of *Harry Potter* where you have to continue in the footsteps of the previous one. I had to ask myself what an *Asterix* film directed by me would look like.

How did you choose the book you would use?

I already had an idea before I started reading the books again. I wanted an odyssey. The English and their culture have always fascinated me, ever since my very first trip to Great Britain. My favourite author is Jane Austen. In her novels, she describes the codified society and its rules that we don't always understand very well. The English have difficulty in expressing their feelings but when they do, they really do. They're crazy *and* elegant, timeless. So I thought of *Asterix in Britain* from which I remembered some hilarious lines written by Goscinny. But Grégoire Vigneron and I wanted to fit the Normans in since the theme of civilisation was going to underline the film we wanted to make: it was interesting to oppose different cultures and offer a wide range of civilisations. The Romans reminded us of the Americans of today: they have a tendency to invade countries "for their own good". All others are barbaric to them. But we wanted to show that it's much more complicated than that: there are the lovable barbarians (the Gauls), pure barbarians, crude and wild (the Normans) and the direct opposite barbarians, in many respects much more sophisticated than themselves (the British).

What were your main goals?

We wanted to push the duo Asterix and Obelix to the forefront and really explore these characters and give them an intellectual complexity: to do so we were convinced we had to broach the theme of sexuality. Since male/female relationships are a favourite subject of mine - one that has fuelled my previous films - we imagined the relationship between Asterix and Obelix to be that of a couple running out of steam and shattered by the arrival of a child (Justforkix). As a result, Asterix starts to question things, wants to explore other avenues and has a profound dispute with Obelix... It's an extremely codified version of the classic romantic plot but it brings real emotion to the story.

So that's why you introduced female characters into the world of our heroes...

Grégoire and I couldn't have conceived of a film without women. Early on, Justforkix, the young

character played by Vincent Lacoste, puts his foot in it and asks: "So being a man is living like you: together, with a little dog?" Once this question is asked, Asterix would want to include women in his world. And to add to that, Obelix would throw himself into an unlikely affair with the character of Miss Macintosh played by Valérie Lemercier.

Is Vincent Lacoste's character one of the liberties you took to modernise the story?

Yes and no. The character of Justforkix does exist in *Asterix in Britain* but he represents a youth of the 60s. Uderzo and Goscinny talked about their times; Justforkix's behaviour is different than that of today's youth. We've just updated him.

How did you proceed with the casting?

G rard Depardieu was the obvious choice for Obelix. I'm very happy with his portrayal in the film. And since we were emphasizing the idea of culture shock, we needed a very French Asterix. Or rather, one very close to the idea foreigners have of the French: a loquacious man, charming, slightly arrogant. This caricature produced a less rustic, less "Gaulish" Asterix. He's more sophisticated, more intellectual than the character in the books. It was while writing this character that Edouard Baer's face appeared to me. He is very French, Parisian even. Once I had him in mind I wanted him for the role.

You cast a number of actors you had worked with previously, as with Edouard Baer in *The Story of My Life*...

For a project of this scale, it's certainly reassuring to know some of your actors well. It also helps with the writing. I had directed Fabrice Luchini in *Moli re* and even before I started working on this screenplay I knew he'd make a perfect Julius Caesar. As for Val rie Lemercier who played the mother in *Little Nicholas*, we'd hardly outlined Miss Macintosh's character before we knew she had to play the part.

It wasn't an easy option to have French actors play the English parts and yet each one of them makes their character theirs.

Catherine Deneuve is to my eyes very credible as the Queen of the Britons. Guillaume Gallienne is a master when it comes to accents; he slipped into Anticlimax's skin very easily. Val rie Lemercier worked a lot on her totally original phrasing for Miss Macintosh and it really works. As for Charlotte Le Bon, whom I didn't know, I followed my casting director's recommendation and it worked immediately.

How do you direct your actors?

I adapt to each one of them so they can be comfortable on set. Some need to talk about their role; the readings help answer all their questions. I spend time with each actor beforehand, going through the psychology of each character and we read the screenplay, scene-by-scene, line-by-line. For a project like this it's vital to do this before shooting starts since you don't really

have much time afterwards. I'm still open to suggestions and improvisation. I have a precise idea of what I want but I do like to leave the actors some kind of freedom because you're never safe from a good surprise! I like to be close to the actors. So for a film of this scale, despite the sets, the extras, the assistants, you have to make yourself available to them.

You had to learn how to handle a great number of extras. Did you find this interesting?

I knew that my film would largely revolve around comic scenes between actors rather than big action. But there are a few spectacular scenes linked to the story, like the rugby match or the final battle. For that we shot for 10 days scenes involving 800 extras. It's complicated, requires an army of assistants and reduces flexibility in the directing.

Did shooting in 3D modify the way you work?

Inevitably, it had repercussions on the directing. If the trend these last twenty years has been for more and more heavily edited shots, 3D imposes just the opposite. The image is so rich you'd risk giving the audience a headache. When you shoot in 3D, you need to favour long shots and the rhythm has to come from the interaction of the actors. But this classic approach, which takes us back some 70 years, suits me very well.

Was 3D your choice?

No, it was a decision made by the production and the distribution. I was slightly reluctant at first. 3D lends itself well to the world of *Asterix*, particularly for the effects of the magic potion, the beating taken by the Romans and the rugby scene. I used to see 3D as a gadget to allow things to emerge from the screen. But my meeting with Alain Derobe and his images for *Pina* changed the way I looked at 3D. I saw two advantages: firstly, by bringing out the sets and the costumes, 3D allows you to immerse the audience in a fictional world and helps them get inside the cartoon; secondly, it emphasizes the presence of the actors and therefore of their characters.

You had the same crew as for *Little Nicholas*. What kind of direction did you give them?

When I wrote a scene, I visualized the sets and costumes pretty thoroughly, but I didn't give the crew any indications other than those in the screenplay. Rather than go towards things I knew, some somehow clichéd elements, I preferred to trust their references and their originality. I only knew that I wanted a timeless Britain, with its gardens, its punks, its red phone boxes, its tartans... and real Romans. We've often seen cheap Romans with tin armour in the movies. I wanted them to be like the Germans in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*; we had to take them seriously! It's a strange choice since *Asterix* and *Obelix* are clearly not realistic characters and I saw them as superheroes. The blending of genres wasn't an easy one but I insisted on it.

What about the music?

Again, I wanted to work with people I trusted. They submitted ideas I hadn't thought of, among them rock music. It was the editor who suggested a track by The Ramones for the arrival of our heroes in Londinium. As for The BB Brunes, I didn't know them well but they had the right look and the ideal musical style to pass for British. Again, it was the editor's idea to show Londinium as a video clip to accompany their music.

In retrospect, what was hardest?

