

SAMSAM

**A FILM BY
TANGUY DE KERMEL**

INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

David GAULTIER

david.gaultier@studiocanal.com

INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY

Amina BOUIDOUDANE

amina.bouidoudane@studiocanal.com

SYNOPSIS

The young and intrepid Samsam has almost everything a cosmic-hero could dream of: loving heroic parents, a bunch of super-friends and his own flying saucer to explore space... except that his first superpower hasn't kicked in yet! When Mega, the new cool kid in town claims she can teach him superpowers, Samsam sees in the mysterious girl the chance to finally reveal his superhuman abilities. Together they will embark on a cosmic adventure where he will learn that friendship and courage may well be the best superpowers he could wish for.

INTERVIEW WITH TANGUY DE KERMEL

How did the project to adapt Serge Bloch's comic strips into an animated television series begin?

In 2006, the Bayard Group was looking for a director to carry out the audiovisual adaptation of Samsam, a character from the Pomme d'Api magazine, because they thought he had great potential. Once they had seen the films I had directed in Japan, they asked me to take part in an animation test. They were unsure whether to choose a 2D adaptation, based on Serge's drawings, or to use 3D animation, which was making its first appearances in children's TV programmes. I told them from the start that traditional cartoons were not my specialty and that I would not participate if they chose that direction for the series, but that I would do everything I could to convince them that 3D animation would produce fantastic results! I did the 3D test, and both Bayard and Serge liked it very much; Serge wanted the series to take his character into a new dimension.

What attracted you to these stories?

I immediately loved the cosmic universe that Serge had created for Samsam: a children's science-fiction story where a little boy and his friends are the stars of superhero adventures. His parents don't spend all their time protecting him — although this does happen in some episodes — and Samsam is given a very free rein: he can fly off to wherever he likes in space in his Samsaucer, taking his teddy bear with him. And there are also all the other delightful characters created by Serge: Marthial the 1st, the dictator on the planet Marth, Beastlybeard and his band of pirates, and a few monsters. But Samsam's school, friends and parents are always at the heart of his adventures. Although it is a small universe, there is enough variety to tell all sorts of stories which all are very different from one another. I knew that I would be able to make 52 episodes, creating each one like a mini short movie, without being limited to a repetitive narrative format. Serge's stories deal with children's psychology in a very positive way. Bayard pays particular attention to this point: they make sure all their characters are meaningful, so that they can help children grow up. So, when Samsam must stand up to an enemy, this represents one of the universal childhood fears, like being scared of the dark or afraid of wetting the bed every night. All of this is brought down to the level of our little superhero, in a cosmic universe full of monsters, pirates and planets to explore.

Did Serge Bloch take part in the visual development of the series? How did you approach the adaptation process with him?

We wondered if Serge would be happy with the new 3D versions of the characters. In his drawings, there are a great many differences from one illustration of Samsam to another: the size of his ears changes, his nose is longer or shorter — so variations arise from the spontaneous way Serge draws.

