



Presents

# A MAGNIFICENT LIFE

**A film by Sylvain Chomet**

90 mins, France, 2025

Language: English

## Distribution

Mongrel Media Inc  
1213C Bathurst Street  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5R 3H3  
Tel: 416-516-9775 Fax: 416-516-0651  
E-mail: [info@mongrelmedia.com](mailto:info@mongrelmedia.com)  
[www.mongrelmedia.com](http://www.mongrelmedia.com)

 @MongrelMedia

## Publicity

Bonne Smith  
Star PR  
Tel: 416-488-4436  
Twitter: @starpr2  
E-mail: [starpr@sympatico.ca](mailto:starpr@sympatico.ca)

 /MongrelMedia

# SYNOPSIS

At the height of his fame, Marcel Pagnol receives a commission from the editor-in-chief of a major women's magazine to write a literary serial, in which he can recount his childhood, his Provence, his first loves...

As he begins writing the first pages, the child he once was—little Marcel—suddenly appears to him. Thus, his memories resurface as the words flow: the arrival of talkies, the first major film studio, his attachment to actors, the experience of writing.

The greatest storyteller of all time becomes the hero of his own story.



## INTERVIEW *Sylvain Chomet*

### WHAT WAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MARCEL PAGNOL BEFORE EMBARKING ON MARCEL AND MR. PAGNOL ?

*In the 1970s, we were made to read My Father's Glory and My Mother's Castle in school. These are the first books I remember reading. I found Pagnol's style accessible, lively, and vivid. It felt «well drawn.» His films were often shown on television. As I grew older, I started watching them more attentively. While preparing for the film, I discovered others and reread all his plays. Pagnol's writing is always precise. He always strikes the right chord. He writes tragedies, with feuding families, dark characters, tough scenes, but because he perfectly masters language, there is always a certain elegance, underpinned by distance and humor. That's what I love about his work.*

### HOW DID MARCEL AND MR. PAGNOL COME ABOUT?

Eight years ago, Nicolas Pagnol, Marcel's grandson, and producers Ashargin Poiré and Valérie Puech contacted me to ask if I liked Marcel Pagnol. Of course, my answer was a big yes! They were planning a documentary with animated sections to illustrate moments of Pagnol's life. I told them I found those hybrid documentaries incongruous and that I preferred doing a real documentary entirely from archives. They convinced me to animate two scenes, one with Raimu, Fernandel, and Pagnol, to seek funding and attract other producers. Something interesting happened: only the animated scenes sparked interest. Everyone was moved to see Pagnol, Raimu, and Fernandel come back to life! So I decided to use the knowledge gained from the documentary project to write a fully animated biopic. From

that concept, I made a pilot. Aton Soumache and Lilian Eche were captivated by the pilot. They took the project on, found funding, and here we are today in official selection at Cannes.

### «I TELL MY STORIES THROUGH DIALOGUE,» SAYS MARCEL PAGNOL IN YOUR FILM. FOR THE FIRST TIME, YOU'RE MAKING AN ANIMATED FILM WITH DIALOGUE!

For my first film, *The Triplets of Belleville*, I didn't want any dialogue because, as an animator first and foremost—an artist of movement—I was only interested in the characters' gestures. I felt dialogue added nothing to my cinema and I could tell a story entirely through mime. My second film, *The Illusionist*, was based on an original script by Jacques Tati. As you can imagine, faithful to his style, there was practically no dialogue. For Pagnol, on the other hand, remaining silent was impossible. I realized while preparing the film how essential the human voice is in Pagnol's work. I drew inspiration from his original texts, more or less dialogued, and reworked them into film dialogues. I invented a few myself, modestly trying to emulate Pagnol. Like the scenes with Fernandel, Pagnol, and Raimu—I had so much fun! I could hear their «trombones» in my head. It's always easier to write a score when you know which instrument will play it.

### THIS IS ALSO YOUR FIRST FILM MADE DIGITALLY.

Yes, but on a tablet, you're still using your hands! The gesture is the same. Digital hasn't changed anything. It's just an incredibly intelligent pencil that lets you do 100 times more than a piece of wood with a graphite tip. For example, you can erase endlessly without tearing the paper! With this technique, I spent a year on the storyboard with just one assistant, then three years in production with the

whole team.

### WAS ANIMATING SPEAKING CHARACTERS AN EXTRA CHALLENGE?

Of course. Did you see how many characters there are per shot? We have scenes, when Marcel is a playwright, that last very long. These are sequence shots with three or four characters talking to each other. It's very complex to animate. We had to hire actors to perform the scenes in advance. We filmed them in period costumes. These references helped us achieve a performance accuracy that's hard to get in animation unless you spend centuries on it. When you have a dinner scene with four people playing cards, their dialogue must be convincing or viewers lose interest.

### THE CHARACTERS OFTEN BEHAVE LIKE REAL STAGE ACTORS, ESPECIALLY IN THE THEATER SCENES—A TRUE TOUR DE FORCE.

From that moment in the film on, it's all wide shots. No more camera movements. We're in a theater-like setting. Long takes, without camera movement or cuts, are very hard to pull off. The characters have to occupy the space and move as if on stage, taking ownership of it. We're talking Disney-class animation standards. I also carefully crafted each transition between scenes. When telling a story, you need a beautiful way to turn the page.

### IN THE FILM, WE ALSO SEE CHARACTERS PAUSE TO BREATHE, SIGH, SMILE... WHICH IS RARE IN ANIMATION.

I love that. Pagnol's wife Jacqueline, when she breathes—it's wonderful. It was crucial: we had to believe in them. These characters needed to feel alive. It's an animated film that

pays tribute to real life. Since we use real-life footage in the film, the animation had to match the same level of realism. When you see Pagnol's film clips on screen, there must be no disconnect. You should forget you're watching a cartoon.

#### HOW DID YOU CHOOSE THOSE EXCERPTS?

I tried to select strong excerpts to feed the narrative and illustrate Pagnol's psychological state at key points in his life. I was lucky to include a previously unreleased excerpt from *The Prayer to the Stars*, the film he partially destroyed during the war. This scene was recently rediscovered. It includes the line: «How can you love someone who doesn't love you, and how can you be loved by someone you don't love?» It was perfect for depicting his tumultuous relationship with Josette Day, who eventually left him and sent him into depression.

#### HOW DID YOU GRAPHICALLY DESIGN THE CHARACTER OF PAGNOL?

It took a long time. I did a lot of research. He really had a unique face. His real face is a bit different from the one in the film. I always draw characters with big noses. I had to emphasize his broken nose. We created 3D models to represent him at different ages. That was the big challenge: he ages in the film. Sometimes by ten years, sometimes five. The wrinkles had to appear progressively, scene by scene. It was tricky. These 3D models helped us maintain narrative continuity and keep his facial structure believable.



