

STUDIOCANAL and JE SUIS BIEN CONTENT

present

April AND THE **EXTRAORDINARY WORLD**

Original graphics creation Tardi

Directed by Christian Desmares and Franck Ekinici

Screenplay Franck Ekinici and Benjamin Legrand

Based on an original idea from Benjamin Legrand

Producers Marc Jousset, Franck Ekinici, Brice Garnier, Denis Delcampe

Winner of the Cristal Award

for feature film

at the Annecy Animation Film Festival 2015

Runtime: 105 minutes

FRENCH RELEASE: 4 NOVEMBER 2015

CONTACTS

INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

Jane Carter

jane.carter@studiocanal.com

INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY

Delphine Vaquier

Delphine.Vaquier@studiocanal.com

Brittani Robinson

Brittani.robinson@studiocanal.com

Images and Press materials: www.studiocanal.com

SYNOPSIS

Paris, 1941. A family of scientists is on the brink of discovering a powerful invincibility serum when all of a sudden, the parents are mysteriously abducted, leaving their young daughter, April, behind. Ten

years later, April is living alone with her precious cat, Darwin, continuing her family's research. But soon, she finds herself at the center of a bizarre conspiracy. Along with Darwin and her trusted friend, Julius, April embarks on an adventure to find her parents and discover the truth behind their disappearance.

INTERVIEW WITH JACQUES TARDI

Did you feel that moving into animation with APRIL AND THE EXTRAORDINARY WORLD was an opportunity to see your graphic art and your work as a writer adapted more faithfully to the screen?

Of course, provided you stay within the graphic world, and you're not dealing with a reinterpretation of your character or casting an actress who cannot look like the heroine you drew. That said, in Luc Besson's THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES OF ADÈLE BLANC-SEC, they used make-up and fake ears on the supporting cast to make them look like the original characters, which was pretty successful.

Your passion for history is a key part of your work, and you do a huge amount of research into the historical periods you describe, examining them in great detail. Did you enjoy having fewer constraints here, working on a fiction film that offers an alternative version of history?

Yes, because I wasn't hampered by research. You can explore other, more fantasy directions without losing sight of what the narrative sets out from the start - that is to say, the mysterious disappearance of all the great wise people, and as a result, all the great inventions of the 20th century. Everything runs on steam, there is no electricity, and that imposes certain constraints that push you to come up with some original solutions. That's how the steam-powered cable car was created.

How did you come up with the magical idea for the "cruise liner" suspended on cables that April's parents used to run away? Are you fascinated by those often far-fetched prototype vehicles that have been invented throughout all periods of history?

I have to say that it was our cowriter Benjamin Legrand who came up with the idea for the Paris-Berlin cable car link, with the double Eiffel Tower serving as a terminus in the French capital. We've all seen the Eiffel Tower but the cable car had to be invented, so I went through some back issues of "La Science et la Vie" from the beginning of the century, and found some descriptions of several fascinating mechanical prototypes. I also used old diagrams of steam engines and other inspired contraptions because I wanted the cable car to be credible. It had to be steam-powered, the mechanisms had to turn the wheels using a method similar to that of a bicycle chain, and it all had to work using rack and pinion. It took me quite a long time to make it realistic. And although you can't really see how it works, I also designed its internal mechanisms. I think the cable car works well in the film, and that you believe in it.

What other sources of inspiration did you use? Did you look at American magazines like "Popular Mechanics" that often feature cover stories about projects for road or air vehicles that look like they are straight out of sci-fi fiction?

No, I only looked at French sources. In terms of fiction, I was inspired by Robida's illustrations, which often involve traffic jams of flying vehicles in the skies over Paris, with landing strips on rooftops all over the place. That's where I got the idea for the balloon used by the police to keep an eye on what is going on down below. Robida's drawings were interesting because they are utopic and belong to a world of dreams and humor, and the aim of an animation is also to inspire people to dream, as well as entertaining them.

In APRIL AND THE EXTRAORDINARY WORLD, the police chief doesn't really understand what is at stake, and the politicians are casually leading the planet into an environmental disaster, which is sparking international conflict. Does that reflect your own opinion on the world today and those who are running it?