I formed a small team to carry out the adaptation into 3D, calling on the designer Eric Guillon, who went on to create the characters in *DESPICABLE ME*, such as the Minions. At the time, we often worked together in advertising, so it was quite natural for me to ask him to work on this adaptation with me. We got out our pencils, wondering how to arrive at one single form for the character of Samsam. Once we had studied Serge's work in detail, we derived a sort of average from his illustrations of Samsam, by first drawing him in two dimensions to determine his proportions, the size of his ears, etc. Then we did the same for his parents, the pirates, and all the other characters. We presented this work to Serge and, because he is an absolute gem with an incredibly open mind, he said, "Listen guys, I think this is fabulous and I trust you. I create comic strips and I don't know anything about 3D. So, go for it!" He gave us the freedom to create our own dynamics, to take his universe into a new dimension. We worked in a trusting atmosphere, with Serge's support throughout the development of the characters in 3D. Then, we asked the sculptor Yves Vidal to make statuettes based on our three-dimensional character studies. These were much more tangible to show Serge, rather than 3D character models on a computer screen, which tend to look very lifeless and unattractive until they are finished. The colourful, painted statuettes gave a much better impression of the final version of the characters. So, Yves created sculptures of the parents, the pirates, the monsters, in fact of almost all the protagonists in the series, referring frequently back to Eric Guillon and myself, to make sure that we were all in agreement. We then showed these three-dimensional models to Serge, who approved them one by one. This process took around six months. We also had to agree on a guiding principle for the scenery, since Serge sometimes colours a world red one day, then orange another day! So, we assigned recurring colour codes to each environment in the series, by giving each character his or her own colour. For example, SuperJulie wears pink from top to toe, SweetPea is all green, SamSam is all red, etc. That's why everything surrounding Samsam is red: his space saucer, his toys, the furniture in his room. In the same way, SweetPea's scooter is green and SuperJulie's space saucer is pink. This creates a unified visual effect that resembles the world created by Serge, even in 3D. We also included his black outlining by drawing some background elements on the walls rather than creating three-dimensional objects. This is the case for the plants in Samsam's parent's house, for example.

And for the outlines of buildings in the distance, in the city panorama...

Exactly. We also decided to leave black dots in the characters' eyes, rather than drawing irises and pupils, and to add black outlines around the headlights on Samsam's space saucer. All these details contribute to giving the 3D images a visual finish that is close to 2D.

Did Serge Bloch take part in writing the stories for the series?

Yes. The first stage in creating the script for a series involves writing a show bible. This contains a detailed description of the characters, their personalities, their idiosyncracies, and the whole world in which their adventures will take place. This bible then becomes an essential tool for the screenwriters as they work on the scripts for each episode. Serge was very much involved during this stage, because he wanted to make sure that the editorial line and the relationships between the characters would be correctly transposed into future episodes. He helped us to write an explanation of how SamPlanet works, the rules at school, what the children say to one another, how the pirates organise themselves, etc. If a screenwriter wonders if the pirates are dangerous and nasty or if they are just a bunch of morons, he will find the answer in the bible. To cut a long story short, all these details were defined very precisely, in collaboration with Bayard's audio-visual and editorial teams.

Let's now move on to the film. If I understand correctly, it's a prequel, since Marthial the 1st, the dictator on the planet Marth, and Samsam have not yet met in the film, whereas they get on quite well in the series...

Yes, that's right, the action in the film takes place before the series. In our story, Samsam knows who Marthial the 1st is, because he is told, "Don't go to Marth, it's dangerous!" So people know that this dictator could pose a threat to SamPlanet. Perhaps Samsam's parents have already gone and zapped him several times, and that's why children are not allowed to go and explore that planet. But the main storyline of this prequel is that Samsam is still trying to discover his first superpower, whereas in the series, he already has several powers. Of course, he still goes to cosmic hero school, but he hears very far-off sounds using his super-ears, his eyes can see for very long distances, and he is strong enough to push meteorites away. In short, he is already a real cosmic hero! In the film, we discover Samsam at a time when he is the only pupil in the class who has not yet found his superpower, and this worries him a lot.

Which new themes did you want to develop in this film?