#### HOW WAS YOUR COLLABORATION WITH COMPOSER STEFANO BOLLANI?

Working with Stefano was a joy. He once emailed me saying he loved my work and offered to send me some music he had composed for a film. I had been searching for a composer to complement my work for a long time. All the themes he sent were beautiful. He is a great jazz musician and a brilliant classical performer. Music is in his blood; he's always singing or playing piano. The film's emotion owes a lot to his music. He managed to paint with music what I had painted with images.

#### THERE'S ANOTHER SURPRISING COLLABORATION IN THE FILM: RAPPER SCH WROTE THE END CREDITS SONG!

He's a huge Pagnol fan. He was thrilled to create the song. He brought his own style. His lyrics move me deeply. They're very personal. He shares his birthplace, Aubagne, with Pagnol. He now lives in Paris and had to leave his southern roots, just like Marcel. It connects us to the Marseille of today, in 2025. Pagnol would have been happy that the film doesn't end in 1974 with his death, but continues on—he loved modernity.

**YOUR FILM SHOWS HOW DEEPLY CONNECTED MARCEL PAGNOL REMAINED TO PROVENCE THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE, AND HOW HIS SOUTHERN CHILDHOOD ALWAYS GUIDED HIS CREATIVITY.**

Marcel could never forget his childhood. In his writings, his childhood memories are very vivid. It feels like he lived them just days ago. I used the character of young Marcel to represent those memories, coming to him and helping him recover them. Throughout the film, little Marcel guides adult Marcel like a ghost. He inspires him, leads him to the key figures in his life. I had the idea of this little ghost while visiting Marcel Pagnol's office with Nicolas Pagnol. It was where he wrote *My Father's Glory* and *My Mother's Castle*, and it had remained untouched since his death in 1974.

**IT'S ALSO A FILM ABOUT CREATION AND WRITING.**

It's a film about the torments of creation. Marcel was very anxious. He thought he never did things well enough. He doubted his work—or at least its effect on people. He was a craftsman with the pen, more than an artist. He often returned to his drafts. It took him a long time to convince himself to write a play in the Marseille dialect, *Marius*. He was quickly discouraged by feedback. But amusingly, he always made use of coincidences and the randomness of creativity. When a friend mistakenly mentions the name *Topaze*, it inspires the title for his play *Topaze*, which

became one of his biggest successes.

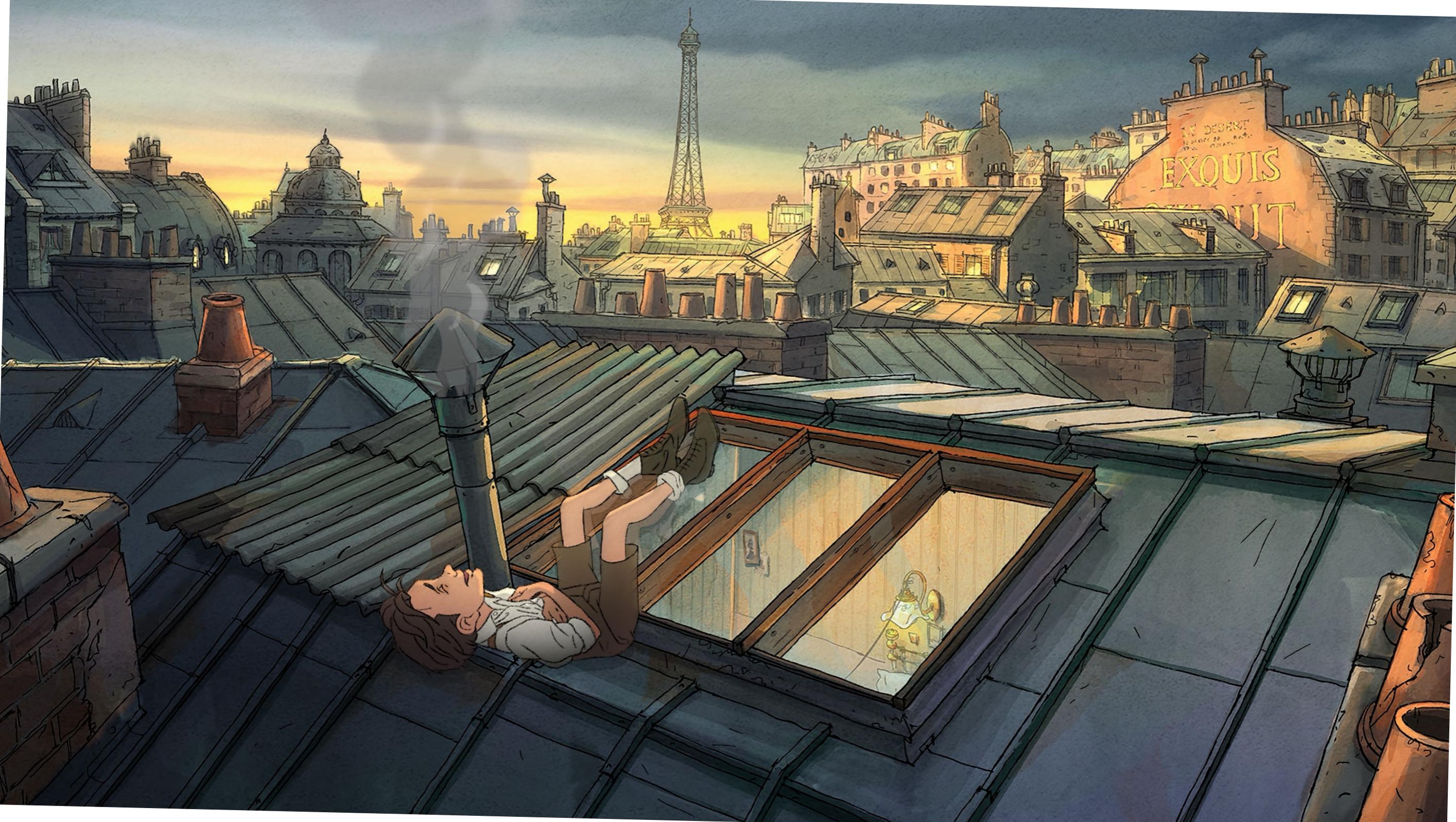
**THE FILM ALSO SHOWS HOW HIS LIFE ALIGNS WITH THE HISTORY OF CINEMA.**

He was born in 1895, the same year as *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*. He hated cinema until it became sound. Then he became one of the first in France to make talkies. He was good friends with Bob Kane, head of Paramount. The story is amazing: when he wanted to make the sequel to *Marius*, Fanny, Bob Kane said Paramount wouldn't fund it because sequels weren't done in the U.S.! Hilarious in hindsight! Though fond of America, Pagnol feared that American culture might overtake French culture. Against Hollywood's dominance, he helped save French cinema by creating, after WWII, the first form of the CNC.

