

 **MNIBUS** ENTERTAINMENT

presents

BELLE AND SEBASTIAN

A film by Nicolas Vanier

Based on the beloved children's book.



**France / 2013 / Family / French with English Subtitles
98 min / 2.35:1 / Dolby Digital 5.1**

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FULL SYNOPSIS

Based on the beloved children's book which introduced resourceful young Sebastian and the giant mountain sheepdog he tames and calls Belle, this heartwarming new feature film is set during WWII in the snowy Alps of occupied France, on the border of Switzerland. Sebastian, lonely and dreaming of the day his mother will return from America for him, befriends "the beast" the local farmers are convinced is killing their sheep – an enormous yet gentle sheepdog who quickly becomes the boy's best friend and protector. With Nazis in the village rooting out the resistance fighters helping Jewish refugees cross the border, Belle and Sebastian's loyalty – to each other and the village that's embraced them both – will be put to the test.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

A beloved story, this heartwarming feature film is set during WWII in the snowy Alps of occupied France, on the border of Switzerland. Sebastian, lonely and dreaming of the day his mother will return from America for him, befriends an enormous yet gentle sheepdog who quickly becomes the boy's best friend and protector. With Nazis in the village rooting out the resistance fighters helping Jewish refugees cross the border, Belle and Sebastian's loyalty – to each other and the village that's embraced them both – will be put to the test.

LOGLINE

Based on the beloved children's book, this heartwarming tale set in the picturesque French Alps follows the relationship of a motherless six-year-old boy and his loyal dog during the Nazi occupation.

ASSETS

Official Trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksSbnIPvxZ0>

Downloadable hi-res images:

<http://www.filmmovement.com/theatrical/index.asp?MerchandiseID=376>

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS



BELLE AND SEBASTIAN is a
Dove Foundation Family Approved film!
Read the full review [here](#).

WINNER:

Grand Prize, New York International Children's Film Festival
Runner Up, Live-Action Children's Film – Chicago Int'l Children's Film Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION:

Martha's Vineyard International Film Festival
Port Townsend Film Festival
Chicago International Children's Film Festival
Heartland Film Festival
Olympia Film Festival
Rehoboth Beach Film Festival
St. Louis International Film Festival
Miami Jewish Film Festival
Palm Beach Jewish Film Festival
San Diego Jewish Film Festival
Providence Children's Film Festival

AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR NICOLAS VANIER

How was this new adaptation of Belle and Sebastian born?

Contrary to my other directorial projects, I was not involved in the origin of *Belle and Sebastian*. The idea first came from our producer, Clément Miserez, my co-writers Fabien Suarez and Juliette Sales, and the folks at Gaumont. When they were searching for a director, they happened to pick me as their top choice. The timing was great for me as I had just pushed back the project I was working on due to financing issues.

What is your memory of the television program?

As a child, I was completely addicted to it! I have to say I was already passionate about animals, nature and mountains and that the show has impacted me deeply. It is not a trivial interest since even as an adult I have dedicated myself to dogs and nature. As such, when I was offered the project, I was almost intimidated by my memories: for me, it wasn't a banal TV show, but a lengthy collection of episodes, each more extraordinary than the other. It was a huge challenge, which did not displease me though it was a little distressing. Belle and Sebastian had awoken in me such strong emotions that I felt a strong duty to succeed. I had to create a movie for cinemas, inevitably different from the series, while staying truthful to the fundamental components of the story, its characters and its universe.

How did you approach the adaptation?

From the very first meeting with Gaumont, I explained I was only accepting the job under certain conditions. First, we had to find a child who was exceptional by the strength of his gaze as well as his personality. Then, I insisted on shooting over three seasons. Finally, I wished to set the movie during World War II. It was in part an aesthetic preference since I didn't want to shoot the mountain as it has become: I wanted to show a mountainous landscape of cottages and villages made of flagstone, whose colors and materials recall the leather, hemp and wood of the clothing and objects of yesteryear. It is this aesthetic decision that led the writing process and allowed me to reconnect with an essential component of the series: adventure, journeys and the notion of passage. The War and the Jews' flight toward Switzerland were perfect to explore these elements.

Did you try to remain truthful to the original characters?

I re-watched the series only once, at home, armed with a notebook and a pen, and whenever something struck me as important, whether it was a character or a place, I took note of it. This allowed me to keep what needed to be a part of the adaptation in mind. I chose to watch the episodes only once to then be able to distance myself from the original story. I just used the list of about thirty elements that were absolutely necessary.