The screenwriter Jean Regnaud discussed this with Serge first, to define the main ingredients of the Samsam stories. Jean forced himself not to watch the TV programme episodes, so that he would not be influenced by what had been done before. Then, Jean and Valérie Magis sought out which characters would give them enough leeway to build a new plot for the film. The main theme that emerged is a child who wants to grow up and become independent, by freeing himself from the "yoke" of his parents. For Samsam, this means finding his superpower. For Mega — a new character who has never featured in the series — things are more complex because her father is the dictator on the planet Marth and her mother is a bossy woman who is only interested in music. Samsam, however, has wonderful parents, a magnificent room filled with toys, a super teddy, fabulous friends, so he is doing very well. Finding his superpower is the only thing that bothers him a bit. At the same time, we discover poor little Mega, who lives hidden away on Marth, forbidden to leave the palace. Her mother forces her to take singing lessons, and even in her room there is not a single toy, only sheets of music. Mega lives locked away at the top of her tower and she doesn't know that children elsewhere can have fun. She is not even allowed to laugh, because it gives her father a headache! We created a great contrast between the way these two characters live: one is doing well, the other is unhappy, but they both have problems to deal with. When they meet, they will help one another. But, to make new friends, Mega feels obliged to tell lies. Telling lies is a central element to our story. Mega's family situation is so distorted, so dysfunctional, that the only way she can get by is to use trickery, by telling huge fibs to her parents, then to the children she meets on SamPlanet. And, without wanting to, she hurts many people with the tales she tells.

Can you tell us about the technical and artistic work that was carried out to transpose the Samsam characters and scenery from the television to the movie screen?

The first episodes of the series were made about twelve years ago. From a technical point of view, we could not reuse any of that material with the current software used by the Mac Guff studio, or to produce cinema-quality images. Blue Spirit, who worked on the first two seasons of the series and will soon be working on the third, is also a very good studio, but it is more specialised in television productions. By working with Mac Guff, it was obvious that we would have to start from scratch. Right from the first few seconds of the film, I wanted the spectator to see that this show was specifically created for the movie screen, that it is not just three episodes from the series one after the other. By offering Folivari this character, as suggested by Mac Guff, I also wanted to entrust the project to a producer with solid experience in the animated feature film industry, who would help us to achieve cinema-quality results throughout the scenario development and image rendering phases.

I therefore drew on Mac Guff's and Folivari's experience to design new models for the characters, taking them much further than before. Everything is much more detailed, more refined. We changed Samsam's proportions very slightly, by elongating them to slim him down a bit. This makes him appear a little bit taller, even though the story takes place before the events in the series. We also wanted to give him a more grown up appearance. The target audience for the series is the 3 to 6 age group, but with this new look, our hero is aimed at children up to 8 years old. When we reworked the characters for the cinema, we started off by going back to the drawing board. This allowed me to adjust all the little things that had restricted us when we made the series.

For example?

Well, by reducing the size of the character's heads and making their arms longer, we gave ourselves much more scope for animation than in the series.

Although the graphics are still streamlined, we can now see additional textures on the character's costumes, for example on Samsam's hood...

Yes, this was essential to achieve a pleasant, more refined appearance for the cinema. The scenery is still stylised, but the characters and vehicles are much more detailed, with greater texture. We have made significant improvements to the panoramas of the city where Samsam lives with his parents. They are much larger, and we have added vegetation to them, but still using the same palette of warm colours. There are new details everywhere: for example, in the parents' living room, the bookcase is now in three dimensions. The scenery has been greatly enriched but is still in the futuristic style of the 1950s and 60s, using the Samsam colour codes. Marthial the 1st's realm has also seen significant developments.

Which opportunities for scene-setting did the film offer you?

Once the script had been written, we continued to enhance the story during the creation of the storyboard, by giving it greater magnitude and dreaming up new scenery. That's why I was talking about Marthial the 1st's world: we invented lots of new settings that had never featured in Serge's comics or in the series. First of all, there is his palace, which is inside a giant statue of himself, with a whole system of lifts and pipes that look like the statue's intestines, and that allow him to access his private apartments or his secret laboratory. These scenery ideas were tested first with the production designer and storyboarder Maël Legall, to make sure they met framing and scene requirements. The gigantic palace-statue and its voluminous interior allowed me to widen the view and explore the idea that the top of the statue is hidden in the clouds. The Marthial family's private apartments cannot be seen by ordinary Marthians from the ground. This explains why the existence of his wife and daughter had remained a secret. We also illustrated the vastly different personalities of Marthial and his wife by dividing the family living room into two parts. Marthial is not allowed to put a foot on the floor of the section decorated by his wife, not even his little toe! This part of the room looks like a diva's boudoir, with a little white sofa and shades of blue that contrast with the typically marthian green and grey tones.