**BESIDES WRITING AND CINEMA, MARCEL PAGNOL WAS ALWAYS FASCINATED BY THE CONCEPT OF PERPETUAL MOTION. THIS IDEA RECURS AS A MOTIF IN THE FILM. WHAT DOES IT REPRESENT?**

He had an engineer's soul and loved mechanics. He built various machines and believed he might one day discover perpetual motion. We know today that's impossible. To me, the film is built as a loop. There's a Nietzschean aspect to it—the eternal return of things. Perpetual motion is the motion of life.





## INTERVIEW *Nicolas Pagnol*

**HE ARRIVED AT A TIME WHEN CINEMA WAS SEEN ALMOST AS A FAIRGROUND ATTRACTION. WHEN HE DECIDED TO PURSUE CINEMA AND LEAVE THEATER, THAT WAS A BOLD MOVE. SAME FOR WHEN HE BUILT HIS OWN STUDIO. I FEEL LIKE HE WAS A KIND OF FRENCH CHARLIE CHAPLIN. IN BOTH HIS POETRY AND AMBITION.**

That's the goal of my work: to place Marcel Pagnol back in his time, in his life. No, Marcel Pagnol wasn't just a child or an old man in corduroy trousers at the foot of the hills. He was president of the SACD. He was a member of the Académie française. He defended sound cinema at a time when no one believed in it. He made one of the first French color films with *The Beautiful Miller Girl*. He never collaborated with the Germans. He was Prince Rainier of Monaco's advisor. He was one of the greatest French playwrights of the early 20th century. For public success comparable to *Topaze*, you have to go back to *Cyrano de Bergerac* in 1895. Marcel Pagnol was also a novelist, a farmer, a scientist, a businessman, a producer, a studio director, a press owner... It's incredible to have lived a life like his, and that's what the film tells. People don't know it because Marcel never put himself forward. He was a man of influence, but behind the scenes.

**THE FILM ALSO SHOWS HOW HIS CHILDHOOD ALWAYS GUIDED HIS CREATIVITY.**

My grandfather's life was so rich, you can't make a chronological biopic. I wanted it to be poetic. So did Sylvain. Two quotes came to mind. The first, from the Gospel: «What have you done with your talent?» And the second, from

Saint-Exupéry: «We belong to our childhood as we belong to a homeland.» How much does the child we were continue to live in us and guide us? From there, Sylvain started writing. And that's exactly what I found in the script. Sometimes, the child we were guides us without us knowing. The goal was to speak about childhood, because for many, Marcel Pagnol is the novelist of childhood. But we didn't want to make a film about his childhood, for children. We wanted to go beyond that.

**THIS FILM IS ALSO A FAMILY AFFAIR: ONE OF THE CO-PRODUCERS, ASHARGIN POIRÉ, IS THE GRANDSON OF ALAIN POIRÉ, A GREAT FRIEND OF MARCEL PAGNOL AND**

### **DISTRIBUTOR OF HIS FILMS.**

Alain gave me my chance, my first job in cinema. There is a legacy. Ashargin and I met through Gaumont after Alain's death. We immediately hit it off. Two years later, we decided to launch this project. Our grandparents must be watching from above with a kind or amused eye.



**WHAT WAS YOUR REACTION UPON SEEING THE FIRST IMAGES OF THE FILM?**

I was moved watching the full animatic at Sylvain's place, with Vincent Fernandel. I left with tears in my eyes. I find this film to have incredible emotional power and poetry. It's beautiful.

**SCH WROTE THE FINAL CREDITS SONG. PROOF THAT MARCEL PAGNOL REMAINS RELEVANT.**

SCH is from Aubagne and grew up with Pagnol. Far from being fed up with him from school dictations, he embraced him. Because Pagnol speaks to everyone! And he will speak to everyone, in every era, like Molière. The themes Pagnol covers are timeless. My role for the last 20 years has been to connect with new generations through comics, a metaverse. We're also creating a video game with Ashargin Poiré. And now, there's this film.

**THE FILM IS BEING RELEASED FOR THE 130TH ANNIVERSARY OF MARCEL PAGNOL'S BIRTH. A FITTING TRIBUTE.**

We thought it would be released for the 50th anniversary of his death, in 2024. But I prefer that it comes out for the 130th anniversary of his birth because this film is a rebirth for Marcel. I'm very happy with this film because it will bring the real Pagnol back into the light.





## INTERVIEW

*Lana Choukroune* ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

*Xiaopeng Jiao* ANIMATIONSUPERVISOR

### PERVISOR

#### HOW DID YOU JOIN THE PROJECT?

**Lana Choukroune (artistic director)** : At the end of 2022, I was hired to do the «turn,» the file that helps animators animate a character from all angles. But when I arrived on the project, the characters hadn't been designed yet. I was asked to design them. As discussions progressed, I was entrusted with the artistic direction of the project. Artistic direction means working with the director to find the graphic language of the film: the characters, the sets, the colors.

**Xiaopeng Jiao (animation supervisor)** : In June 2023, I was contacted to work on the opening scene of the film *Joker: Folie à deux*, directed by Sylvain. My work on the dance scene was well received, and I was later asked to work as supervisor on Marcel and Mr. Pagnol. It was somewhat complex because there were several teams to coordinate between Paris, Brussels, and Luxembourg.

#### WHAT STYLISTIC GUIDANCE DID SYLVAIN CHOMET GIVE?

**Lana Choukroune** : Sylvain wanted more realism than in *The Triplets of Belleville*. It's closer to what he did in *The*

*Illusionist*, but with more realism, and a bit more caricature in the line. In the film, the faces are very caricatured, but the expressions remain quite realistic.

**Xiaopeng Jiao** : I remember my first shot. It was the one where Marcel Pagnol and Paul Nivoix are in a car, with the dog throwing up at the end. It's a long shot with three people crammed into this tiny car, in a tiny frame, with this giant dog! That shot captures all the magic of Sylvain's style.

#### MORE THAN 100 PEOPLE WORKED ON THIS FILM. HOW DID YOU MAINTAIN SYLVAIN CHOMET'S HIGHLY PERSONAL STYLE DESPITE SUCH A LARGE-SCALE PROJECT?

**Lana Choukroune** : I had a unique role. Since I was in charge of character design, I was also head of the layout team, the step before animation, where characters are prepped. Once the sets were ready, we placed the characters to scale and in the right pose to help animators animate. The animators then did the first key poses, the most iconic of the shot. I checked that everything matched the model. Once approved, they animated the rest. This system helped preserve Sylvain's graphic style throughout the film.