Sustaining the stamina for such a physical and psychological marathon. After six months of preparation you're already tired when you start shooting. But you have to keep your standards of ambition, rigour, and good taste. You have to stay fresh each day, enthusiastic and available to answer all the questions that arise.

And the best moments?

All these fleeting moments when I was able to step back to enjoy what was happening to me: directing Catherine Deneuve, a true icon who has worked with Truffaut and Buñuel; admiring the army of ants and cranes who bustled about in Malta to capture the scenes on the open sea; directing battle scenes with the Romans on a plain in Hungary when it was 35 degrees...

Did you think about the teenager you were and who would have perhaps never dreamed of anything like this?

But the teenager I was convinced he would make this kind of film! (Laughs). It's only later, when you discover the reality of this profession that you think: "Will I ever be able to make a film, at least once in my life?"

A CONVERSATION WITH GERARD DEPARDIEU (Obelix)

What made you want to get back into Obelix's costume?

I love this character. Obelix has a field of daisies inside his head: he doesn't have a single bad thought. And if by bad luck, one comes to his mind, it saddens him infinitely. That's what makes him extremely touching. There's nothing negative in him. He's just a fat man... who doesn't like to be called fat! (Laughs)

How is he like you?

Like him, I can feel humiliated. I don't know if he is like me but the fact that I like him so much perhaps shows a certain desire to be like him. I don't envy his strength, since by nature I can bear a great deal, but rather his positive side.

For a gastronome like yourself, is it possible to have such passion for wild boar?

Wild boar is very good! But I prefer it with sauce rather than roasted. Young wild boar fricassee is exquisite! Obelix's appetite is matched only by his generosity and his sense of wonder. The same thing when he falls in love: it's all too much. It's not rational but it is beautiful.

What's your magic potion?

Life! My excesses in life are probably sometimes disheartening for those around me.

Everyone agrees that no other actor could play Obelix. Is it a pleasure to be associated so much with a character?

Yes, all the more so since this one is so likable. And it's very special, playing a cartoon or a trait.

Did you ever meet Goscinny?

Absolutely. In the 70s I played in *The Annuity* and *Down-in-the-Hall Gang*, Pierre Tchernia's films co-written with Goscinny. I liked him a lot because he was intelligent, loved laughing and was fundamentally good. You can find his spirit in *Little Nicolas* or *Asterix and Obelix*. As an adult, he was like one of those children who know how to observe. Those at the end of the crocodile line, who look at the world with wonder. Tchernia has this spirit too; Jean Carmet and Michel Serrault had it. Later, I met Uderzo, who was a lot more structured.

Is it difficult to submit to the new demands of directors each time you play this character?

No, because the vision I have of my character is always connected to the film and the scenes I will be asked to play. There are some beautiful ones here: the touching moment when Obelix has to tell Dogmatix that he can't take him to England with him because of his friend. And when Obelix dares to leave with Miss Macintosh and Asterix rebuffs him, he says something like: "You can say what you want but what matters most for me is that you are my friend": it's magnificent. Personally, I like missing someone because it allows me to meet that person again afterwards all the better. There is no need to intellectualize all these simple and beautiful things when you say them honestly.

What do you like about Laurent Tirard?

I love Laurent! He's a marvellous guy because he manages to reconcile misanthropes like me with the human race! To work with him is refreshing. I loved Pialat, Ridley Scott or Bertrand Blier for the same reasons. But Laurent has something extra: flexibility, freshness... he gets thrilled

just like a kid. In his films, he doesn't try either to appear or to disappear. In *Little Nicholas* or *Asterix* he avoids all sopiness and stays within the world of children while looking at the world of adults without judging them. There isn't one single moment in his adaptations when he uses effects to bring you back into the world of adults. It's extremely difficult to be simple as the comic book was. But I think this is the only *Asterix* film that stays faithful to the comics.

What judgement do you bring to the four adaptations you've collaborated to?

I never judge, neither the film nor the actors. What interest me most are the frame and the lights. But let's say that the first film has the virtue of having given flesh to the stroke of a pen, which is really difficult; the second, which was a success, was full of "Canal + humour"; in the third we got a bit lost in the performances of the Olympic games but that's when Julius Caesar intervened. A Julius Caesar whom we find absolutely spot on here, in Fabrice Luchini.

How did you find your new Asterix?

If the film is a great success it's in no small part due to Laurent for choosing Edouard. I like his dandyism, his slight arrogance, just like the image we have of a typical Frenchman. Before, our little Asterix was first and foremost an old fashioned, typically narrow-minded Frenchman who symbolised the first Resistance. But in the comic books, he's never like that, and his village is just a little hamlet that resists, with its traditions, its likeability and its simple joys.

What about your sweetheart, played by Valérie Lemercier?

She's an intelligent woman. Her spirit and humour make her sparkling, beautiful and graceful. Valérie is a true comedian and even when she's scathing, she is magnificent. Like Catherine Deneuve, her personality, her energy and humour make her very beautiful. Our little Charlotte Le Bon has the same energy; she is adorable. In fact, more than talent, it is the soul that conquers me.

What does a seasoned actor like you make of the young Vincent Lacoste?

In this film, he is exceptional. Vincent has enough distance from adolescence to portray teenage ingratitude. He represents today's youth very well. Contrary to ten years ago they are neither stuck on nor blasé about new technologies, as they have gone beyond the phenomenon.

What is your opinion of 3D?

Generally speaking I'm not into 3D that much since it's applied to American science fiction films and rather than watch *Avatar* or *Batman* at the movies, I've always preferred reading A.E. Vogt, Isaac Asimov or other great authors of the genre. But I have to admit that to give life to characters with charged features like those of the cartoons, and to illustrate the spirit of a small Breton village that resists Julius Caesar so playfully, 3D is perfectly adapted.

Is it a constraint for an actor?

Nothing is a constraint. Not acting in front of a green screen nor in front of a 3D camera. You know, acting is the stupidest and most wonderful job in the world. When you don't take yourself too seriously, it's fabulous, because it's not work. That's why I get annoyed when people assign themselves a mission and intellectualise everything. Thankfully, when I'm in the frame, there's no longer anything intellectual there! (Laughs)

What are your strongest memories of the shoot?

I loved shooting in Ireland. It was magnificent and I loved the climate. If Edouard is a lizard looking for the sun, I am a cold climate animal.

What do you think is the film's greatest achievement of this film?

This *Asterix* is a real success of a cartoon. The scripting is perfect because it shows the different temperaments of the British and the French. If the British had invented *Asterix* we would have been seen as big wine drinkers and big Camembert consumers. But it's subtler here and the magic potion makes the difference. Concerning the actors, I find Catherine Deneuve as delicious as candy; Valérie Lemercier magnificent, Guillaume Gallienne fabulous... I adore the Normans, these people who are looking for fear – it's so poetic! And this youthful spirit! I've seen the film with children and I can assure you that when Guillaume Gallienne finds himself naked in front of Charlotte, they were howling with laughter. It's only a tiny moment, but it's beautiful because it's very childlike.