I would have thought that was obvious! But it's not spelled out in a clear and definitive way. It's up to the audience to understand it and draw that conclusion themselves. I hope that after seeing the film, people will understand what we are trying to say. But don't forget that this is a fantasy film, with a completely invented story, and it was out of the question to force our vision of politics and the world we live in down people's throats. That's not our aim at all. That might have been the case had we been able to make our film about World War I, which unfortunately never came to fruition. A subject like that forces you to present a perspective on the world we live in today, which is, for a large part, defined by the borders that were redrawn post-war in countries like Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East. 1917 was the time of the Russian Revolution and the arrival of American expeditionary forces. It was when the world was divided in two, a world in which we then lived for decades, and in which we still live for that matter! A film about World War I would have allowed us to explore all of that, but that wasn't our goal with APRIL AND THE EXTRAORDINARY WORLD.

By definition, the heroes in animation films are often made stronger, braver, smarter, and faster than the majority of people. They have few doubts about the justification for their actions and almost never have any weaknesses. And in comics, "classic" heroes were the majority for a very long time. Is that why you have always had a soft spot for characters with flaws, weaknesses, or doubts?

Yes of course, because I've never met an infallible hero like those you mention, and I don't know how they operate. Moreover, a character that is simply moving forward along a pre-destined trajectory towards a mission to be accomplished is not interesting because I already know they will win, and defeat the baddies. There is no reason to read the book or go and see the film because you know what will happen. So I prefer characters who have doubts, who commit errors, or who might simply do nothing at all. For example, Adèle Blanc-Sec is a character who does the same job as me - she writes series of books, only travels for research purposes, and as such, meets different people, because I need things to happen in her adventures. But she's not someone who takes sensational decisions and who is always moving forwards. She is carried along by events. I prefer that kind of character and April in this film is one of those.

But there must still be some classic heroes from comic books that you like? I know you like "Blake and Mortimer", and Edgar P Jacobs's other work...

What I like about Jacobs is his drawing. I'm not that interested in his two characters of the scientist and the soldier. But his style and the moods he created are amazing. Then others came along, created as a reaction to his two very formatted heroes, like Corto Maltese, who was the complete opposite. I won't mention the American superheroes,

although I do sometimes read them and am sometimes surprised by how appealing the drawing is. For example, I really like Milton Caniff's drawings but you can guess that his Steve Canyon aviation stories are not really my cup of tea. In fact, I don't really read that many comics.

In the past, science was considered to be the light in the darkness, like the source of a radiant future marked by progress accessible to all. Then it allowed people to make terrible weapons, and since the 1970s, industrial processes linked to pollution, to genetic manipulation, and the intensive exploitation of raw materials have tarnished this noble image. These unappealing applications of science are caricaturized very humorously in APRIL AND THE EXTRAORDINARY WORLD...

If you want to critique science, you have to remember that on the one hand, there is penicillin, and on the other, the atomic bomb. And that opens the door to the laboratory of the mad scientist, a character that has so often been explored, from Jules Verne to contemporary writers, because he is frightening. Science gives him means that he alone can master, and very often, he wants to rule the world. With his test tubes and crazy plans, he only becomes interesting if his intention is malicious. Indeed, there are relatively few scientists trying to resolve the problems of famine in the world, while there are hundreds of thousands of scientists working on developing new weapons. And as Hitchcock said, "The more successful the baddie, the more successful the film."

There is also the work carried out by very sane scientists that can be a cause for worry, like that of Oppenheimer, who said that when they were working on creating the first atomic bomb, some of his colleagues thought there was a risk that it would trigger a chain reaction that would spread across the entire planet, destroying the atmosphere. But that didn't stop them going on with their work! It was only later, after they had carried out the first effective test, that they knew it was no longer a risk...

Absolutely. They were curious people and they wanted to know if it would work! And while we're on the subject of the atomic bomb, which is so frightening and yet about which we unfortunately no longer talk very much, for a long time, they told us that it was "the balance of the threat" that guaranteed peace. But if you look at what is going on in the world today, you might start to question that...

Could you give us a few ideas of scenes and visual concepts that you suggested while reading different versions of the script?