**Xiaopeng Jiao** : Sylvain also reviewed completed shots, checking the style of the faces, costumes, and gestures. He spent a lot of time on Pagnol's and his wife's faces. And also on Fernandel's.

#### WAS THE FILM DIFFICULT TO ANIMATE?

**Xiaopeng Jiao** : It's not an action film like in Hollywood. It's more contemplative, with scenes of daily life. In action films, you can have 10 to 20 drawings per shot, using effects to create movement. Here, each shot averages 100 drawings. Sometimes even 1,000! Animation took a long time. Daily life scenes are harder to animate than fantasy sequences. I had

never worked on such a hyper-realistic film.

**Lana Choukroune** : Having filmed references, like in Disney, helped fine-tune timing. And matched what Sylvain wanted. Sometimes he showed us a little video of a blink to reproduce. Or a simple hand resting. He often noticed those small details. That's what gives the film its strength.

#### THERE ARE SOME LONG SHOTS IN THE FILM THAT POSE REAL ANIMATION CHALLENGES, NOTABLY THE SCENE WHERE RAIMU PERFORMS AT THE ALCAZAR, DRESSED AS A WOMAN.

**Xiaopeng Jiao** : I spent two months on the cleanup of that shot! There were 1,000 drawings to animate two characters! They're older, so their faces have more lines. There were also many clothing details. It's rare to do such a long shot in animation. There are many similar shots in the film.

**Lana Choukroune** : These shots were tricky because you can't assign multiple animators to them. Changing animators mid-shot would be visible... So resource-wise, these are very demanding shots. Another major challenge was the mother's death scene. The camera circles around the mother, papers fly off and transform into flowers, which merge in a backward tracking shot into a flower crown on the funeral carriage. That was quite the challenge!



## INTERVIEW *Producers*

### HOW DID MARCEL AND MR. PAGNOL COME ABOUT?

**Ashargin Poiré** : With Nicolas Pagnol, we wanted to create a first-person biographical portrait of his grandfather Marcel Pagnol. A hybrid documentary with animation. Sylvain Chomet agreed to join this adventure. It required great talent to tell the story of another great talent like Pagnol! Along the way, we realized the animation was taking over. Beyond the challenge of the Marseille accent, it was difficult to follow in the footsteps of actors like Raimu, Fernandel, or Pierre Fresnay. Since Sylvain had used Tati's character in *The Illusionist*, we thought animation would suit Pagnol's universe perfectly.

**Lilian Eche** : Aton and I work together regularly. Over time, we've become experienced and recognized producers in animation, with various awards including two Cristals and one César for Aton. Ashargin contacted us and proposed we co-produce this film that retraces both Pagnol's life and the history of cinema through animation. Ashargin, Nicolas, and Sylvain had been working together for over a year when they contacted us. We came in for the final script stage and oversaw the entire production and financing.

**Aton Soumache** : When they showed us the pilot Sylvain had created, I instantly fell in love with the project. It was delightful to see Fernandel, Raimu, and Pagnol talking during a pétanque game. Only animation could bring that to life again. I also found the mix of archive footage and animation beautiful. There was real poetry, with a lovely *mise en abyme* of little Marcel following big Marcel through his life. It wasn't a classic biopic.

It was a very original approach. I knew something magical would come from this film.

### ASHARGIN, YOU ALSO HAVE A PERSONAL CONNECTION TO MARCEL PAGNOL...

**Ashargin Poiré** : My grandfather, Alain Poiré, produced *My Mother's Castle* and *My Father's Glory* by Yves Robert, and co-produced *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources* by Claude Berri. Our grandfathers—Nicolas's and mine—were friends since 1941–1942. They made films together. Alain bought Pagnol's studios during the war. He also distributed Pagnol's films from 1945 onward. It's in our DNA. My grandfather always told me, "Pagnol is magic." I grew up with these films. Pagnol starts with simple stories and through ordinary people, touches us in universal ways.

### THE AMBITION WITH MARCEL AND MR. PAGNOL IS TO TELL A LESSER-KNOWN PART OF HIS LIFE, BEYOND WHAT THE PUBLIC ALREADY KNOWS THROUGH MY FATHER'S GLORY AND MY MOTHER'S CASTLE.

**Ashargin Poiré** : It's a bit of a sequel. After *My Mother's Castle*, Marcel Pagnol becomes an adult. He moves to Paris to become a writer. The film tells the story of his journey as a playwright, then filmmaker and producer.

**Lilian Eche** : We chose not to focus on the well-known and recognized parts of Pagnol. We realized his life ran parallel to the evolution of cinema. That parallel became an obvious way to tell his story. At first, we were very focused on Raimu, Fernandel, the films. But there was so much more to tell.

**Ashargin Poiré** : Marcel Pagnol helped finance and define French cultural exception. He defended French cinema after the war. He was an engineer, inventing a three-wheeled car. He was the first to film on location, with direct sound and

local actors. He always followed through with his ideas and dreams, even against all odds.

**Aton Soumache** : Thanks to Sylvain's film, I discovered many things. It's a film about resilience, about how Marcel Pagnol kept reinventing himself. At 63, having never written a book, he became the Académicien and great novelist we now know, though he had mostly been a playwright and filmmaker. He lived ten lives, and we show seven or eight in the film.

### MARCEL AND MR. PAGNOL IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER ANIMATED FILM. YOU SEE CHARACTERS BREATHE, SIGH, SMILE... THAT'S QUITE RARE IN ANIMATION. WAS IT HARD TO FINANCE?

**Lilian Eche** : Sylvain doesn't make many films, but he is highly respected in animation. This is his third feature. He's been nominated for Oscars four times. He opened Cannes. He's won a César. That recognition made financing a bit easier. It helped us. Sony Pictures Classics joined the project right away. We set up a co-production between France, Luxembourg, and Belgium. Netflix France is also part of the financing. We're supported by the Paca and Normandy regions, Film Fund Luxembourg, and Belgian tax shelters. All this allowed us to finance a budget around 16 million euros, matching Sylvain's ambition.

**Ashargin Poiré** : To get Sylvain's quality, you need a significant budget. This project wasn't simple because it had never been done before. Unique films are always harder to fund. We were the first believers. We had to convince everyone. When we pitched this animated biopic, people often asked why we weren't adapting one of Pagnol's works instead. But we wanted to tell his life story—because it's amazing. This is a film you can rewatch and always discover new things.

