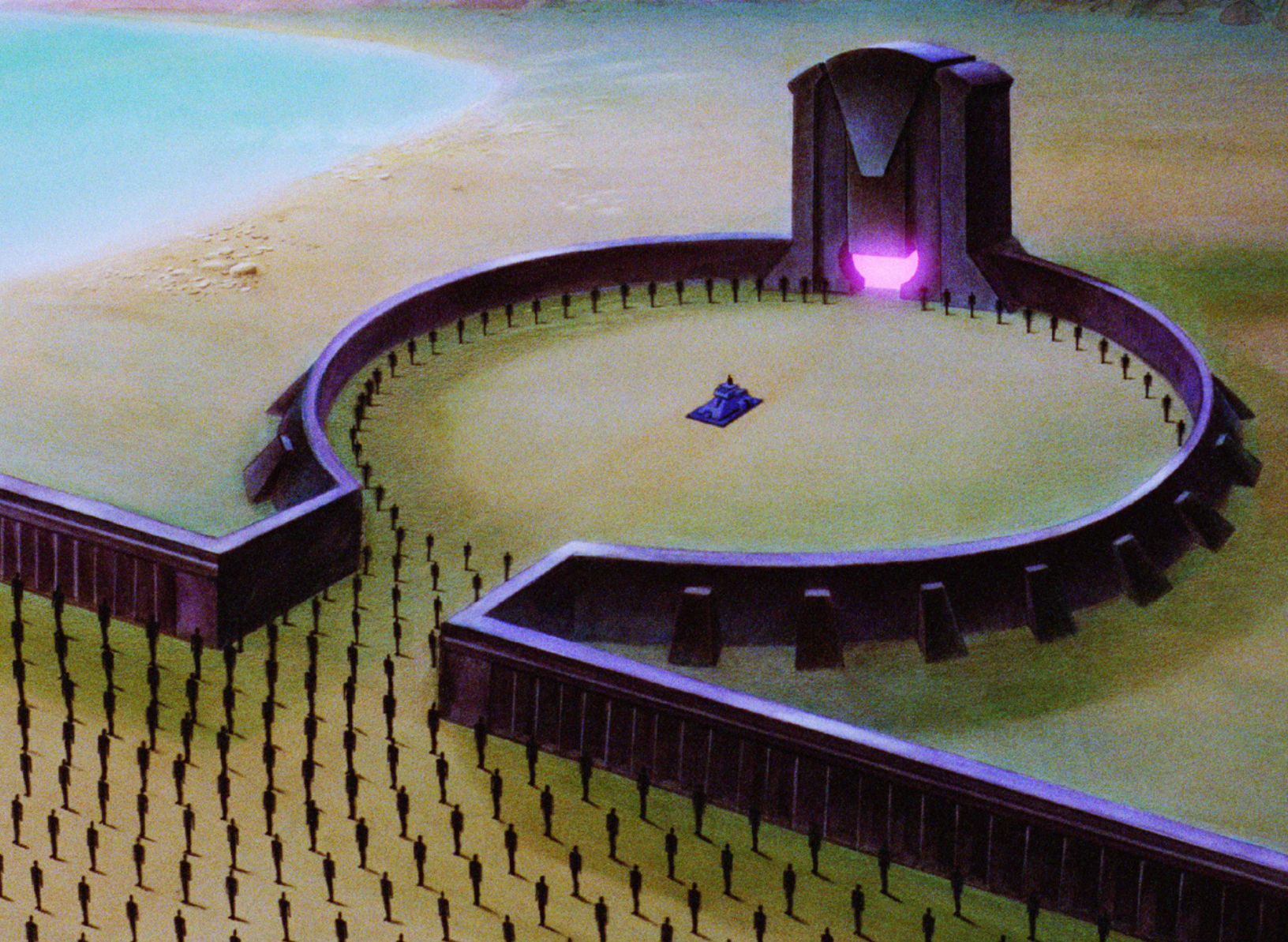




JANUS FILMS

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GANDAHAR

An entire civilization must confront its destiny in alternative-animation pioneer René Laloux's final feature, a cult classic of mind-bending science fiction. In a distant world, a merciless army of automata attacks Gandahar, turning its peace-loving people to stone. Hoping to discover the source of these Metal Men, a council of matriarchs enlists the brave yet inexperienced warrior Sylvain (Pierre-Marie Escourrou), who, while journeying through his planet's outer regions, teams up with the Deformed, a race cast out from Gandahar after failed science experiments rendered them mutants. Soon, Sylvain learns that a gargantuan brain called the Metamorph (Georges Wilson) is responsible for his utopian society's strife and—together with the beautiful Airelle (Catherine Chevallier)—he travels through time to defeat him, in the process risking their lives and Gandahar's very existence. Featuring stunningly surreal creatures and wondrously bizarre environments designed by renowned comic-book artist Caza, *Gandahar* is a visceral, visionary head trip in which animation opens a gateway to the furthest reaches of the imagination.