A CONVERSATION WITH EDOUARD BAER (Asterix)

What image of *Asterix* did you have until now?

When I read the books for the first time I found them a lot of fun, cheerful and good-natured. I was more interested in the second fiddles: I loved the story of the blacksmith and the fishmonger and was touched when the bard was forbidden to sing. I also liked Impedimenta, the little lady with a temper, and thought Falbala was very sexy... I even liked Dogmatix, much more interesting than Snowy or Rantanplan! And like all children I loved Obelix, the giant with feet of clay, this big gentle brute who gives away menhirs... what a poetic thing to do! Asterix's Boy Scout side didn't appeal to me as much. He was smiley but had less character and fewer shortcomings than his pal. Obelix sulks, he's a very endearing grown up kid

Did you know that Laurent Tirard and Grégoire Vigneron were writing the role of Asterix for you?

I found out quite late because Laurent had the decency to keep it quiet until he was sure he could offer me the role. He waited until he had a solid cast, allowing him the freedom to choose for Asterix an actor who might not have as much commercial value as certain others.

Is a made-to-measure part a luxury or does it put you under pressure?

It's very flattering and reassuring because in principle it will stop you from having to do character acting. The drawback is that the writing can sometimes be based on an image you have given in other films. I never play myself, I always play a part and I do love improvisation.

What did you want to do with this character?

As an actor, my job is mostly to follow the director's instructions. But I did have in mind Jules Romain's novel *Les Copains*, Julien Duvivier's movie *La Belle Equipe (They Were Five)*, Carné's films or those with Raymond Bussières, with guys as straight as a die, who get into fights, slightly crooked, who like nothing more than being with their buddies. That's how I saw Asterix. When in the original screenplay he tells Caesar: "I am honoured by my whole village", I allowed myself to tell Laurent that I thought Asterix was prouder of his friendships and brotherhood than being honoured.

Was it easy to slip into Asterix's shoes?

What's great with this kind of character is the costume. You only have to look into a mirror and you are Asterix. But you also have to find the rhythm. When I see myself on screen I sometimes find myself somewhat casual, even limp, and my voice mannered. I had to put more energy into my role to be more dynamic and determined.

Do you have less freedom when you play such a famous hero?

I think that a historical character such as De Gaulle or a man with high moral standards like Jean Moulin must be more difficult to play. There are constraints with Asterix, of course, but you forget them on set because you're happy playing the scenes, relationships and situations.

After playing Otis, a supporting role in Alain Chabat's Asterix ten years ago, to land a main role in this one is a bit of an ordination, isn't it?

Absolutely! I even told Alain: "You see, my friend, this lot didn't just offer me an extra's part!" (Laughs).

Do you find similarities between Chabat's and Tirard's humour?

There's something childlike, almost naïve about them. In their films there's more childishness (in a good way!) than in the other *Asterix* movies. And Chabat introduced something wonderful: Obelix blushes when he's in love. There is a bit of that with Tirard: the two friends argue, they sulk;

just like kids they can get really angry with each other, and slightly dishonest too. In any case, Alain and Laurent are at ease when adapting cartoons, particularly Asterix and Obelix who have, like them, retained their childlike qualities.

Did you watch the three previous films again and meet the other Asterixes?

I read the books but didn't see the films because I wanted to do something personal. As for actors, I didn't have discussions with Christian Clavier or Clovis Cornillac. Did Daniel Craig meet Sean Connery and Roger Moore when he became the new James Bond?

Did you know Gérard Depardieu, your Obelix, before this film?

We had worked together on *How Much Do You Love Me?* by Bertrand Blier. Gérard is one of these people I like to stick to, not because of work but for the pure pleasure of being with him. I break into the life of people like him because they make my life more intense. I did that with Chabrol; I continue with Poelvoorde, Bouli Lanners and other actors, writers or wine producers that I'll call out of the blue, without knowing them, to tell them I'd like to get to know them. When you're lucky enough to work in a job that allows you to meet people you admire, it's a pity not to take advantage of it.

What is Depardieu like to work with?

At work, it's no picnic! He observes everything happening on set, he takes no prisoners! Since he's impatient, if you're slightly hesitant he can be ruthless. But he's also an extraordinary companion and a very hard worker... Away from the camera, we were a little bit like Asterix and Obelix: I was both his little brother and his big brother. If he got unruly, I'd take him out of the way so he could keep on messing around and let Laurent work. Fortunately, Laurent is extremely calm and Depardieu really respects him. That's because he immediately noticed that Laurent wasn't the kind of guy who would create a fake authority and play 'director' by re-shooting scenes over and over again for the sake of it.

Was shooting in 3D a constraint?

It was in the sense that the 3D camera is a huge machine that needs an entire team of technicians just to itself. These people are not there to look at you but to observe the machine. But on a shoot I'm not playing for the camera but for my partner, the man behind the camera, the director and all the technicians.

So you see more drawbacks than advantages to big productions?

No, it's fantastic to have lavish sets and costumes, to be part of a huge crew and work with such great actors. But huge productions dilute time enormously. It's never that good for actors because it makes you lose your energy and the thread of the story.

What are the most memorable moments during your 60 days of shooting?

The first day was stupendous. I was in Malta, on the water, with Depardieu on top form, one of my best friends, Atmen Kelif, and the young Vincent Lacoste whom I knew a little. The sight of these great big boats made us happy, and excitement was growing. And Gérard gave one of his crazy laughs that he hides well but which demand to go free.

Were there any barriers between the young actors and the stars?

No, since a lot of these people like Guillaume Gallienne and I come from the theatre and are driven by working as a company. Depardieu - the least assisted and most available actor I know - loves it; anyway, he has nothing to prove. Same for Deneuve. She told me she hadn't seen such an ambience in thirty years by the way. Very often, each actor stays in his or her trailer; here, everybody was out, laughing around a table. It was very friendly.

Did you experience any difficult moments?

I had a hard time in Ireland. We had bad weather for three months, crazy winds; you always had to hurry to walk in between the raindrops. At the end there were a lot of people, particularly all the Vikings, and three sets working at the same time. It was tough on Laurent, above all.

Are you happy with the result?

Yes, I love the epic dimension of this *Asterix*. The story holds together, it's action-packed. As with all superhero films, it gets very exciting when they lose the magic potion, that's to say their magic powers. I found some great scenes with Valérie Lemercier and Charlotte Le Bon. The way Guillaume Gallienne leads the story impressed me greatly, and Vincent Lacoste is just brilliant.

Alberto Uderzo and Anne Goscinny were very impressed by your portrayal of Asterix.