**Aton Soumache** : It's never easy to raise over 15 million euros for a film. But when financing a Sylvain film, you have to give him the means! In terms of direction, there are exceptional moments of bravura. And we managed to fund it. One major challenge was Pagnol's limited international fame. We framed the film on two angles to ensure wide enjoyment, whether audiences knew Pagnol or not: it's a film about an incredible person, and a story of cinema. That's why we called the English version A Magnificent Life.

#### WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE ON THIS FILM?

**Lilian Eche** : In this kind of film, I always focus on animation quality and framing, to avoid making just a typical animated film. To me, Sylvain didn't make an animated film. He made a movie, using animation. There's crazy poetry in the transitions. It's rhythmic and rich.

**Ashargin Poiré** : The challenge was also to render Pagnol's authenticity through animation. To be as genuine as Pagnol was since we were telling his life. It's a kind of magical fable, a family film. It's full of wonder, colorful, with laughter and tears. It offers something for everyone: cinema fans, history buffs, animation lovers. It's entertainment for all generations: grandparents, teens.

**Aton Soumache** : The animation world has changed a lot since Sylvain's last film *The Illusionist* in 2010. There are fewer traditional 2D animators. We had to find animators who could work in Sylvain's line, with the finesse of his stroke. Recruitment was hard because Sylvain is very demanding. We worked with lots of young artists who were children when his first film came out! We also had to modernize Sylvain's style with today's tools. That was the tech challenge: modernize the technique while preserving

his beautiful imperfections.

#### SCH CREATED THE END CREDITS SONG. HOW DID HE JOIN THE PROJECT?

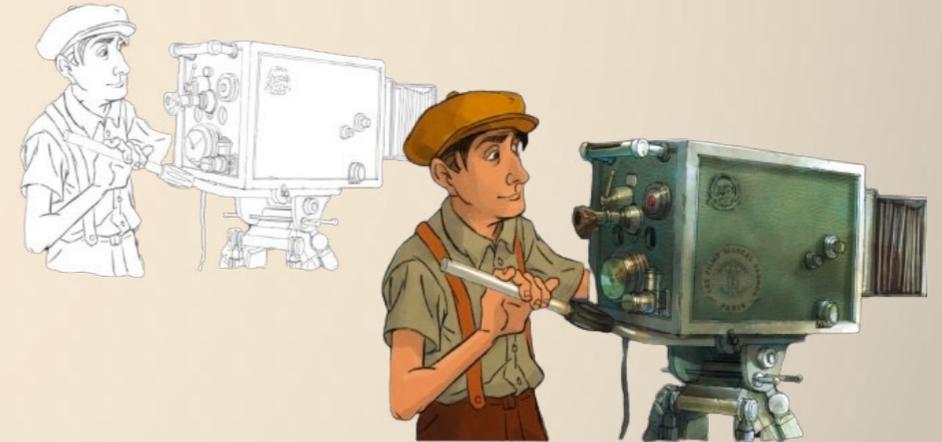
**Ashargin Poiré** : In early December, I saw a video where SCH spoke about his love for Pagnol's films and writings. Turns out SCH is from Aubagne, like Pagnol. His passion and sincerity made it a no-brainer.

**Aton Soumache** : It's the most unexpected collaboration possible. Sylvain likes using songs in his films. He wanted someone from the South. It was a beautiful artistic encounter.

**Lilian Eche** : He got along well with Sylvain. We gave him complete creative freedom. We had no idea what he would come up with. It's very musical. We didn't expect it, and it fits the film's style perfectly, along with Stefano Bollani's original score blending jazz, piano, and full symphonic orchestra.

#### THE FILM IS RELEASED FOR THE 130TH ANNIVERSARY OF MARCEL PAGNOL'S BIRTH.

**Ashargin Poiré** : There were many challenges, but we're glad to present it now for this anniversary and to be selected in Cannes, 70 years after Marcel awarded the first Palme d'Or. It's a huge relief. This film wasn't made for the anniversary. It's like grace followed Marcel Pagnol throughout his life.



\*What The Prod : "Us" = Valérie Puech, co-funder (and marseillaise), and Ashargin Poiré



## INTERVIEW *Stefano Balloni* COMPOSER

### HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT?

It's a story of coincidences. I joined the project by writing directly to Sylvain in September 2022. I sent him a love letter. I adore his films—both his animated ones and his live-action film *Attila Marcel*. I wrote in the letter that I dreamed of working with him. I also sent him some music I had composed for a film called *Il pataffio*. He invited me to visit him, and we hit it off immediately.

### DID YOU START WORKING TOGETHER RIGHT AWAY?

We immediately began exchanging ideas. He liked the music from *Il pataffio*, which featured a recorder. He's a musician himself and had already started using recorder music as a temp track for *Marcel* and *Mr. Pagnol*. It was a perfect coincidence. Plus, he was looking for a composer! According to him, an Italian composer was a good fit because traditional Marseille music resembles that of Naples for many historical reasons.

### WERE YOU FAMILIAR WITH MARCEL PAGNOL?

I didn't know him! After meeting Sylvain, I went home and did my homework. I researched Pagnol's life. I watched his films. In Italy, he isn't well known at all. I thought, what an interesting personality. He really did it all—cinema, theater, novels. There was so much to tell, and so much to express through music. It was very rich.

### WHAT WERE YOUR INSPIRATIONS?

Traditional Marseille music inspired me a lot. Early 20th-century Paris also influenced me. Jazz, obviously, since

Marcel Pagnol even wrote a play called *Jazz*. With words, Pagnol was a kind of musician! Sylvain told me from the start that he wanted a large orchestra, to truly capture the essence of the era. Orchestral music, like in *Golden Age* Hollywood films.

### DID HE GIVE YOU ANY MUSICAL REFERENCES?

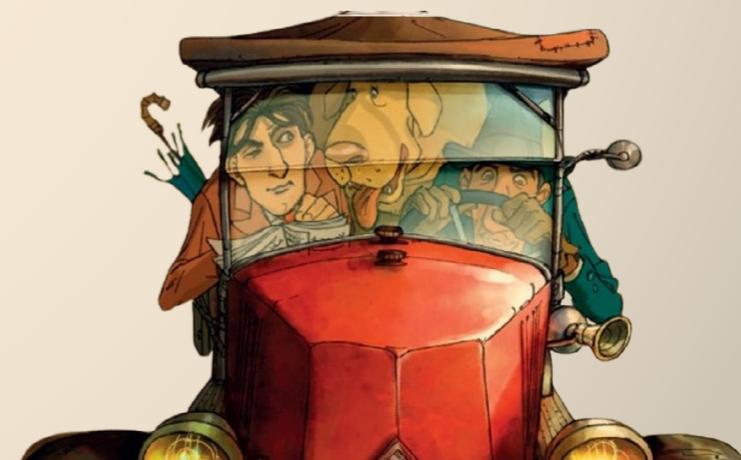
I was influenced by his musical tastes. I had some idea from his previous films. I learned more by spending time with him, listening to his playlists during meals. I discovered we shared many musical interests, which helped our collaboration: jazz, of course, and musicians like Django Reinhardt. We discussed it and ultimately decided that guitar, accordion, or ukulele shouldn't dominate the score. Instead, I discovered he loved early 20th-century French music—Ravel, Poulenc, etc.—which are also among my main inspirations for both my work and this film.