France | 1987 | 83 minutes | Color | In French with English subtitles |
1.37:1 aspect ratio

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Gandahar, René Laloux's final feature film, was conceived in the wake of *Fantastic Planet* (1973), a science-fiction classic and Cannes Film Festival prizewinner that had announced its director as a master of surreal underground animation. Now in a position to go bigger and better, Laloux pitched several projects to comic-book artists Jean Giraud (a.k.a. Mœbius) and Philippe Cazaumayou (a.k.a. Caza) of *Métal hurlant* (*Heavy Metal*) magazine fame. One of these was an adaptation of the Jean-Pierre Andrevon novel *Les hommes-machines contre Gandahar* (*The Machine-Men vs. Gandahar*, 1969), but, though Caza was interested, Laloux soon began channeling his energy into a short film, *The Game*, that would be released in 1975.

Laloux eventually collaborated with Mœbius on the existentialist space adventure *The Time Masters* (1982). But during and after its production, Laloux held on to his dream of *Gandahar*, which finally got off the ground when North Korea's state-owned animation studio SEK, which had previously worked on Eurasian film and television, offered itself up as a subcontractor. North Korea—one of the most politically and socially isolated countries in the world—could provide talented animators at wages that were exceptionally low in comparison to the West; thus Laloux, keenly aware of the exorbitant costs of animation and the niche appeal of his adult-oriented sci-fi/fantasy films, accepted SEK's proposal and moved the production of *Gandahar* to Pyongyang.

Laloux and Caza, who in the meantime had collaborated on a short, *The Captive* (1985), knew how to work well together as a team. For *Gandahar*, Laloux wrote a screenplay from Andrevon's narrative, while Caza provided illustrations and concept art to form the basis of the film's images. This is where SEK's lack of wide-ranging experience posed problems, however. Caza hoped that SEK would experiment with various cutting-edge techniques to bring his work to life. But SEK was accustomed to implementing a single house style, forcing Laloux and Caza to give the studio a crash course on Western design and animation; even then, many of Caza's most ambitious ideas had to be dropped. The animators were so skeptical of the bare-breasted, amply endowed figures that Laloux and Caza had imagined for the civilization of Gandahar that director and illustrator showed them erotic magazines from Europe—smuggled past customs agents en route to North Korea—to convince them that such images did, in fact, exist.

The distributor Acteurs Auteurs Associés released *Gandahar* in France on December 11, 1987, to positive reviews and successful box-office returns. By then, the film had already caught the attention of Miramax, which was building a reputation in the United States for distributing uncompromising and off-kilter art-house fare like *Working Girls* (1986) and *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* (1987). Soon, Miramax bought the North American rights to *Gandahar* and sought to draw attention to the property by enlisting legendary science-fiction author Isaac Asimov to write and polish the English dialogue. In a March 1988 issue of *Cinefantastique*—a film magazine devoted to sci-fi, horror, and fantasy—producer Susan Slonaker assured Laloux fans that Miramax would “not touch the [original] visuals. That's what got Asimov interested.”