I wasn't involved from start to finish. I was mainly involved at the start in terms of the definition and representation of the characters, doing sketches of their costumes, working on their attitudes, how they moved and walked around. I also started to draw a storyboard based on the final version of the script. That allowed us to define the fairground feel at the start, the inside of the statue being constructed, the interiors of the labs and the cable car. Then I stopped, because the sequence with the cable car had been filmed, and I realized that some of my ideas had disappeared along the way. So I

wondered if it was necessary for me to work on the storyboard through to the end of the film, given that what I was doing was much more detailed than a regular storyboard. I realized that if I wasn't there the whole time, things would change, and because the project had already been around for years, and I was busy with MOI RENÉ TARDI, PRISONNIER AU STALAG B, the story of my father, I told the team I'd given them all the fundamentals for the graphics, and all the ideas for them to finish the film on their own. In the beginning, I'd go to the studio and go round the computers to see what they'd done. But that put me in the quite unpleasant position of having to correct the work of certain artists, saying, "No, no, you have to do it the way I showed you." And that's not very nice. I'd rather give them the freedom to do it their way.

Even though you were very involved at the start, in several stages of the production process, were you able to have some perspective and watch the film as a regular viewer? And what did you think when you saw the finished movie?

I have to say I was quite surprised and happy. I'd only ever seen it in bits before, but I thought the finished film was very good, and I enjoyed many things that had been created by the team. I saw my drawings reinterpreted by Christian Desmares, who was co-director and head animator. I examined them closely and was delighted to see how well it worked. It was a very pleasant surprise. The production company, Je Suis Bien Content, did a great job over six years to do this film right. I don't think I'd have been so tenacious, and that's why I'm glad I work in graphic art where I can work alone, without having to ask anyone anything, using a pencil and eraser to create my stories. I can blow up as many bridges and derail as many locomotives as I like, without running over budget! I don't need a huge amount of financing, and I feel totally free. Of course, expressing one self on paper has its limits - it's very difficult to convey emotion for example, in a way a talented actor can in a live-action film. And there's no soundtrack either. But the advantage is that the text is written down and at any point, the reader can go back and reread a passage they missed first time round, without losing the continuity of the story. Graphic novels also allow the reader to define the pace. With a movie, if you forget a name or miss a detail, it can bother you for the whole screening. Of course, that's not a problem if you're watching on DVD or Blu Ray, but films are better watched at a movie theater.

Because it's a place for sharing emotions and laughter...

I really enjoyed watching how the audience behaved during the first public screening at the Annecy Animated Film Festival. The reaction was good. And you never get that contact with the public if you just write graphic novels.

Which characters did the audience most relate to?

April, of course. And to Pops, the grandfather, a mad scientist with a good heart!

INTERVIEW WITH FRANCK EKINCI CO-WRITER AND CO-DIRECTOR

How did you get involved with this project? Were you already a fan of Jacques Tardi's world?

I met Benjamin Legrand, who was Jacques Tardi's screenwriter for the graphic novel TUEUR DE CAFARDS, and who has written a great deal for cinema and TV. It was Benjamin who organized my first meeting with Tardi, and who had the idea for this story about the kidnapping of the world's greatest intellectuals, which leads to a huge technological delay, turning the history of the world on its head. And that's how the project began. In terms of Tardi's style, working in the world of animation, I'm passionate about all kinds of graphics and I'd read his graphic novels when I was younger. Having the chance to work with him and to animate his unique graphic style for the first time was really a dream come true. I was convinced that it would work well, thanks to the richness of his visual ideas.

Why did you opt for Benjamin Legrand's idea for an alternative reality and a tale of retro-futuristic adventures?

Benjamin's initial idea appealed to us because it provided us with the chance to say "What if...?" and to imagine how history might have been different, with new and more interesting concepts. Alternative realities and dystopia are recurring sci-fi themes. One of the best-known examples of that is THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE by Philip K. Dick, and many French authors have recently tried their hand in that genre. For us, artistically, it allowed us to research different machines, architectures, and scientific experiments from the past, and then to draw on these real elements as inspiration for creating new things. The fantasy in our film has its roots in logic, and has a real historical structure to it.

Had you heard of the style that is now referred to as "steampunk", such as the architecture of Gustave Eiffel and those metal machines assembled bolted together, of which Jules Verne was so fond?