### HOW DID YOU WORK WITH SYLVAIN?

We began by finding the main themes. I started imagining themes for Marseille and Paris, then one for his mother. I offered several versions until Sylvain was happy and started integrating the music into the film. The great thing about animation is that you already have the general structure when you begin composing. That helped a lot. We often met up afterward to keep refining the music. Once we finalized the melodies, he gave me freedom with the arrangements. When we agreed on the pieces, we moved to recording. We had a full orchestra in Berlin, a jazz band in Brussels, and folk musicians in Rome.

### WHY DOES THE RECORDER PLAY SUCH A PROMINENT ROLE IN THE FILM'S MUSIC? WHY WAS IT IMPORTANT FOR TELLING MARCEL PAGNOL'S STORY?

It was the perfect instrument to highlight the joyful moments of his life in Marseille and the sad scenes when he remembers his late mother. In a single shot, with the same instrument, we can move from a joyful childhood memory to the sorrow of his mother's death. That's a very interesting idea: linking two emotions in this way. Music helps you travel back in time, reconnect with childhood. It takes you through emotions. That's what Pagnol did in his films. This is my way of honoring him.



"I've always been in love with Chomet's films and his taste. Being able to collaborate on his film was a wonderful experience. Pagnol's life is a great source of inspiration because he lived in an era full of cultural stimuli. His journey starts in Marseille at the end of the century and moves through the splendid Paris of the twenties and thirties, arriving at the post-war years. That's why we chose to work with a full symphonic orchestra, but with a touch of jazz and folk music."

—  
*Stefano Balloni*



## BIOGRAPHY

# Sylvain Chomet



After studying at the École Supérieure de l'Image in Angoulême, Sylvain published his first comic book *Le Secret des libellules* (Futuropolis), followed by a collaboration with Nicolas de Crécy on an adaptation of Victor Hugo's first novel *Bug-Jargal*. He then wrote the script for *Le Pont dans la vase* (Glénat), illustrated by Hubert Chevillard, and *Léon la came* (Casterman) with Nicolas de Crécy, which won the Goscinny Prize and the Grand Prize at the Angoulême Festival.

Transitioning into animated filmmaking, he wrote and directed the short film *The Old Lady and the Pigeons*. The film won numerous awards, including a BAFTA, the Grand Prize at the Annecy Festival, and an Oscar nomination. In 2003, *The Triplets of Belleville*, his first animated feature, was both a critical and public success worldwide, earning two Oscar nominations (Best Animated Feature and Best Original Song).

In 2006, he directed the 7th arrondissement segment of the film *Paris, je t'aime*. In 2010, he released *The Illusionist*, an animated feature based on an unproduced script by Jacques Tati, which he adapted, directed, and scored. The film won the European Film Award and received Golden Globe and Oscar nominations for Best Animated Feature, as well as the César for Best Animated Film. Sylvain then directed his first live-action film, *Attila Marcel*, produced by Claudie Ossard.

Returning to animation, he began writing and directing *Marcel and Mr. Pagnol* while also collaborating with various artists, including Stromae (Carmen), Matt Groening (for a «couch gag» on *The Simpsons*, season 25), and the opening scene of *Joker: Folie à deux* by Todd Phillips.



## BIOGRAPHY

# Nicolas Pagnol

Born in 1973, Nicolas Pagnol is known as the grandson of Marcel Pagnol and Jacqueline Bouvier. He is the son of Frédéric Pagnol, their son born in 1946. Nicolas was only one year old when his famous grandfather died on April 18, 1974. His mother passed away two years later. He grew up in Cagnes-sur-Mer and became familiar with Marcel Pagnol's work through his grandmother, who entrusted him with the mission of preserving her late husband's legacy.

After studying history, Nicolas Pagnol worked for ten years as an assistant director, collaborating with filmmakers such as Gérard Oury, Francis Veber, Jérôme Cornuau, and Philippe Muyl. Since 2004, he has led the Compagnie Méditerranéenne de Films, the family company that manages Marcel Pagnol's film catalog. He also oversees Éditions de la Treille, founded by René and Jacqueline Pagnol to manage publishing rights and establish the Marcel Pagnol Prize (2000).

He heads the Marcel Pagnol Endowment Fund, which preserves the archives and family land in the hills above Aubagne and Allauch, with a planned museum in Allauch. In addition to adapting his grandfather's books and plays into comics, theatrical works, and audiovisual projects,

Nicolas Pagnol has authored several books about Marcel Pagnol, including *Marcel Pagnol, de l'Académie française : l'album d'une vie* (2011), *Paroles, sagesse et mots d'esprit de Marcel Pagnol* (2016), *Je te Souhaite Beaucoup d'Ennemis comme moi* (2017), and *J'ai Écrit le Rôle de ta Vie* (2016).



## BIOGRAPHY

# Stephano Bollani

**Music is a vast playground that must constantly be reinvented, alone or with others.**

Bollani draws inspiration from all musical styles of the past but especially enjoys exploring the present moment and improvising with great artists such as his mentor Enrico Rava, Chick Corea, Richard Galliano, Bill Frisell, Lee Konitz, Paul Motian, and Pat Metheny. He has recorded with top jazz labels like ECM, Label Bleu, and ACT Records.

He also collaborates with leading symphony orchestras such as the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, La Scala Theater Orchestra in Milan, and the Orchestre National de Paris, performing works by Gershwin, Ravel, and Poulenc—his favorite composers. He finds inspiration in bold and passionate conductors like Riccardo Chailly, Kristjan Järvi, Daniel Harding, Zubin Mehta, and Antonio Pappano.

Bollani has a strong bond with Brazil. He recorded two albums in Rio de Janeiro (Carioca in 2007, Que bom in 2018) and worked with Brazilian artists like Hamilton de Holanda, Caetano Veloso, and Chico Buarque.

Outside of music, he writes books (including the novel *La sindrome di Brontolo*) and creates theater shows such as *Primo Piano* with Banda Osiris, and *La regina dada*, written and performed with his wife Valentina Cenni.

On the radio, with his friend David Riondino, he created *Dr. Djembè*, a scholarly musicologist character who for years shared witty insights on RadioRai3. On television, drawing on his experience with singer Renzo Arbore, he hosted musical improvisation shows blending music and dialogue (*Sostiene Bollani* on Rai3 and *L'importante è avere un piano* on Rai1).