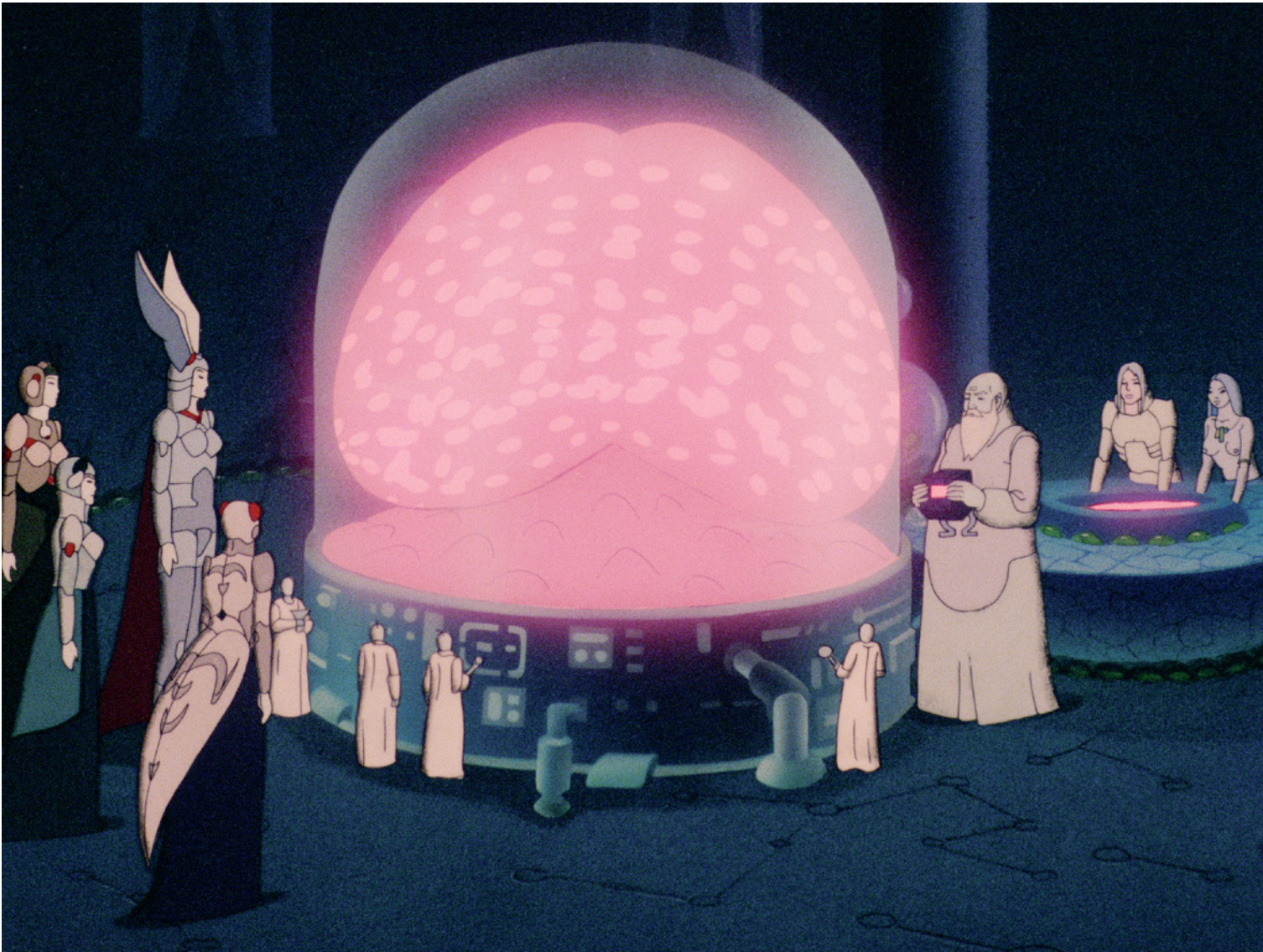
CAST

Sylvain	Pierre-Marie Escourrou
Airelle	Catherine Chevallier
The Metamorph	Georges Wilson
Ambisextra	Anny Duperey
Blaminhor	Jean-Pierre Ducos
Spokesperson	Christine Paris

But that promise was broken: Among other revisions, the now-disgraced Miramax cofounder Harvey Weinstein created a new introduction (with a quote by Asimov), grafted footage from earlier in the film into the end credits, and, most notably, truncated scenes implying physical intimacy between Sylvain and Airelle. On the whole, the Miramax version was more than six minutes shorter than the original film. It also dropped composer Gabriel Yared’s lush, dynamic score in favor of a new, upbeat synth soundtrack by Jack Maeby, Bob Jewitt, and Jim Klein. Indeed, Weinstein made so many changes to *Gandahar*, now titled *Light Years* (or, sometimes, *Isaac Asimov’s Light Years*), that he billed himself as codirector. Laloux nonetheless approved the film’s English-language version, which features voice work by John Shea (Sylvain), Jennifer Grey (Airelle), Christopher Plummer (the Metamorph), and Glenn Close (Ambisextra). This new restoration of the original French version offers American audiences a chance to finally see Laloux’s vision as he intended it. ●

CREDITS

Director	René Laloux
Original designs	Philippe Caza
Based on the novel <i>Les hommes-machines</i> <i>contre Gandahar</i> by	Jean-Pierre Andrevon
Adaptation	René Laloux
Dialogue	Raphael Cluzel
Music	Gabriel Yared
“Marche des hommes-machines” composed by	Christian Zanesi
Production director	Dominique Boischot
Executive producer	Leon Zuratas