In the same vein, which new accomplishments were achieved during the animation of the film, in comparison to the series?

We spent 4 times longer on the animations for the film than on those for the series. This is a huge leap in terms of quality, which has had a positive effect in all areas, both artistic and technical. The cinemascope format also gave me greater magnitude to stage each scene, so as to plunge the spectator even further into our large-scale scenery.

In the film, do the character's faces have a greater range of expressions than in the series?

Yes, the animation principles used for the film are much more refined. There are many more controls — known as “rigs” — to move the characters’ body joints and facial expressions. There are ten times more controllers for the animators to use, so they can create much more appropriate, subtle expressions on the characters’ faces. For example, rather than just having one “catch-all” sad face, we could give Mega an expression that shows she is both despondent and annoyed at having to lie to Samsam. We could therefore show varying degrees of each emotion, allowing us to convey the characters’ feelings deep down inside to the audience.

You worked with a choreographer on the dance scenes. How were these movements transferred to the characters?

I asked the choreographer, Véronique Brunel, to pay special attention to the proportions of our child characters, with their “little, short legs”. We filmed her, and the animators used this video to adapt the dance routine to the characters in a dynamic way. If we had used a movement capture technique, we would not have achieved the same lively effect or the same energy: the results would have been too realistic.

Where was the animation carried out?

In the Mac Guff studios in Paris and Brussels, with whole sequences of the film being shared out between these two teams. Each studio had its own modelers, animators, surfacing specialists, lighting specialists, etc. I was mainly based in Paris, but I also worked in Lille for two months with the small Folivari preproduction team — two visual designers and a storyboarder — at the Tchack studio that hosted our project. This was made possible by a financial contribution from Pictanovo, which manages the Hauts-de-France region’s audiovisual support fund, and which subsidised part of my salary because I live in Lille. Next, we finished the preproduction phase at the Folivari premises in Paris with the whole artistic team. Then, we took up residence in the 10th district of Paris, in a Mac Guff animation studio that was exclusively devoted to Samsam. I spent two days a week in Brussels and the rest in Paris, at the Mac Guff studio.

Can you tell us about how you worked with the composer Eric Neveux?

Eric had just composed the soundtrack for the Zombillennium animated film, after having worked on lots of live action series.

In the Samsam TV series, we took our inspiration from 1970s jazz, since this was a good fit with the retro-futuristic designs of this universe. When we first met, I explained to Eric that I wanted to keep this jazzy atmosphere, but without staying so close to 1970s references like Lalo Schifrin, which might constrain the range of emotions we could convey. We couldn’t go for a symphonic style either, similar to major Hollywood adventure films, since this would not match the streamlined approach of Samsam’s universe: it would “crush” him a bit. Eric used the animatic sequences to get a head start and provided me with lots of suggestions. He struck out in many different directions, working with jazz and other styles, sometimes heading towards rock. He was very creative, producing lots of options, and all this toing and froing between he and I allowed us to define a musical style. I selected and grouped the compositions I preferred to illustrate the Marth planet sequences, SamPlanet sequences and the cosmic parts of the

adventure, and that is how we determined the musical tone for the film. We used sparkling, positive, warm-hearted jazz for the SamPlanet and Samsam's parent's house. On Marth, we kept an atmosphere of more traditional military music, and in space, we used jazz with a smattering of electronic sounds. Then, we had to adapt the music to suit the characters' emotions and the atmosphere of each sequence. All the music is new and was composed for the film. The only element that we kept from the series is Strauss' Egyptian march, which always accompanies the Marthian military parades!

What were the main challenges you faced to make this film, and the most rewarding aspects of this project?