Yes. I've always been fascinated by the 19th century, for its historical context, for its primary technology, and its almost naïve faith in science as the universal key to progress and personal improvement. I like reading stories about the Third Republic and the artistic revolutions that took place during that period. Tardi already examined that key moment of the end of the 19th and early 20th century in THE ADVENTURES OF ADELE BLANC-SEC. But to return to steampunk, it's true we use it, but in a more measured and sober way than in animation films like STEAMBOY for example. Granted, there are fantasy machines in the film, but they are located in a Paris that is not so different to the Paris you see in postcards from the end of the 19th century, even if there are two Eiffel Towers in this instance.

Is this story a caricature of a kind of immobility in the face of progress?

We wanted to look at those dangerous places into which science strays, thinking of that famous maxim of Rabelais's in GARGANTUA: "Science without conscience is but the ruin of the soul." And of the way society can try to generate order and disorder to move forward intelligently, without being excessive in either. We also show how certain well-meaning protagonists stray from the right path and risk creating catastrophe

through their blindness, which allows us to examine the question of whether the end justifies the means, by showing some crazy and fun situations. In the end, the story isn't a Manicheistic critique of science, rather an oblique and entertaining illustration of how it is used.

Can you describe the main characters?

The story is set in Paris in 1941, but the city is technologically stuck in the 19th century because all intellectuals have been systematically kidnapped over decades. A young girl, April, is searching for her scientist parents who mysteriously disappeared when she was six. She is resilient and she survives, along with her talking cat, Darwin, the result of her parents' experiments. Like them, April is looking for a serum that is supposed to cure all humanity's ills. Her grandfather, Pops, was not kidnapped, but he is on the run, because Napoleon V's police want him to improve the Empire's weaponry. He embodies scientific good and the belief that anything is possible through science. Darwin the cat is a kind of innocent, who expresses the audience's perspective of the events taking place, with a dose of humor. You might say that the cat is more artistic, while April is more concerned with science. He "raises" April, and introduces her to global literature, art, and culture during her childhood. April's father, Paul, has more perspective when it comes to science. He asks questions about how it can be used. Her mother Annette has dedicated her life to developing the cure-all serum, even accepting being separated from her daughter in order to achieve this. Julius is a street child who hangs around April for a variety of reasons. He ends up growing close to and falling in love with her. He helps her make the transition to adulthood.

How did you integrate the Tardi spirit into the writing? Did you rework certain passages in the script according to his suggestions?

Yes. Jacques made some suggestions of how to improve certain sequences, which led to us modify the direction. But most of his input involved the visual invention of this universe.

Did he provide any illustrations that inspired new scenes or situations for the story?

We had already begun developing the script - we were on version 10, I believe - when we started working with him. He used that as a basis to give his opinion on certain scenes, working up the storyboard with his visual ideas. For example, in the scene at the beginning in Gustave's laboratory, the two mutant animals are in a vat, whereas we had them in a cage. Tardi thought a vat with a kind of porthole through which we could barely make out the creatures would make them more mysterious and disturbing. Then he worked on the characters, the sets and various objects, not by representing them individually, but including them in a document that was halfway between a cartoon and a storyboard. Another significant change was his transformation of the cable car as described in the script into an aerial cruise liner.

How did you handle the directing with Christian Desmares? Did you share certain tasks, as is often the case in animation? Did you have any specific cinematographic references in mind?

I handled the direction - or rather the storyboard - in particular, and the actors, soundtrack, and the visual concept. Christian dealt with the direction of the animation, the sets, and the artistic concept of "Tardifying" the script, with graphic research into elements such as the colors and vehicles. My references came from cinema, and live action shots, from films like those by John Ford in the 1940s, with very carefully composed framing where the camera becomes invisible in order to purely serve the story and the characters.

How did you work with the actors on interpreting the characters?

It is important to note that the animation was created from their voices. Moreover, when we recorded them, we also filmed them so that the animators could take inspiration from their postures and gestures. Producer Marc Jousset and production manager Perrine Capron handled the casting. They contacted the actors and offered them the project. I was delighted we were able to work with such talented people and they were very involved, enthusiastic, concentrated, and often came up with different suggestions so that we had several different choices when editing the sound. They were recorded one after the next and we fed them the lines to help them. This all happened very early on in the project, and we did lots of takes with different voice speeds and various motivations because nothing was yet fixed. Marion Cotillard gave us a range of options, trying out various things, with an in-depth exploration of the character of April. Jean Rochefort brought a great deal of humanity to Pops. And I was delighted that the coproduction meant we were able to work with Belgian actors Olivier Gourmet, Bouli Lanners and Anne Coesens, and with Canadian actors Marc-André Grondin, Benoit Brière, and Macha Grenon, who each brought plenty of fresh ideas as they performed their roles. Bouli Lanners, who plays the cop Pizoni, shot off like a bullet and made us laugh so much!