That touches me deeply. Just as much as knowing Uderzo enjoyed the film. Because giving life to a drawing has to be treason... if I had to do this again I'd dye my hair because the wig and the moustache restricted my movements. And it would have to be with the same director because I am, above all, Laurent Tirard's Asterix!

A CONVERSATION WITH GRÉGOIRE VIGNERON (Co-screenwriter)

What do you think of the Goscinny 'style'?

Everything seems so obvious when a work is successful. In Goscinny's books, the stories are quite simple, the argument is subtle and the whole, made of the drawings in each box and the

text in the balloons, has real rhythm. The characters are very sharply characterised. Enormously likeable, they are simple, even naïve. Today, many of them have become archetypal. The talents of Goscinny as a writer and Uderzo as an artist create movement, an agility. Anyone who wants to write comedy is struck by their efficiency. Their stories possess a freshness that seems impervious to time.

Who chose *Asterix in Britain*?

Laurent. But when he told me, I agreed straight away.

What value did *Asterix and the Normans* add?

The Normans want to experience fear because it gives them wings. That's pure Goscinny, the play on words, the pleasure in language. Beside the fact that we liked this poetic story, it allowed us to describe the world as we saw it. In 2008, the controversial invasion of Iraq by the Americans "for their own good" was still going strong. From a western point of view, all the others are barbarians. For Caesar, everything that is not Roman is barbarian. By adding the Normans to the story, we had the whole spectrum: from the most sophisticated, the British, to the most boorish, the Normans, and in the middle, the Gauls. Caesar used the Normans to crush the British. It's a practice as old as war. It always ends up turning against us but we persist in using it. In his comic books Goscinny already takes a swipe at our society. He loves anachronisms. We wanted to recapture his spirit. It wasn't a question of drawing up a list of news topics that we wanted to talk about, but certain questions inhabited us, because they are omnipresent; for example, the fate of émigrés. Asterix and Obelix have to cross the channel. We still had in mind the Sangatte controversy and wanted to do something with it. Then Calamitus arrives on the scene, an illegal immigrant without papyrus, struggling to reach the world of his dreams...

What other themes did you want to broach?

Goscinny's heroes are more or less asexual. Lucky Luke, Iznogood or Asterix don't possess a sexuality. It's invisible. I'm interested in this particular theme. It always seems slightly suspicious to define a character without mentioning his relationship to sex, either clearly or in an encrypted manner.

Is this why you wanted to focus the story of *Asterix and Obelix*?

For the film, it seemed necessary to replace Asterix and Obelix at the centre of the story. Things had to happen to them, I almost want to say "between them".

So we wondered about their personalities and the origin of their duo. Asterix became this guy who has always been a best friend but who gets to a point in his life when loneliness starts to bother him. One of our references was George and Lenny, from *Of Mice and Men*. One is a smart but fundamentally worried little fellow, probably because he's clear-sighted; the other has an extraordinary body, is slightly dim, messes around and breaks the rules in spite of himself. Another point of reference was superheroes who have to live 'like normal people' a good deal of

the time. Besides, given their superpowers, Asterix (thanks to his small flask) and Obelix never really have reasons to escape, to run away or to fight. Only their moral weaknesses and their soul searching allow one to create thrilling stories. The torments Asterix experiences about friendship, camaraderie or faithfulness to his values (while facing an alluring Caesar among others) are a bit like our own.

Was bringing the issues up to date a way of being able to make the works your own?

Without a doubt. What we knew is that we didn't want to be swallowed by the *Asterix* brand but to rejuvenate it. To adapt *Asterix and Obelix* is a powerful constraint but we were never inhibited.

How much room for manoeuvre did you have as far as the copyright owners were concerned?

Quite a lot. Of course, their duty as guardians of the temple obliges them to be conservative and they hesitated over a few passages in the screenplay. But we managed to ensure that these were shot anyway, delaying the moment of selection to post-production. We were convinced that once filmed, once fleshed out by the actors, these passages would exchange their transgressive charge for emotion and comicality. That's exactly what happened.

Did you have many versions?

Not that many. The screenplay got thicker or thinner during consultation (with Benjamin Guedj), or with the arrival of the actors and their suggestions. But the initial structure didn't change.

Is it easier to write with an actor in mind?

Generally, we forbid ourselves to think of actors while writing. But since we make films, and mix with actors, it's becoming difficult. All the more so since it helps. The work of a screenwriter is a bit like that of a composer: you have to write each part, and then orchestrate the sound of different instruments. Edouard Baer is a source of inspiration. In many ways we write bespoke parts for him. Fabrice Luchini too. By arriving early on in our imaginations he influenced our Caesar we imagined closer to Nero, or in any case to the idea we have of him: a baby king. I have to admit that the way he delivers some of our lines gives me great satisfaction.

Did *Little Nicholas* help you 'attack' *Asterix*?

Absolutely. We wrote it after *Moliere*, which had helped us familiarise ourselves with adaptation and period film. With *Little Nicholas* we went further into comic territory, direction of the actors' bodies, slapstick, cartoon-like characters. These two films marked two vital stages before we got to *Asterix*. Laurent's films (which we have written together) couldn't have been made in a different order. They have a continuity. Each one has given us a bit more confidence.

How do you work with Laurent?

We talk a lot. Thanks to our shared experience, ideas come from all sides. First we thin out the

work we're adapting to sort out what to keep and what to discard. Then we write index cards explaining each scene, which we assemble on a wall to build a structure. From that, we write a step outline that is nothing else than the description of each scene with headings such as "Interior day", "exterior night", etc.... At this stage, scenes are detailed, and we submit the document to the producers. Apart from the cards, which aren't common practice for everyone, this is a normal process and numerous screenwriters work this way. When everyone has validated the outline (in the case of *Asterix*, we needed the agreement of the copyright owners) we write the dialogues: it's a work of immersion close to the work of an actor. Once the outline and the characters are clear, it's a pleasure. We had put aside the lines of Goscinny's that we wanted to use. Some have remained intact; others have been transformed, recycled. In the end, everything blends together. The same goes for Laurent's ideas and mine. When it's finished, our screenplay has an organic feel to it, we both make it but you couldn't draw a line between what's his and what's mine - like a child really.

A CONVERSATION WITH ALBERT UDERZO

Do you remember creating the story of *Asterix in Britain*?

Yes, I do, and it's one of my favourites if I have to choose. If memory serves, it was written in 1966. It has to be said that it hasn't aged one bit.

How was the story born?

This was our eighth book and we were used to making the characters go on a journey every two books, within the limits of the known ancient world, of course!

Besides, and this was often criticized, we loved to caricature different nations and emphasize their characteristics. Thus, our Gauls were cantankerous, moaned all the time, were never happy, in short: French! We made the Egyptians walk sideways, following the style of the drawn figures that we've all seen since childhood. Our main aim was to be funny.