The aim was to create a rich, pleasant cinema picture, with many new items of scenery, and at the same time to remain faithful to the streamlined style that characterises Samsam's universe. To achieve this, one of the key approaches was to spend much more time on lighting to bring out the textures, and to clearly express the dramatic intent and the emotions in each of the scenes. Once again, this required true cinema lighting, as a cinematographer would have done during a live action film shoot. Now that I have watched the film several times on big screens, I am happy to see that these efforts have paid off and that the initial objectives have been achieved.

What would you like Samsam fans to feel when they discover the film?

I think they will recognise the kind, positive character that they already love, and I hope that they will be surprised, moved and amused, especially when they discover new places and characters that they have not yet seen on Marth.

Will we see the new characters from the film in the third season of the series?

We are currently thinking about this. It is quite possible that we will show that Marthial the 1st's wife has divorced and left him, taking her daughter with her, because he really is just too stupid! (laughs) That would explain why Marthial has been left alone like an idiot on his planet, as in previous episodes.

Tanguy de Kermel

Tanguy de Kermel is an author-director and artistic director. He is one of the first French directors to specialise in 3D image synthesis.

Tanguy studied at the École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs in Paris, from which he graduated in 1992 with a cinema, video and 3D animation diploma. His end-of-diploma film won a prize at the Imagina festival in Monte Carlo in 1993.

He worked on the “Les Quarxs” series, shown on the French TV channel Canal+. He then directed several video clips in Germany for MTV with the group SNAP, which was top of the MTV chart for several weeks, and won a prize awarded by the German music TV channel VIVA.

From 1998 onwards, he directed simulator ride films and three-dimensional films for amusement parks in Japan and France (Futuroscope).

He also directed advertising films for companies such as McDonald’s, the Caisse d’Épargne bank, Smarties and Kinder, both in France and also in Japan, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland.

In 2007, he directed the “Samsam” series, produced by Bayard presse and shown on French television. He also directed the 2nd season, which was released in 2009. For this series, he was nominated twice at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival and won the TV Export Awards in 2009 (for the best-selling French animation programme abroad).

In 2013, he directed the “What’s the big idea?” series for the BBC and France Télévisions, for which he was also artistic director. This series was nominated for the British Writer’s Guild Award, the British Academy Film Awards (BAFTAs) and at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival.

In 2016, he directed the “Ziggy and the zootram” series for VRT and ZDF.

From 2017 to 2019, he directed the SAMSAM feature film, for which he was also artistic director. The film is produced by Folivari and distributed by Studiocanal.

INTERVIEW WITH SERGE BLOCH

Did you like superhero comics when you were a child?

I didn't know about them at the time, because comic books from Marvel and DC Comics hadn't yet arrived in France in the 1960s. My childhood heroes were more like Tartine, Ivanhoe, Akim, Blek le Roc, Mandrake and The Phantom. Batman and Superman hadn't crossed the Atlantic!

How did you create Samsam? Where did your inspiration come from?

I had already worked on other characters before, like Max and Lili, and I knew that comic books were a rite of passage to win over readers. Following these creative experiences as part of a duo, most of the time with other writers, I wanted to develop something that would reflect my own desires and annoyances. At the time, the Pokémon tidal wave had cost me dearly as a parent. Although I respected the interesting graphic design behind this world, I thought it was mainly a commercial gimmick to encourage children to buy and collect cards, and that there was no real meaning in the stories. But I was struck by this craze for fantasy worlds, and this encouraged me to step out of the daily life subjects I usually worked on. At the time, I had noticed that my 4-year-old son was fascinated by Batman, without having read any of his adventures, probably because he had seen a picture of him somewhere. Incidentally, we made him a little cardboard Batman costume to keep him happy. Then, one evening, some friends came to dinner at our house with their son, who was the same age, and he came dressed up in a more sophisticated Batman outfit, with plastic accessories. This meeting between two mini Batmans amused and touched me. Shortly afterwards, I started to create a small childhood world, set in a universe of superheroes, as a series of sketches in a notebook. Quite by chance, I showed this to Marie-Agnès Gaudrat one day, who is really good editor. Without her, I would never have created Samsam, or Zouk the little witch. So that is how this little superhero, who lives in a family of superheroes, came into existence. He first appeared in the children's magazine Pomme d'Api in January 2000, almost five years after the Pixar film THE INCREDIBLES. I wanted to say that, just in case! (laughs)

How did you create the artwork for this world? Were you inspired by the streamlined, futuristic style of the 1950s and 60s?