Since 2021, he has hosted *Via dei matti numero zero* with Valentina Cenni on Rai3—a daily prime-time show dedicated to music, now in its fourth season. At the Venice Film Festival in 2022, he received the Soundtrack Stars Award for his work as a film composer. He also won a Nastro d'Argento in 2021 (*Carosello Carosone*) and a David di Donatello in 2023 (*Il pataffio*).



## BIOGRAPHY

# Aton Soumache

Born in 1971, Aton Soumache is a prominent figure in the French animation industry. He founded Onyx Films in 1996 with a pioneering vision for animated cinema: to create and support ambitious projects with strong storytelling, using new technologies to bring extraordinary worlds to life. In 1998, he launched Method Animation, which has since become an international reference in animated series production.

During its early years, Onyx Films produced a range of critically acclaimed projects, including more than twenty short films. In 2003, the short film *L'homme sans tête* by Juan Solanas won the Short Film Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, followed by the César for Best Short Film in 2004. In 2006, Onyx produced *Renaissance*, a visually groundbreaking sci-fi animated feature directed by Christian Volckman using motion capture and a never-before-seen painterly approach. The film received the Cristal Award at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival.

At the same time, Method Animation was producing numerous animated series including *Iron Man*, *The Little Prince*, *Chaplin & Co*, *Robin Hood*, *Playmobil*, *Little Nicholas*, and created one of the world's leading children's brands: *Miraculous Ladybug*.

In 2013, Aton Soumache partnered with Dimitri Rassam to found ON kids & family, bringing together Onyx Films, Method Animation, and Chapter 2 to form a large independent European studio with international reach. Notable productions include the animated feature *The Little Prince*, which was an official selection out of competition at Cannes and went on to win both a César and a BAFTA for Best Animated Film in 2015. It remains the most successful French animated film ever released worldwide. Other works include *Mune: Guardian of the Moon*, *Playmobil: The Movie*, *Little Vampire*, and the 2015 launch of *Miraculous*, which has since become a global phenomenon. Together with Rassam, he also produced over fifteen live-action films, ranging from sci-fi like *Upside Down* to successful comedies such as *What's in a Name* and *Daddy or Mommy*.

In 2018, ON kids & family joined the Mediawan Group, becoming Mediawan Kids & Family in 2022, with Aton Soumache as president. That same year, he produced the animated feature *The Little Nicholas: Happy As Can Be*, which saw major success including selection at the Cannes Film Festival, the Cristal Award for Best Feature at Annecy, the Lumières Award for Best Animated Film, and a nomination for the César Award for Best Animated Film.

*Miraculous Ladybug* continued its extraordinary rise, and Aton Soumache became internationally recognized as one of the creators of the series alongside Jérémy Zag. Since 2015, all seven seasons have aired in 150 countries. The series has become a global pop culture phenomenon, reaching massive audiences on platforms like Netflix and Disney. In 2023, he produced *Miraculous: The Movie*, directed by Jérémy Zag, with a production budget of 80 million euros, making it the second largest budget in French film history. The film was released simultaneously in cinemas and on Netflix in a unique distribution strategy.

Over the span of nearly thirty years, Aton Soumache has established himself as one of the leading animation producers in the world. He has produced twelve animated feature films and around forty animated series, all praised by audiences and critics alike. His work has earned hundreds of awards worldwide, including two Cristal Awards at Annecy, four official selections at Cannes, the Short Film Jury Prize at Cannes, two César Awards and four César nominations for Best Animated Film, as well as two BAFTA Awards. His contributions have left a lasting impact on the animation industry, making him an essential figure in the field.



## BIOGRAPHY

# Lilian Eche

Born in November 1967 in the Paris region, Lilian Eche considers himself Savoyard after living for over ten years on the snowy slopes of the Maurienne. With a strong background in mathematics, he specialized in industrial computing.

After a brief stint at EDF (Electricité de France), Lilian devoted himself in 1989 to one of his great passions—robotics. As a project manager in the industrial sector, he supervised and coordinated IT, electrical, and mechanical components in fields as diverse as aerospace, automotive, insulation, tooling, propulsion, and food processing.

In 1997, he joined Neuroplanet, a young animation film production and distribution company, where he successively served as Technical Director (R&D), Studio General Manager (overseeing studios in Belgium, Luxembourg, Paris, Angoulême, Seoul, Lisbon, and Montreal), and led the group's IT development. He contributed to the company's growth and, as Executive Producer from 2000, founded a new animation studio in Luxembourg and became Vice President of the Montreal studio.

In 2001, seeking full independence, he launched his own operation, establishing a Luxembourg-based animation hub with LuxAnimation (production company) and LuxStudio (production studio) specializing in new technologies. His technical background enabled him to develop in-house tools to optimize financial and production workflows. Lilian co-produced over 28 TV series and 7 feature films, including the international hit Franklin, and the animated features Renaissance by Christian Volckman, Dragon Hunters by Arthur Qwak and Guillaume Ivernel, 9 by Shane Acker (produced with Tim Burton), The Prodigies by Antoine Charreyron, and The Children of Timpelbach by Nicolas Bary.

He co-founded Bidibul Productions with Christel Henon and has served as Producer and Managing Director since early 2009. He has produced over 20 animated and live-action feature films and series, many of which have been selected or awarded at prestigious festivals, including Little Nicholas: Happy As Can Be by Benjamin Massoubre and Amandine Fredon (official selection at Cannes 2022, Cristal winner at Annecy 2022, Lumières Award, and César nominee), Room 212 by Christophe Honoré (Acting Award at Cannes



for Chiara Mastroianni), and Sibel by Çagla Zencirci and Guillaume Giovanetti (multi-awarded in Locarno, Hamburg, Cannes, Rome, Brussels...).

## BIOGRAPHY

SCH

SCH, whose real name is Julien Schwarzer, has established himself as one of the most distinctive artists on the French rap scene. Originally from Aubagne, he made a strong impact on French rap in 2015 with «A7», a powerful debut mixtape that showcased his talent for blending melancholy with darker tracks, always standing out with a unique style in the rap landscape. This project, now considered a genre classic and certified diamond, left a lasting impression thanks to its sounds and introspective lyrics, laying the groundwork for a unique style that merges street rap with a cinematic vision, as seen in tracks like Gomorra and A7.

In 2016, his first album «Anarchie» propelled him firmly into the spotlight. He followed up with «Deo Favente» in 2017, which cemented his status as a key figure in contemporary French rap. He also explored French pop influences with the track «La nuit», a song dedicated to his father, a genre he would delve into further in 2024 with JVLIVS III.