What is there about APRIL AND THE EXTRAORDINARY WORLD that will appeal to adults and to younger audiences?

I think that adults who are already familiar with Tardi's world will enjoy plunging into his graphic universe and unique themes, and younger audiences will love the adventure and the plot twists and turns.

INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTIAN DESMARES

CO-DIRECTOR AND ANIMATION SUPERVISOR

How did you make the project your own after Benjamin Legrand and Frank Ekinici had written the script and Tardi had done the graphic groundwork?

I had to learn "Tardi-speak", I had to understand it, and I had to transcribe it while taking into account the technical constraints in order to create the sets and the vehicles. There was a whole graphic language to assimilate and to reproduce as faithfully as possible using animation procedures. That meant I had to adapt the drawing of a character in the space so that they could rotate through 360° without becoming corrupted. That way, we could respect Tardi's world and apply it to all the characters. Once we had defined the animation graphics, we could draw and animate all the characters in the space. We had to find the right way to handle the hair, the clothes, and how some characters aged through the story. Then we gave the drawings to Tardi for modification or approval.

Did you work like Tardi, using photographs to reproduce certain environments?

Yes, I worked in the same way as he does, taking photos in Paris for certain scenes. Then we framed the image in the same way as Jacques draws his frames.

But you don't use the same drawing techniques...

That's true, but we do use digital tools like traditional ones. We didn't use paper on this film because the drawings were all created on a tablet. Because Jacques uses a tubular pen like a Rotring, drawing with the tip, we simulated a pen tip that would generate the same kind of lines and the same textures for the sets. For the colors, we simulated gouache, with the addition of lead pencil. In talking to Jacques and watching him work, I was able to replicate his style as much as possible with our digital tools. We used the computer to try and reproduce Jacques's pen strokes, such as his way of shading black contours. We proceeded in the same way, trying to work in a similar style.

Have the script and the characters evolved over the six years the film was in development and production? Did you reconsider certain elements?

Yes. When we started working on the pilot, April was six years old in 1931, and she hardly appeared in that part of the story. We had one of Jacques's sketches in which she gets involved, but that period hadn't yet really been explored. Then, we had to rework the aging of the characters when we see them in 1941, a decade later. April's father looked too much like Wolf in the Tintin book, *DESTINATION MOON*, and we modified him to avoid any ambiguity. Some characters change because as the animators reproduce them in recurrent attitudes and positions, they end up realizing they work better in a particular way. Comic-book characters also evolve - if you look at the first appearances of Adèle Blanc-Sec and Nestor Burma as drawn by Jacques, and compare them to his later books, you'll see the characters have changed. If one feels at home with a new representation of a character, one shouldn't deprive oneself of that evolution during the period of graphic development. Then, once you animate them, the character has to remain constant.

Tardi was less comfortable with the graphic descriptions of the 1950s and 1960s, so he let you work on the last part of the film, which takes

place in the jungle...

We wanted to represent the differences in technological understanding with on one side, the "Jules Verne" rivets and bolts, and on the other, techniques with a futuristic look from the 1960s in the jungle. But because Jacques didn't identify with that, we went back to a style closer to that of Gustave Eiffel, with metal beams and cast iron, although we did add some more modern elements. It was a return to the "steampunk" esthetic and the universe of Jules Verne.

The film uses rather dark tones, and has a special approach to color because it is reserved for the characters alone, while the urban landscapes are black and white with some sepia tints...

The artistic direction of the film is based on contrasting images with lots of depth, like in the crime films of the 1940s. The Parisian sets are gray, but the characters are in color and it's those spots of color that give rhythm to the image. It's a narrative intention.

How did you direct from the script? What modifications did you make?

We made things more fluid by creating and directing the storyboard, thanks to many discussions with Franck, who was the co-director and co-writer. It was all about teamwork.

Was the resemblance between Jean Rochefort and Pops, the character he voices, deliberate?