I like Czech cartoons from the 1950s very much, and also the drawing style of American artists like Robert O. Blechman. One of his stories, The Juggler of our Lady, was made into a cinemascope format cartoon in 1958.

It's one of my favourite cartoons! Samsam's adventures began as two-page comic strips. They are two-dimensional stories for small children, with outlines and coloured-in images. In this format, I tell a short story in eleven panels and because they are quite small, I can't include much scenery, especially as the characters must be clearly visible at the centre of the panel, to make it easy to read. That's how this simple style started, then it also evolved through the two subsequently produced TV series, thanks to talented people like Eric Guillon, who is a great artistic director, and Tanguy de Kermel, who directed all the episodes of the series and is now directing the film. They also made their contributions to this world. Initially, Eric was unsettled by my principle of always assigning one colour to each main character, to make reading easier, but then he went even further by using one colour for each planet: everything is red, yellow and ochre on SamPlanet, and everything is green on Marth. This colour coding is very effective and allows children to find their way through these adventures.

What did you want to say about the fears, trials and joys of childhood in your stories?

In my work, I am most interested in the emotions felt by children: their joys, their little fears... By transposing them into a fantasy world, I can take them out of the strict context of reality, in order to help children, overcome their anxieties while they are having fun. That's why I invented the Wettabeds, who are annoying, sticky little beings. It's a very simple idea, but it made them laugh a lot. The same was true for MuckyYuck, who is a bit dirty and represents the exhilarating, transgressive pleasure that little kids derive from getting filthy, as all parents know.

Were some of Samsam's characteristics inspired by your children?

Yes. Starting with his name: my son is called Samuel, and we gave him the nickname Samsam. My children were little when I dived into Samsam's world, and if I ran out of ideas for a story, I just had to watch them to find some. A little problem at school or a quarrel with a friend: all the ups and downs of their daily lives were a source of inspiration.

Do you find it pleasurable to create stories for young readers?

First of all, I am amused by them, because I am the first reader of the scenarios I write. I hope my little stories make them laugh, reassure them, make them feel good and give them more confidence in themselves. I believe that stories can have a very beneficial effect. They help us live our lives. Having fun, relaxing and developing their imagination are very important for little children, because this will continue to help them for the rest of their lives.

What are the funniest or the most touching things that young readers have said to you about Samsam?

It will be quite difficult for me to answer that, because when I meet them at book fairs, they come with their Mums, and as soon as I ask them a question, it is often their Mum who answers for them! (laughs) "How old are you?" "He's 5 years old!", "Do you have any brothers and sisters?" "Yes, he has a sister and a brother!" (laughs) Children are often shy in that sort of situation, so they find it difficult to speak up. What I find most touching and charming is watching this character, this fragile little thing, as he continues to stand the test of time for nearly twenty years now, just because he is a source of joy for many children. I find this quite moving and impressive. My little readers say what they think by sending their drawings to the magazine, which sends them on to me. It's wonderful to discover them, but sometimes quite annoying because they are often very competent and draw better than me! (laughs)

Daniel Pennac once said, “The right book for children is a book that parents read and enjoy with their child, and that they also appreciate themselves”. Do you also write for parents?