For the story of the Britons and the characters in it, it was easy to choose and twist all the powerful cultural symbols of that country: teatime, gardening, gastronomy, the British stiff upper lip, etc...

What are you the most proud of in this particular book?

René spoke perfect English (among other languages)... He came up with the idea of translating the English into French word by word, that's to say taking into account the fact that the position

of words in English is often reversed compared to French. I find this irresistible because it's so left field.

It became *the* joke of the whole adventure.

But it was a perilous exercise because once written in French it had to be translated into English while keeping the play on words and other linguistic quirks. And René who was a perfectionist when it came to the quality of the translations worked endlessly on this since he knew both languages perfectly.

How did you work with René Goscinny?

We shared the same sense of humour, so it was easy for us to find themes together in a spirit of camaraderie.

René would write the script alone. Once completed, he'd give it to me so I could do the drawings, after having asked my opinion, of course. And that was a very serious demand! He awaited my reply anxiously. I remember a bad joke I played on him once after having read one of his just-finished scripts. I knew he was waiting impatiently to hear what I thought, so I called him, and when he asked: "So, what do you think?" I kept quiet for as long as I could, then when I felt his anxiety, I told him, laughing, that it was absolutely perfect, as usual!

I can't repeat all the swear words he inundated me with afterwards and I never did that again!

Is it always difficult for an author to see his works adapted?

Yes, of course, particularly for cartoons. René and I were always concerned that our cartoons would be poorly adapted. All special effects are allowed in comics. Fiction has no limit; you can do what you want.

A live action adaptation was difficult to imagine at the time. How could the effects of the magic potion be reproduced? How to choose the best actor with a nose big enough or a stomach as large as Obelix's? A real character part...

That's why I was really impressed and completely convinced the day I saw Gérard Depardieu as Obelix. And today's technology offers almost unlimited visual possibilities. Besides, *ASTERIX & OBELIX: IN BRITAIN 3D* is filmed in 3D relief, a first in France.

Did you follow the writing and the storyboards closely?

No, not the storyboards, but the writing of the screenplay, yes. What is crucial for me is to ensure that the story of the books is preserved. Adaptations yes, as long as the spirit of our comic books is preserved.

The director made some changes, in particular with sets and costumes. Were you anxious about that and what did you think of the results?

It didn't bother me at all since it served the story. It's difficult to adapt a comic book word for

word. First because it's too short to allow you enough material for a feature-length film, so the screenwriters have to incorporate another story. This obliges them to create coherent links between the two. And since we are talking about adaptation, they can change and add certain elements, create characters to flesh out the story.

And I can confess that I won't complain about the immense honour of having Madame Deneuve herself to play the queen, no less, beside our modest Gauls!

I'm also just as proud to see all these talented actors interested in playing paper characters. I have to take my hat off to them because it is no easy exercise to bring fictional cartoon characters to life.

Which bright ideas from the film would you have liked to put into your comic books?

The possibility of reading them in 3D!

What do you think of Edouard Baer in the role of Asterix?

He is perfect. An actor before him declared that in the end Asterix wasn't a very funny character! Well, Edouard Baer proves him wrong while keeping his own composure... mind, I didn't say that Edouard was as cantankerous and moralistic as Asterix. On the contrary, he enriches the character with his own personality and it works.

What is your relationship to Gérard Depardieu?

As I said, when I saw Gérard in Obelix's pantaloons, it seemed obvious to me: there could be no other actor to play this character. He knew how to respect and emphasize his frankness. Obelix's spirit is simple but honest, and Gérard's charisma magnifies these characteristics. And his physique, which is far from being Obelix's, makes the character absolutely believable: a real force of nature! And he spoke about him so well. I am a great admirer of both Gérard and his work. He's as generous as he is charismatic. He makes me laugh a lot, his gestures are always extravagant but with a real sensitivity underneath. He's an incredible character whom I'm proud to know.

And Luchini as Caesar?

Irresistible! And astonishing, because he knew how to give humour to a character that didn't necessarily have any in the cartoon, even if he is fair when the Gauls triumph each time!

What do you think of 3D?

Magical! It serves the cartoon wonderfully well and magnifies every action.

Which other book would you like to see filmed?

It's never me who decides, but the screenwriters and the directors who are interested in our stories.

I can only give my modest opinion on the advantage some stories offer, or on the contrary, on the difficulties certain others might involve.

A CONVERSATION WITH ANNE GOSCINNY (Daughter of author René Goscinny)

What led you to entrust Laurent Tirard with *Asterix*?

I really loved the adventure we all had with *Little Nicholas* so I just made a wish for *Asterix*! I particularly liked the way Laurent looked at that little boy, and everything in his film was perfectly suited to my father's and Sempé's world. So I organised a screening with Uderzo and some of the Hachette executives who own the merchandising and audio-visual rights to *Asterix* with this in mind. When the screening was over, I think everyone was convinced not only by Laurent's and Grégoire's talents, but that they would not misrepresent the original work.

What do Laurent Tirard and your father have in common?

Elegance and third-degree British humour.

What did you like in his planned adaptation?

As with *Little Nicholas*, he had his own vision. And I liked his idea of refocusing the story on the duo. Because after *Asterix at the Olympic Games* - which by the way had numerous qualities - I wanted to get closer to the minimalist spirit and the humour of my father. In short, I felt that with Laurent, *Asterix* would be raised a level.

Are you particularly attached to this book?

All the wordplay with English like "n'est-il pas?" (Literal translation of isn't it) in *Asterix in Britain* make me laugh so much. Although I love all the *Asterix* books, I think this one is particularly brilliant. But we couldn't afford to get it wrong because my father couldn't stand a film adaptation that wasn't intelligent and creative.

Do you have, like your father and Laurent, a strong connection with England?

No, I don't. To tell you the truth, I was on the Eurostar for the first time only three weeks ago!

Were you sceptical about some of the liberties taken by the screenwriters?

Not really. Since I've had experience of a few adaptations, I know that the screenwriter has to make the story his own. It's a difficult exercise, where you have to find the right balance between respecting the author's values and transgression. Regarding the women characters, I'm fully

aware that today a film without female characters is unimaginable. You need a young one; a middle-aged one, an older woman... or all three! One of the only things I was more reluctant about was the joke about the Asterix and Obelix 'couple': "two men living together with a little dog". You always have to put the work back into its context and in 1959, two men who spent most of their time together were inevitably friends. This joke made me laugh but I made it very clear that any ambiguity would have been a complete misinterpretation.

During which stage of the filmmaking were you most present?

After the writing, I read the screenplay many times. Waging a war against "no worries" and "awesome", I hunted anything in the dialogues that was too easy or too trendy. But I didn't have to be too vigilant since Laurent, Grégoire and I understand each other very well. Once the screenplay was completed I made myself unobtrusive. I am the guardian of my father's works but Asterix's adventures in film are taken from his work and move away from it at the same time. This is the life of literary works that are adapted.