No, that wasn't our intention at the start. We had created a rangy figure with a moustache, a scatterbrained kind of guy, and then subconsciously, we began to associate the character with Jean Rochefort, aware of how imaginatively he has played some of his roles. The voices were recorded before the animation was done, and the actors really created their own characters. Then we did the storyboard, and used video images from the recording sessions with the actors to guide and define the performance style and the animation of each character. When Jean Rochefort got involved, he made a real impression on the directing.

Did you rework the voices?

Yes, we did some corrections. After recording all the dialogs, we worked on the direction and discovered that certain cues we had initially given the actors weren't right. So we recorded some substitute voices to make sure of the changes we needed to make. It's perfectly normal to bring the actors back to the studio and record certain scenes again so the voices correspond to the dramatic intention. And we also used the opportunity to get them to record any new dialog that had been rewritten and improved in the meantime.

Did any real scientific experiments inspire the visuals?

No, apart from the machines. To animate the "vapomobiles", I watched videos of steam-powered vehicles online to see how they moved and to hear the noises they made. The same applied to the rocket you see at the end of the film - we took information from NASA to create the shape of the flame from the reactor and the way the gantry falls away at lift-off.

INTERVIEW WITH BENJAMIN LEGRAND CO-WRITER

How did APRIL AND THE EXTRAORDINARY WORLD come into being? Did Jacques Tardi's graphic universe inspire the alternative reality and the characters in this adventure?

I was frustrated because we weren't able to get our animation about World War I off the ground, so I was looking for a subject with an era, characters, and sets that corresponded to what Tardi likes to draw. I wanted to find a universe close to those in his DÉMON DES GLACES, AVENTURES D'ADÈLE BLANC-SEC, or ADIEU BRINDAVOINE books, but one that was a little different. So the idea emerged for an alternative reality, set in a Paris that was different because of a twist in history, a world that had stopped in the era of steam, and one that had barely evolved because all the great inventors since 1870 had disappeared. It would be set in 1941, and the two world wars hadn't happened. A Paris like you've never seen, with two Eiffel Towers suffocating under smog, and with a steam-powered cable car linking Paris to Berlin, etc. An extraordinary world, created through temporal sleight of hand, and one that was made-to-measure for Tardi!

Do you have a particular affection for these periods in history that you revisit and turn upside-down here?

Probably - I've always been very drawn to history in general, to all periods and all around the globe. History is very important. But I am both very drawn to and very repulsed by the modern world in which we live. I have written a few crime novels and sci-fi tales, and twisting reality is always a joy. But whatever you write, you are always kind of talking about the present. Science also plays a major role in the film. And the moral of the story - if there is one - is that science requires a conscience. It's great fun playing with a world that has been deprived of science, but one that is full of hidden scientists, mad inventors, and charlatans, and their crazy or terrible inventions that could have existed... in an extraordinary world.

What was it like working with Tardi, and then developing and writing the script with Franck Ekinici?

Jacques and I have been friends for more than 30 years. I love what Druillet said - "Creator of universes! What a wonderful job!" And it's true, in the world of comic books, you are constantly creating and recreating universes. I love talking over my ideas with my illustrator friends, while watching them start to sketch out the characters. It's fascinating. And these sketches inspire other ideas as the characters are honed. Situations emerge and everything follows on from that. This film was written in four phases. Firstly, when I met with producers Franck Ekinici and Marc Jousset to talk about my idea for an animation series that would be made-to-measure for Tardi. But then Franck convinced me that we should make a feature-length movie instead. The second phase involved a lengthy period of collaboration with Jacques, while we defined the main plot thrusts, characters, and structure. And then, once we received a development grant from the CNC, I started to write the script. At that time, Franck was just going to be a producer on the film, but because he is such a great screenwriter and director, he wrote me such precise reading notes that I ended up suggesting we write the script together, to avoid such back-and-forths. That was the third phase of the project. And then, he finished writing the script on

his own because I was no longer available, and it was during the fourth phase that Franck worked on the last few versions of the script until we had the final version of APRIL AND THE EXTRAORDINARY WORLD.

How does writing for animation compare to writing for a live-action project?