Absolutely. I have always paid attention to the fact that my stories will always be read first by parents, because the 4 or 5 year old children that I write for don't know how to read yet: Samsam's adventures are geared towards what is known as accompanied reading. The children understand the images, but the words are read by their Mummy or Daddy. Parents are also the ones who flick through and choose books in bookshops and take out subscriptions to Pomme d'Api for their kids. And because reading brings parents and children together, Samsam's parents had to have their share of the limelight in his adventures. Samsam's mother and father are both superheroes. They know a lot of things; his Mum is rather pretty and his Dad is strong. And in fact, I often add little jokes for adults in my stories, that the children will not understand, but that will amuse their parents. I was of course influenced by Gosciny, who was the master of different levels of reading and interpretation.

How did you work with Tanguy de Kermel and the team who developed the “Samsam” animated series?

Tanguy and I have known each other for over ten years, and we did a lot of work together to transpose the Samsam universe onto the screen when the first series was being prepared. Most of the adaptation work was carried out at that time, with further development during the creation of the one hundred episodes that were then produced. This was quite an investment, which provided the basis for everything that was refined and taken even further in the film. I admire Tanguy very much, for his talent, for his high-quality, serious working methods, and also for his gentleness both with children and with this fantasy world. With him at the helm and with the authors who wrote the scenario for the film, I knew that the project was in good hands. So, I followed its development in good faith, and I thought the scenario was great, with spot-on, meaningful dialogues between the characters. Sometimes, we discussed a few minor details with Tanguy, Jean, Valérie and the Folivari team, but this was never about any important issues. I think you have to let people immerse themselves in a subject so that they can feel free to work on it, since this achieves much better results. I have spent my whole life fighting for the freedom to work without restrictions, so it is quite natural that I want the same thing for the people that I work with. In the end, everyone gains from this approach.

What are your greatest satisfactions from the television and film adaptations of Samsam?

The greatest thing is to see my characters moving, to hear their voices and the music that accompanies their adventures. In the film, there is also wonderful work on lighting and little Mega, a very successful new character. It feels as if she has always been there and she has found her place in the little group of kids. And because I love Marthial the 1st, who is for me the *Louis de Funès* of this universe, I am overjoyed that his world has been developed in such a pleasant way in the film. I would like to thank the whole team, who have worked for over two years to achieve these results.

INTERVIEW WITH DIDIER BRUNNER

How does SAMSAM fit into the editorial policy for your company Folivari's productions?

It's the first time we have worked on the universe surrounding a character that is already very popular, thanks to Serge Bloch's books and their adaptation into a TV series. Serge is an wonderfully creative author, with great artistic flair. We are very touched by his kind, sensitive world. In this film, which takes place before the events in the series, Samsam is much more self-doubting than usual: he wonders how he will manage to acquire his powers, and when he will at last become a real hero. Damien Brunner and I thought it was an interesting idea to suggest to young viewers that powers, and in general all human abilities, are learnt and developed while we are growing up and gaining experience in life.

At Folivari, we also wanted to take on a totally 3D production, since this is quite a new sphere for us, and because it is a widely-acclaimed technique. In Europe, audiences still love 2D cartoons and they understand that this is a unique form of artistic expression. But since all the American animation films are produced in 3D and video game culture now has a huge following, this has an inevitable effect on the general public's preferences. Using 3D adds a touch of realism, special effects and sophisticated lighting, even to cartoon-style worlds. For all these reasons, we wanted to take part in the adventure of making this film starring Samsam. In addition, the idea is to reuse the new scenographics and narrative elements developed for the film in the third season of the series.

How did the whole Folivari team help Tanguy de Kermel to adapt Samsam's universe from the television to the cinema?

From a visual point of view, everything had to be more refined than in the previous series. But first we had to devise a full-length 80-minute story, whereas in the books and TV series episodes, Samsam has very short adventures. The goal was to create more space for a much more ambitious story, and to imagine challenges that would draw both parents and children into Samsam's world, by entertaining them and holding their attention throughout the feature film. We asked the screenwriters Jean Regnaud and Valérie Magis to create this story, and Serge Bloch gave us his input throughout this process, as did Tanguy, of course. We invested a lot of time in creating the scenario, because it had to be robust and sufficiently cross-generational to appeal not only to the children in the audience, but to the whole family. This adventure was devised so that parents taking their children to the cinema could also enjoy a little magic and find it amusing and interesting. And that by enjoying the film, they would encourage other parents and children to go and see it.