What did you think of the casting?

Having worked with Valérie Lemercier on *Little Nicholas* and not being one to miss any of her shows, I was thrilled to see her in *Asterix*. All the more so since her character - who is very uptight and wants nothing more than to loosen up - could have easily been invented by my father. Catherine Deneuve is a mistress of self-mockery under the Queen's crown. This is also a quality Alain Delon also showed in the third *Asterix*. Vincent Lacoste and Gérard Depardieu are marvellous but my personal favourites are Guillaume Gallienne and Edouard Baer. These two men possess a remarkable elegance and intelligence. Had my father met Guillaume he would probably have written a show just for him, and Edouard's Asterix might well be the one my father dreamed of. As for Luchini, when I saw the film I thought Uderzo and Goscinny had invented this Caesar so Fabrice could play him one day.

Do you have memories of your father writing *Asterix*?

Only auditory memories... I can still hear the tap-tap of his typewriter... It meant two things when I came back from school: Daddy's here and he can't be disturbed!

Did he talk to you about what he was doing?

He probably talked about it with my mother but I was 9 when he died. And this was a different generation. Men born at the beginning of the last century weren't 'buddy-parents' who would talk to their children about what they did. Mine was very loving but I do remember that when he had guests, he'd say: "Put the child away"!

Did he pass on his sense of humour to you?

That's not for me to say but I have often been told I have an unconventional way of looking at things. That's probably why Valérie Lemercier or Alain Chabat really make me laugh.

2012 marks the 35th anniversary of your father's death. Is this film a good tribute?

It's more than that. A tribute can have something frozen about it, something morbid. My father gave these characters a first life and, with this film, Laurent gives them a new one. Which shows that life continues.

What are the rules regarding the merchandising that accompanies the release of an *Asterix* film?

They are set by the publisher Albert René - owned by Hachette - but nothing important can take place without Albert Uderzo and me being informed. I have a right of inspection, and in order to keep this right I mustn't abuse it! If I could give any advice to beneficiaries like me I would tell them to be light and discreet because we have nothing to do with the creation of the works we defend.

Will there be further *Asterix* movies?

My father wrote 24 books and Albert has published 8 since his death so there is a lot of material. As long as producers, screenwriters and actors want to, it will have to continue. As long as the spirit of the series is retained and the film is of equal quality to the original works then yes, there will be more!

A CONVERSATION WITH OLIVIER DELBOSC AND MARC MISSONNIER (Producers)

What were your plans for the new *Asterix*?

Marc Missonnier: Our idea was to do what the Americans call a "reboot", which means taking an already existing franchise and reactivating it. For this film, we wanted to refocus the story on the Asterix and Obelix duo, to offer these characters a journey littered with hurdles and conflicts in order to make them evolve as the story goes along... while staying in the realm of family comedy movie, of course.

Olivier Delbosc: Laurent was very clear with us. He said he didn't mind spending three years of his life on this project, on the condition that he could make the work his slightly, and bring something new and personal to it.

You've produced all of Laurent Tirard's films. Was he an obvious choice for you?

O.D.: We would never have gone into the project without him. And things are less risky if you know a director well.

M.M.: It takes so much work, so much time; so much is at stake that it's crucial to be on the same wavelength as the director. The hardest thing in our profession is to have a precise vision of what you want to do.

O.D.: Our work is to ensure that this vision remains convergent throughout shooting and editing. But Laurent is a man of conviction and when he has an idea, he follows it through. He's very reliable, artistically *and* financially. That's important for a project of this scale.

M.M.: We also knew that Laurent and Grégoire would bring a different vision, *their* vision of *Asterix*, while remaining faithful to the spirit of the original work.

What does *Asterix* represent for you?

M.M.: For a producer, it's a sort of career highpoint since, *James Bond* aside, *Asterix* is the biggest franchise in Europe. It represents huge budgets, there's so much at stake. But we've also discovered that this hero generates a lot of excitement, passion - even madness - in financial partners, actors, and distributors.

O.D.: When you talk about *Asterix* everything takes on enormous proportions. From the beginning, we wanted to be reasonable and to stick to rehabilitating an image.

A project of this scale is a first for Fidélité, your production company...

M.M.: With a budget of 61 million euros, this film is by far our biggest project. All the more so since it's the first time an independent producer has produced *Asterix*. In other words, in the case that you go over budget (that wasn't the case) or of unforeseen circumstances or commercial failure, the stakes are high.

Was 3D an obvious choice from the start?

M.M.: Not immediately. It was after the success of *Avatar* and certain animation films that we started to think about it. We thought that if there was one film in France that could be compared to great popular American family entertainment movies, it was *Asterix*. We had to adapt to current tastes in order to offer the most complete show to the audience. Furthermore, we thought 3D lends itself well to cartoon adaptation and would allow Uderzo's drawings the liveliest interpretation.

O.D.: The foreign distributors also pushed us. Having distributed the three first films, they wanted something extra.

M.M.: We had to adapt the budget because a 3D film costs 10-15% more than a 2D film. It has an impact on the length of the shoot, the crew, the equipment, the post-production, and special effects.

O.D.: And so as to not throw ourselves into the unknown at the last minute, we did tests. For one day, we shot with stand-ins in costume to evaluate the work and check how it looked. It allowed us to realize that a 3D camera is so heavy that it requires a crane at all times. A detail that makes you lose time, prevents the multiplication of shots... But since the trials were so conclusive, we decided to go for it.

Did you have much say in the casting?

M.M.: Of course. For a film with such commercial calling, you need famous actors. We received spontaneous offers from many actors, which is very rare. But we were facing two big hurdles. The first concerned Asterix and Obelix. For the latter Gérard Depardieu seemed obvious, but he was tied to an exclusivity contract. It was a long battle for Gérard to free himself...

O.D.: But it wasn't in vain. I can't see who could have replaced him. The actor who can play Obelix as well as him hasn't been born! Then we had to find an Asterix. If we didn't think about Edouard Baer immediately, the idea had been brewing in Laurent's head for a long time. In fact he had written the dialogues with him in mind. When we did tests with both of them, it became obvious that the duo worked wonderfully.

M.M.: And the second hurdle concerned the British characters. At first we wanted to have British actors play Anticlimax, Miss Macintosh and Ophelia. But we realised during casting that pronounced accents didn't work. The flavour of the dialogue was lost, as well as the sense of comedy and the somewhat absurd spirit of Goscinny. Laurent suggested an English accent for some of the French actors.

O.D.: It is not the most obvious thing for the audience to accept but the actors' talent wins out. When Catherine Deneuve speaks with a British accent and wears the Queen of the Britons' crown, you really believe in it!

Where did you shoot?