The screenplay must be absolutely flawless and the dialog definitive. As soon as you have an approved version of the script, you record the actors' voices or test voices. This is because you have to animate the mouths of the characters when they speak in each sequence and in each shot. The dialog becomes the "real time" and is timed to the second. And you can't shorten it by cutting a shot, nor can you lengthen it by adding images. This is real dialog that you write underneath the frames in the storyboard. And unlike in live-action, you can't retake the shot ten times over. When you animate a shot, the teams have to draw each one of the 24 images for each second that make up the shot. There is no room for error, so it has to be concrete, or in this instance, bolted together perhaps, steam included!

Did you explore certain narrative strands that you eventually abandoned?

Yes. We had imagined a triple alliance between France, Great Britain, and Germany. A kind of Europe revisited. But in the end, Franck had to create a threat of war between the American continent and the French Empire under Napoleon V!

Humor plays an important role in the film. Might one say that you used the alternative reality to caricature certain French idiosyncrasies, and beyond that, the blindness of the human race in the face of certain environmental and societal issues?

Absolutely, and even more besides! I think that the five of us, Tardi, Franck Ekinici, Marc Jousset, Christian Desmares, and I, we all share a taste for sending up certain characteristics, and for laughing at the blinkeredness of humanity. It reminds me of THE SHEEP LOOK UP by John Brunner - that leads us all into unimaginable catastrophe! It's a humoristic approach to a very serious problem: That year, in just eight months, the Earth exhausts all the resources it needs to exist. And that's only just the beginning...

How do you view APRIL AND THE EXTRAORDINARY WORLD today?

The teams of illustrators, animators, technicians, and actors have accomplished a huge amount of work since we came up with our original ideas, the initial drawings, and the first versions of the script. Everyone gave their very best, starting with Tardi, Franck Ekinici, Marc Jousset, and Christian Desmares. And I led them all into this steam-powered struggle, so I'm delighted it has finally been transformed into such a wonderful film.

CAST

Original Voices

Marion Cotillard	April
Philippe Katerine	Darwin
Jean Rochefort	Pops
Olivier Gourmet	Paul
Marc-André Grondin	Julius
Bouli Lanners	Pizoni
Anne Coesens	Chimène
Macha Grenon	Annette
Benoit Brière	Rodrigue

CREW

Producers	Marc Jousset, Franck Ekinici, Brice Garnier, Denis Delcampe
Screenplay	Franck Ekinici and Benjamin Legrand
Based on an original idea from	Benjamin Legrand
Line producer	Marc Jousset
Production manager	Perrine Capron
Executive music producer	Emmanuel Deletang (22D MUSIC)
First assistant directors	Camille-Elvis Thery Jérémie Hoarau
Visual conception	Franck Ekinici
Art direction	Luciano Lepinay Christian Desmares
Music	Valentin Hadjadj
Editing	Nazim Meslem
2d animation supervisor	Patrick Imbert
Lay-out	Guillaume Lebois
2D special effects animation supervisor	Olivier Malric
3D special effects animation supervisor	Bernie Denk
Compositing supervisor	Damien Gaillardon
Sound design and editing	Yann Lacan
Sound mixing	Thierry Lebon

A French, Canadian, and Belgian coproduction

JE SUIS BIEN CONTENT STUDIOCANAL KAIBOU PRODUCTION UMT INC. NEED
PRODUCTION ARTE FRANCE CINÉMA JOUROR DISTRIBUTION RTBF (BELGIAN
TELEVISION) PROXIMUS TCHACK

In association with BACKUP FILMS with the participation of CANAL+ CINÉ+
ARTE FRANCE MINISTÈRE DE LA CULTURE ET DE LA COMMUNICATION (CENTRE
NATIONAL DU CINÉMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE) TELEFILM CANADA SODEC FONDS
SHAW-ROCKET LA WALLONIE FONDS QUEBECOR SOCIETE RADIO-CANADA and
METROPOLE FILMS DISTRIBUTION

With the support of EURIMAGES, the 2007 MEDIA PROGRAMME, the ÎLE-DE-
FRANCE region, the CNC (NOUVELLES TECHNOLOGIES EN PRODUCTION), the
PROCIREP, the ANGOA-AGICOA, the CENTRE DU CINÉMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL DE
LA FÉDÉRATION WALLONIE-BRUXELLES, the BELGIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
TAXSHELTER, INVER INVEST, the PÔLE IMAGE DE LIÈGE DE CINÉFINANCE. In
association with COFINOVA 10 and LA BANQUE POSTALE IMAGE 7.