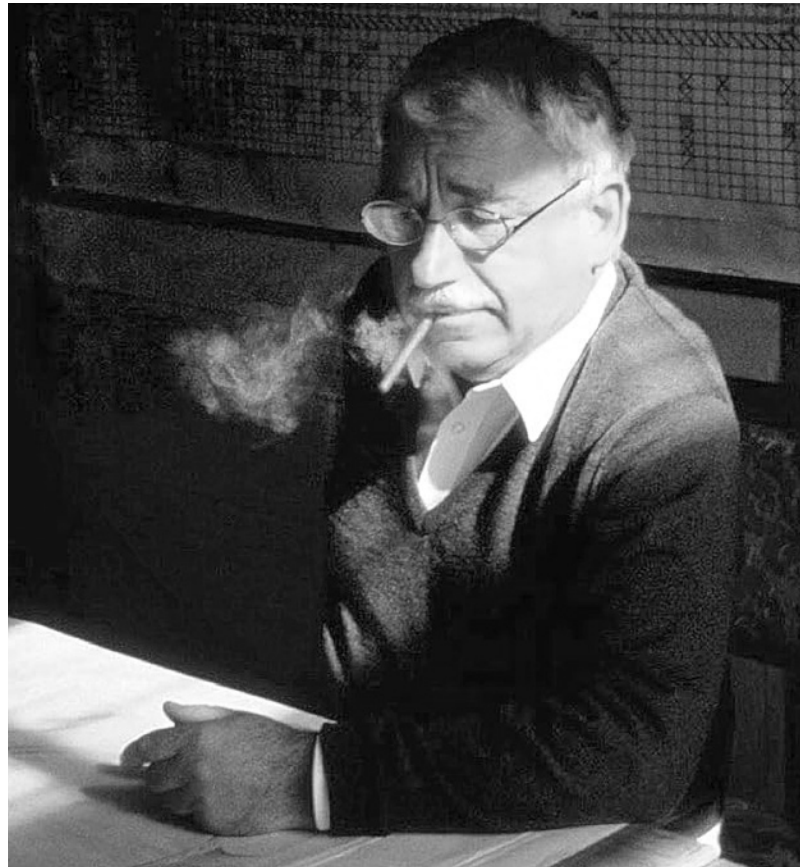
RENÉ LALOUX BIOGRAPHY

René Laloux was born in Paris on July 13, 1929. After attending college to study fine art and working for a spell in advertising, he shifted into psychiatry with a job at a clinic in Cour-Cheverny. Though his first film was the silhouette-animation short *Tic Tac* (1957), it was there that he launched an animation studio as a form of occupational therapy. In 1961, with the help of famed French animator Paul Grimault, Laloux produced *The Monkey's Teeth*, a short scripted and illustrated by his patients.

Two collaborations with artist, cartoonist, and illustrator Roland Topor followed, both shorts: *Dead Times* (1965) and *The Snails* (1966). After many years of painstaking work, Laloux at last made his feature-film debut with *Fantastic Planet* (1973), from a script adapted by Topor and himself from Stefan Wul's novel *Oms en série* (1957). The result was a surreal science-fiction classic that found an audience among the last wave of the flower-child generation, won the Grand Prix special jury prize at the 1973 Cannes Film Festival, and to this day remains a landmark of underground animation.

For his sophomore feature, Laloux teamed up with comic-book artist Moebius. Based on the iconic illustrator's adaptation of *L'orphelin de Perdide* (1958), another Wul novel, *The Time Masters* (1982) once again explores psychedelic sci-fi landscapes with a distinct visual and narrative inventiveness. Laloux then adapted a Jean-Pierre Andrevon novel, for which he enlisted Caza to design the animation. *Gandahar* (1987), Laloux's third and final feature, received a successful critical and theatrical reception in France, but the English-language version, reedited and released by Harvey Weinstein's Miramax, floundered in the North American market.

Though Laloux directed shorts throughout his career, he was unable to complete any additional features before his death, from a heart attack, on March 14, 2004. His last significant work was a nonfiction book, *Ces dessins qui bougent: Cent ans de cinéma d'animation* (Drawings That Move: One Hundred Years of Animated Films, 1996), which compares and contrasts the American and European schools of animation to make a case for what makes great animated art. ●



RENÉ LALOUX FILMOGRAPHY

- 1957 *Tic Tac* (short, codirected with Jacques Brissot)
- 1958 *Les achalunés* (short)
- 1961 *The Monkey's Teeth* (*Les dents du singe*) (short)
- 1965 *Dead Times* (*Les temps morts*) (short)
- 1966 *The Snails* (*Les escargots*) (short)
- 1973 *Fantastic Planet* (*La planète sauvage*)
- 1975 *The Game* (*Le jeu*) (short)
- 1982 *The Time Masters* (*Les maîtres du temps*)
- 1984 *Quality Control* (*La maîtrise de la qualité*) (short)
- 1985 *The Captive* (*La prisonnière*) (short, codirected with Philippe Caza)
- 1987 *Gandahar*
How Wang-fo Was Saved
(*Comment Wang-fo fut sauvé*) (short)