M.M.: All the open sea scenes were shot in Malta. We hired an infinity pool specializing in this type of shot for ten days. Most of the exterior shots were filmed in Ireland, over a month. But most of the film - Londinium, the rugby stadium, the Queens's house, the Breton and Gaul villages and all the interiors -were filmed in Hungary. Then, thanks to special effects, we can superimpose on comedy scenes, landscapes or horizons captured elsewhere.

O.D.: We researched a lot of locations to know where we were setting foot. Choosing locations is as difficult as casting actors: you're not allowed to make mistakes. The country has to be economically stable, has to have infrastructures and the local workforce has to be efficient.

What was your role during the shoot?

M.M.: As producers, we don't have a precise role to play on set. We verify that all is going well. If that's the case, we are more useful in Paris where we have the necessary distance to watch the images since we don't know in which context they have been filmed. The only question is to know if it works or not.

O.D.: We take turns each week on set but watch the rushes together so we can agree before talking to the director.

M.M.: But as we are producers who are close to the making of the film, as we were present during the writing, we haven't had many surprises, we knew the structure was solid: there's a real story with real characters. Laurent and Grégoire have perfect control of the screenplay. Their work is always sound and always intelligent.

Was the film edited simultaneously?

O.D.: Yes, from the first day of shooting. A triangle then takes shape between producers, director and editor.

M.M.: It allows us to see if what was filmed works and to make sure there are no missing shots. This feeds the thoughts of the director and the crew and allows you to save time later. But it is also delicate work, because it is at this moment that you can make a bad film or a great one!

A CONVERSATION WITH ISABELLE MAGNAC (Manager of The Albert René Publishing Company)

How important is *Asterix* for the Hachette Group?

Asterix is an institution, a national heritage created by a genius duo: René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo. It is a timeless body of work full of universal human values. We manage the complete rights for *Asterix* and are responsible for the image of the characters. It is with this ethic in mind that we work - in close collaboration with Albert Uderzo and Anne Goscinny - to develop projects that serve the series, properly convey the characters and ensure their continuity. *Asterix* is a source of inspiration and for many artists, so the ideas are numerous and diverse, and we make our choices very carefully.

Why did you choose Laurent Tirard?

Laurent's vision for this film excited everyone from the start. The choice of books was audacious: the *Britons* book is based on wordplay and motion within the images. The *Normans* book that he wanted to combine it with is set in a radically different world. Laurent and Grégoire succeeded in blending the plots of both while creating a brand new story and retaining the most beloved scenes of both. In our opinion, their screenplay served *Asterix* best. Of course, other projects were submitted to us but Laurent's was the obvious choice. The writing was intelligent; he put the lead characters' duo at the forefront and gave them depth, developed their personalities and allowed them a real significance within the plot. That is exactly what we were looking for.

Furthermore, Marc and Olivier, who brought Laurent's project, have an admirable reputation as serious and rigorous professionals, which seemed paramount on a project of this scale. They proved worthy of the challenge, managing to complete a particularly difficult project on time and within the budget. Lastly, and for us more importantly, Albert and Anne were immediately enthusiastic about the project and trusted the team completely.

What's next for Asterix?

There are many projects in progress; *Asterix* generates a real diversity and large-scale ideas. It's no secret that we're working on the release of the 35th volume of the adventures of *Asterix*. For the first time, Albert Uderzo - who is always close by, by the way - has worked with Jean-Yves Ferri, a screenwriter (*De Gaulle On the Beach* and *Return to Earth*) and another illustrator than himself. It is a much-anticipated volume and a tremendous challenge for the Hachette Group. We are also working on a 3D feature-length animation in collaboration with M6 Studio: a large-scale project based on *The Mansions of the Gods*, with some very talented artists who began their careers in the greatest American studios and want to prove that France can also produce extremely ambitious projects. And naturally we are already thinking about the next *Asterix* feature. Because watching re-watching Laurent's film can only give one a taste for more.

A CONVERSATION WITH JOSÉPHINE DEROBE

ASTERIX & OBELIX: IN BRITAIN 3D is dedicated to your father. Who was he? (DP, director, Futuroscope)

Alain Derobe was a great image technician with the savoir-faire and ingenuity of a craftsman; always seeking new ways to improve his art. He was a Director of Photography for over thirty feature films, as well as ads and documentaries. His passion for the image, his taste for research and development lead him, over twenty years ago, into largely unexplored and unexploited territories of special formats. First the Imax and 360 degree images (a system with 9 cameras), notably for the Futuroscope, then stereoscopic shooting (3D). He was one of the first to develop a method (Natural Depth) for stereoscopic shooting, and to create the equipment that allows us to shoot with two cameras at the same time.

On a professional and human level, it was a great opportunity to work alongside him with our team: Thierry Pouffary, Hugo Barbier and Jean Chesneau. We share the same philosophy for 3D relief, the same enthusiasm for promoting the evolution of our profession and exploring the multiple artistic possibilities this medium can offer.

Was it an obvious choice for you to become his successor?

I didn't ask myself the question: like Asterix and Obelix, I am at Her Majesty's service! We had invested a lot of ourselves; we had to complete the film while staying faithful to the 3D relief goals established by Laurent Tirard and Alain. I was present during pre-production, at the early stages of post-production and spent over 5 months making relief controls for the main

crew during the shoot. It was a real asset for the post-production stages because we knew the settings, the intentions of the director, the DPs and the problems encountered during the shoot. It saves precious time when you have to collaborate for a few months with the different departments: editing, lab, grading, and special effects.

What is the “Derobe method”? (French converging method)

To be coherent with the intentions of the direction, while respecting a 3D relief that won't cause headaches, the stereographer must change the adjustments of both cameras in between shots – often even while shooting – in relation to what is happening in the image: foreground, background, character action, movement, light... Historically, most stereographers thought it was necessary to reproduce the same distance between the cameras as between our eyes, by setting the distance at 6.5 cm. With this fixed distance between two lenses, the only possibility of adjusting the settings was to increase or diminish the angle (while shooting or during post-production) which often made the audience's eyes diverge (the reason for the headaches) and generated real scenographical incoherencies.

For a long time, Alain was the only one to defend the notion that varying the distance between cameras, with an adjusted and only slightly modified angling, was the key to the visual comfort of the audience at all times and allowed greater freedom to the stereographer. He developed a method called Natural Depth that he improved with each film. This method is based on two fundamental principles: research into the visual psycho-physiological, that allows knowing the principles of stereoscopy, and into human visual behaviour in order to respect the visual comfort of the audience and obtain a good 3D when reproduced on a flat screen.

The purpose of this method is to optimize the use of 3D to serve film language.

The images from *Pina* convinced Laurent Tirard. What made them special?