How did you form the production team to work with Tanguy?

We chose Julien Gallet as production manager, since we knew he would be a good discussion partner for Tanguy and would also be able to manage the artistic teams.

We had already worked with Julien on the first season of the "Ernest & Celestine" series and on the film THE BIG BAD FOX, directed by Benjamin Renner and Patrick Imbert, and we very much appreciated his wide-ranging intelligence. As production manager, he knows how to talk finances with the producers, to stick to a schedule with the teams, to discuss animatics, scenes and staging with the director, and also how to work with the team to find the necessary shortcuts in the scenario, since the initial version almost always runs to 1 h 45 min while the desired runtime is around 1 h 20 min. The difficulty resides in putting together a story that is neither too long nor too fast-moving, as a frantic pace initially gets the children excited, but then they quickly lose interest in the film. Once we had spent a lot of time working on this, we managed to achieve a tense, rapid tempo for the action sequences, and also maintain calmer scenes to allow for more intimate moments or for characters to confide in one another. Julien also put his energy into assisting the director and editor, to leave them time to adapt and rewrite the scenario while creating the animatic, since this is a key step in staging the film.

I should add that Damien Brunner, Thibaut Ruby and I particularly wanted the production to take place in one location only, to make Tanguy's job easier. That's why we arranged for most of the team — the animators and compositing managers — to work together in a studio in the 10th district of Paris. Another Mac Guff team was located in Brussels. Because Tanguy lives in Lille, he was ideally placed to travel to Paris or Brussels in one hour.

Finally, what would you like to say about the finished film?

I think we have succeeded in producing a film whose technical and artistic quality will make it competitive in the international market. The aesthetic choices are original, with stylised designs that conjure up futuristic, cosmic forms. You soon feel drawn into this world and feel empathy for its inhabitants because they are funny and delightful, but they are still a faithful reflection of what we have already seen of Samsam in books and the first two seasons of the series. I think we have succeeded in providing Samsam with some slightly more complex experiences, by propelling him into an adventure which raises some interesting questions. We ask how you can grow up with your dreams, your friends, and your parents, and at the same time face up to your fears. In short, we are very proud to have produced this film!

TECHNICAL TEAM

Director **Tanguy de Kermel**
Executive Producer **Thibaut Ruby**
Production manager **Julien Gallet**

FOLIVARI Producers **Damien Brunner**
Didier Brunner

COMPAGNIE CINÉMATOGRAPHIQUE Producer **Gaëtan David**
PANACHE PRODUCTIONS Producer **André Logie**

Scenario **Valérie Magis & Jean Regnaud**
Based on the original works of **Serge Bloch**
Original soundtrack composed, arranged and created by **Éric Neveux**
Produced and supervised by **22D MUSIC**
“Cosmic Groove” song performed by **Lucie Vagenheim**
Produced by **Benny Adam**
Composed by **Benny Adam et John Mamann**
Words by **Dany Héricourt**

Folivari
Character designer **Jeremy Macedo**
Maël Le Gall, Pierre-Henry Laporterie, Jean Guinot
Production designers
Storyboard **Maël Le Gall, Mor Israeli, Stéphane Gateau, Diane Fontaine, Marc Perret**
Editors **Benjamin Massoubre, Nazim Meslem**
Choreographer **Véronique Brunel**

Mac Guff
Producer **Philippe Sonrier**
Production manager **Emmanuelle Carlier**
Digital effects supervisors **Laurent Panissier**

Carine Gillet
Animation director **Ivan Del Rio**
Animation supervisor **Nicolas Sainte-Rose**

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