The JVLIVS saga began in 2018, marking a turning point in his career. With the first volume, SCH created a fully realized fictional universe. Inspired by genre cinema, he crafted an immersive work where each track

paints a cinematic picture, enhanced by legendary interludes narrated by José Luccioni (the French voice of Al Pacino). This groundbreaking project transcended music, notably through an accompanying short film and cinematic music videos, where SCH's personal story intertwines with film-inspired aesthetics.

In 2019, «Rooftop» offered a break from the JVLIVS saga, just before the cultural phenomenon «Bande Organisée» in 2020, a massive hit that made waves in popular culture. In 2021, «JVLIVS II» confirmed SCH's artistic ambition. More personal, this album blurred the lines between fiction and reality, merging the artist and the character. It was certified gold in just four days, reflecting the massive anticipation surrounding the project.

After releasing «Autobahn» in 2022 and its hit title track, SCH returned in 2024 to conclude the JVLIVS trilogy. He first took a surprising turn with «JVLIVS Prequel: Giulio», accompanied by a short film exploring the origins of the character and his own trajectory. Just six months later, he unveiled «JVLIVS III: Ad Finem», an album he had been working on for over two years, concluding a blend of live performance and musical theatre, whose final show was filmed and is now available on MyCANAL.

While Volume III marks the end of the JVLIVS era for SCH musically, it also marks the artistic culmination both musically and visually with an entire coherent, cinematic universe, from covers to music videos to short films and the JVLIVS Tour, halfway between live action and musical comedy, the last date of which was captured currently on MyCANAL

The end of the JVLIVS chapter also comes on the eve of the 10th anniversary of his first mixtape iconic "A7" released in 2015.

Key Figures:

5 million monthly listeners on Spotify

9 albums, all at least platinum, with A7 certified diamond, and JVLIVS II triple platinum

2.3 million+ albums sold

1 million albums sold just from the JVLIVS trilogy

3 million YouTube subscribers

2 million followers on Instagram

1 million on Snapchat

827k on TikTok

In 2024:

JVLIVS Prequel: Giulio sold 42k units in the first week, certified platinum.

JVLIVS III: Ad Finem sold 48k units in the first week 3rd best debut of the year (after Les Enfoirés and Indochine) Top rap debut, gold certified in 8 days, already platinum.

JVLIVS Concerto: Two sold-out shows at Théâtre du Châtelet, each selling out in under 2 hours.

After filling the Stade Vélodrome in 2023, he's touring Zénith venues from Dec 2024 to Jan 2025, including two sold-out Bercy concerts A true Pop Icon: Jury member for 4 seasons of Netflix's Nouvelle École, promo appearances with Squeezie, Hot Ones, Konbini's Video Club.

Also a fashion reference: ambassador for Audemars Piguet, partnership with Chanel, and more...

Also a fashion reference: ambassador for Audemars Piguet, partnership with Chanel, and more...

# What The Prod



The company is led by Ashargin Poiré and Valérie Puech, co-founders and co-producers of *A MAGNIFICENT LIFE*, their first feature film. They initially developed and (co) produced various documentaries and TV series before moving into fiction with this film by Sylvain Chomet, whom they approached to tell the story of Pagnol's life and career.

**Ashargin Poiré** began as a trainee and 3rd assistant director, then as 2nd assistant director on comedy sets for Josiane Balasko (*My Life Is Hell*), Yves Robert (*Le Bal des Casse-Pieds*), Jean-Marie Poiré (*Operation Corned-Beef*, *The Visitors*), as well as ads, music videos, and short films. In the 2000s, he shifted to producing, particularly in documentaries, as a writer, director, or production manager. In 2010, he and Valérie founded their own production company, What The Prod, officially created in 2012.

**Valérie Puech** has worked in the audiovisual and media industry for over 25 years. Her roles have included production coordinator, assistant director, line producer, and production manager (e.g., *La Grande Course* with Michel Denzot), on TV fiction (Gaumont TV), cinema, live programming (for various broadcasters), and commercial films.

She has also worked as a script supervisor for the 8pm news on Antenne Réunion, as a communications officer (cultural sites), and as a press officer (Aventi DVD Editions and Jalou publications with editor-in-chief Thomas Erber).

WHAT THE PROD is a 360° creative and production house focused on French works with strong international potential: cinema, audiovisual, video games, VR, and Web3. The company aims to break silos and develop hybrid, innovative, multimedia content.

WHAT THE PROD is passionate about exploring narrative techniques, visual processes, and original graphic styles, working with top artistic talents to offer impactful and entertaining stories and experiences.

# Mediawan

Founded in late 2015 by Pierre-Antoine Capton, Xavier Niel and Matthieu Pigasse, Mediawan is one of Europe's leading independent audiovisual content studios. Mediawan federates the best talents in audiovisual creation by being present across the entire value chain: the production of original content in fiction, cinema, documentaries, animation and flow programs (Mediawan Studios) thanks to more than 85 production labels in France, Germany, England, Italy, Spain, USA, Netherlands, Finland, Belgium, Australia, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, but also the distribution of audiovisual content (Mediawan Rights), the publishing of digital channels and services (Mediawan Thematics) and the development and production of digital content (Mediawan Digital).



## With the voices of

Matthew GRAVELLE  
Lu CORFIELD  
Jonathan KEEBLE  
Celyn JONES  
Jess NESLING  
Flora MONTGOMERY



## Technical Credits

A film by Sylvain CHOMET

Produced by Aton SOUMACHE  
Ashargin POIRÉ  
Valérie PUECH  
Lilian ECHE

Co-produced by Eric GOOSSENS  
Anton ROEBBEN  
Fabrice DELVILLE  
Samuel FELLER

Original Music	Stefano BOLLANI
Executive Producer	Jean-Baptiste LÈRE
Music Supervisor	Pierre-Marie DRU
Line Producer	Lara BELLINI
Post-Production Director	Morgane LE GALLIC
Artistic Director	Lana CHOUKROUNE
Animation Supervisor	Xiaopeng JIAO
Background Supervisor	Sébastien MORIN
Layout Background Supervisor	Patrick SADZOT
Color Background Supervisor	François SPREUTELS
Compositing Supervisor	Brenda BULUT
Colorist	Grégoire LESTURGIE
Sound Editor	Nicolas LEROY
Foley Artist	Xavier DROUAULT
Sound Mixer	Loïc COLLIGNON

### PRODUCTION

WHAT THE PROD  
MEDIWAN  
PICTURE BOX  
BIDIBUL PRODUCTIONS

French Distribution  
International Sales

WILD BUNCH DISTRIBUTION  
ELLE DRIVER  
SONY PICTURES CLASSICS