While exploring another film language, relief can offer much more than just the 'spectacular'. The image we create in 3D is not an identical reproduction of the reality we perceive but an interpretation that allows us to play with space (in depth and in front of the screen) and with the volume of each thing. Thus it's a marvellous medium for the director who can add stereography to his range; relief also has immersive and emotional power, which is what Wim Wenders understood perfectly. The 3D in *Pina* is neither a gimmick nor gratuitous; the director chose this medium to try to render on screen the art of Pina Bausch and of her dancers on stage. A technique has to serve an artistic endeavour and I think that's the case for *Pina*.

What did you want to achieve for *Asterix*? What were your references?

Some of the more “cartoon comic book” shots lent themselves perfectly to relief but they remain quite anecdotal elements in the film. Our work was mainly to serve the story's characters, to make them more real, by accompanying them on their epic journey. It was crucial for our team to understand the world of the director and screenwriter: his tone, his touch, his filmography and most importantly his intentions as to the adaptation of the comic book on screen. The two heroes

get the special place they deserve, while daring to tackle different sides of their personalities that do not exist in the comic books. Uderzo's and Goscinny's worlds are respected but audaciously revisited by the screenplay, offering a marvellous comedy; the 3D had to follow that same direction.

What's really amazing with such a subject?

It's a wonderful challenge to be able to work on creating volume and depth from a comic book for which certain artistic codes are very different than those of 3D. At the same time, envisaging a relief film from a comic book allows us great freedom since it is a world the audience knows is not real: we can allow ourselves more, play more with space, volume, the scale of the characters and the sets, than on a "realistic" film.

How did you work?

We had some 3D readings of the storyboard in order to understand the director's artistic intentions and work out how we could technically achieve each shot: direction, image, equipment, special effects VFX and SFX, editing.

During the shoot, there were three of us continuously for each team of stereographers: Alain Derobe supervised the two main units from a specially adapted TSF trailer which allowed him to have a monitor for both teams, thanks to datamanager. There was one stereographer per team, responsible for relief adjustment, working in close collaboration with the director, the DP and the camera crew. More than once we had three or four units shooting at the same time: main crew, second unit for special effects, a unit for aerial views, an underwater unit...

When he returned from the shoot, Alain had already started the supervision of the different stages of post-production; after he died, I took over the final stage of relief grading that takes place after the edit is locked and special effects are in place.

How many people worked on the 3D?

Every single member of the crew and crew worked on the 3D!

Making a relief film involves a preparation, shoot, edit and post-production that are often different and more complex than for a regular film. Each job is affected by 3D since it implies different codes and ways of making film and it was a new experience for most of the crew and the subcontracted staff..

And even if technologies and equipment develop very fast to make our work easier, relief often means being able to adapt and create prototype equipment and camera implements; the same goes for software, editing and post-production workflow. The key departments in the making of a film must have the flexibility to work and take risks.

What were the major difficulties?

In preproduction, envisaging your film in 2D or 3D involves a different cinematographic language. And for now, the showing of a film in both 2D and 3D complicates things and often obliges you

to make compromises. For this reason it's important to be able to integrate the relief as early as possible during the creation process for each department - creative and technical - so they can have the time to understand 3D, to integrate what can be brought artistically and also to anticipate changes that this technique involves compared to a traditional film. We did tests, as if we were shooting for real, but the whole phase of pre-production - storyboard, screenplay, sets elaboration, costumes... - was already well underway when the relief team was integrated. The creation phase was established more in 2D, which was tricky for 3D, given the scale of the film. Thankfully, the flexibility and open-mindedness displayed by Laurent Tirard and his crew allowed us to find communication ground to work together happily.

On set, the weather conditions gave us some trouble... would you be surprised if I told you it was in Ireland?

In post-production, the closure of Duboi studios made the work more difficult because we lost months but the film's release date remained unchanged. Digimage Laboratoire, who replaced Duboi, made the effort to acquire grading equipment (Mistika) totally adapted to the needs of a relief post-production of this scale. Personally, I was impressed by the incredible energy of the people involved in the post-production: editing, lab, colour grading and 3D, despite the urgency and numerous difficulties.

How do you find the result?

Like the director and the screenplay: remarkable, audacious and full of humour.

CAST

G rard Depardieu - **OBELIX**

Edouard Baer - **ASTERIX**

Guillaume Gallienne - **ANTICLIMAX**

Vincent Lacoste - **JUSTFORKIX**

Val rie Lemercier - **MISS MACINTOSH**

Fabrice Luchini - **JULIUS CEASAR**

Catherine Deneuve - **QUEEN CORDELIA**

Charlotte Le Bon - **OPHELIA**

Bouli Lanners - **TIMANDAHAF**

Dany Boon - **NEEDSABAF**

Atmen Kelif - **CALAMITUS**

Jean Rochefort - **PUNCTILIUS MAXIMUS**

G rard Jugnot - **RED BEARD**

Luca Zingaretti - **THE GENERAL**

Filippo Timi - **PATROL DECURION**

Niccolo Senni - **ACADEMUS**

Neri Marcor  - **PATROL DECURION**

Tristan Ulloa - **CLAUDIUS DETRITUS**

Javivi Gil - **EXECUTIONER**

G tz Otto - **MAKESUSLAF**

With the participation of B.B. BRUNES

CREW

Directed by

LAURENT TIRARD

Screenplay by

LAURENT TIRARD and **GRÉGOIRE VIGNERON**

From the works of **RENÉ GOSCINNY** and **ALBERT UDERZO**

DP

DENIS ROUDEN - AFC

Editor

VALÉRIE DESEINE

Sound

ERIC DEVULDER

Sound Editor

MARC BASTIEN

Mix

THOMAS GAUDER

Stereographer

ALAIN DEROBE

Production Designer

FRANÇOISE DUPERTUIS - ADC

Costume Designer

PIERRE-JEAN LARROQUE - AFCCA

Original Music

KLAUS BADELT

Assistant Directors

THIERRY MAUVOISIN

MATTHIEU DE LA MORTIÈRE

Casting

ANTOINETTE BOULAT - ARDA

Location Manager

SINA FRIFRA

Visual Effects Supervisor

KEVIN BERGER

2nd Unit Director

ALAN CORNO

Post-production Manager

SUSANA ANTUNES

Production Manager

SYLVESTRE GUARINO

Executive Producer

CHRISTINE DE JEKEL

Producers

OLIVIER DELBOSC and **MARC MISSONNIER**

Co-production

CINETOTAL KFT

LUCKY RED S.R.L

MORENA FILMS

FRANCE 2 CINÉMA

FRANCE 3 CINÉMA

SAINT SÉBASTIEN FROISSART

Associate Producer

LES ÉDITIONS ALBERT RENÉ

With the participation of

ORANGE CINÉMA SÉRIES and

FRANCE TÉLÉVISIONS

In association with

WILD BUNCH

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LUCKY RED S.r.l – MORENA FILMS – France 2 CINEMA
– France 3 CINEMA – SAINT-SEBASTIEN FROISSART

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