What were the most challenging aspects of shooting?

Nothing seemed insurmountable, not the mountain shoot nor the presence of the dog. The hardest part was to direct a child because so much of the movie rests on his ability to live this adventure from start to finish. Even if I was confident, I remained prudent because I am aware that, at 7½ years old, anything can happen. The biggest surprise was Félix' ability to understand precisely what I wanted, to never overact, to have pertinent ideas of his own and to always play with finesse. That's what gave a formidable energy to everyone on set. Even more than the film's writing and directing, it's really Félix who carries the project.

How did you find little Félix (who plays Sebastian)?

We received about 2400 applications for the part. The casting director had never seen such a craze: usually people want to read the screenplay, but the popularity of the screenplay and having my name attached to the project were enough to reassure and enthuse the parents who sent photos of their children. 200 of them were preselected and, based on reels and readings, I chose a dozen to take to the Vercors where I have sleigh dogs. For a few days, I lived with these kids, I observed them and got to know them. Even if there were only three candidates left, I quickly knew which one I wanted and I imposed Félix against all opposition, even if others may have seemed cuter at first. I loved his personality; he is a courageous and intelligent kid, but he can quickly close up like an oyster if you don't give him the time to get accustomed to you. There is something disconcerting and strange about him in which I detected a finesse that only he possessed.

Did you have trouble finding dogs to play Belle?

Based on certain criteria of weight and height, about a hundred dogs were identified. Andrew Simpson, who trained the animals for *Le Dernier Trappeur* and *Wolf*, and in whom I have absolute trust, observed them. He chose 7 or 8 that he started training and ended up keeping three: Garfield, the star dog, and two others that served as body doubles. They each had a specific set of characteristics that allowed them to play calmer or more dynamic scenes. However, every time there is a close-up of a dog, it's a close-up of Garfield.

What were some of your directorial choices?

If I had to sum them up in one word, I would say "restraint". A calculated, thoughtful and assured restraint. Which is not synonymous with simplicity. I was wonderfully assisted by Luc Drion, a cameraman with such a precise grasp of frames, and Eric Guichard, a director of photography with a great understanding of lighting. Working with these two professionals was a stroke of luck: the three of us ended up together because of a common desire to build the movie by alternating between action phases and descriptive phases. As a result, when we were editing, we all tried to get in one shot what most people get in two.

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

NICOLAS VANIER, Director

Nicolas Vanier is a multi-talented artist and adventurer, with books, documentaries and feature films to his credit. With an absolute respect for nature at the heart of each of his projects, he's worked in film and on the page since the early 1980s. His most notable films to date include 2004's *The Last Trapper*, about one of the last trappers on the Yukon, and 2009's *Loup*, the story of the Evans tribe in Siberia, which was screened at the Cannes Film Festival. *Belle and Sebastian* marks the first film he's directed based on source material he didn't also create.

FILMOGRAPHY

2013 Belle and Sebastian

2009 Loup

2004 The Last Trapper

1995 L'enfant des neiges

1993 Au nord de l'hiver



CAST

TCHÉKY KARYO (César)

Born in Istanbul, Tchéky Karyo studied management and accounting but quickly realized he chose the wrong path. He changed direction and took drama classes at the Théâtre Daniel Sorano, and then joined the Théâtre National de Strasbourg. In 1982, he made his film debut in Chantal Akerman's *Toute Une Nuit*. That year, he was nominated for the Best New Actor César for his performance in Bob Swaim's *La Balance*. Since then, Karyo has become a recognizable and critically-acclaimed actor in Europe and internationally. In 2009, he played a warlord in the television series *Kaamelott*. More recently, he appeared with Gérard Lanvin in Olivier Marchal's *Les Lyonnais* and in Christian Duguay's *Jappeloup*.

FILMOGRAPHY

2014 Belle and Sebastian
2013 De Guerre lasse
2013 Jappeloup
2012 L'étoile du jour
2012 Pieces of Me
2011 Les Lyonnais
2011 Special Forces
2010 The Way
2008 A Previous Engagement
2007 Boxes
2006 The Gravedancers
2004 A Very Long Engagement
2004 Taking Lives
2000 The Patriot
1999 Babel
1997 Doberman
1995 Bad Boys
1990 Nikita
1988 L'Ours
1987 Le Moine et la soicière
1985 L'Amour Braque
1984 Les Nuits de la pleine lune
1983 Le Marginal

Felix Bossuet (Sebastian)

Felix Bossuet makes his screen debut with Belle and Sebastian. Born in Paris in 2005, he brings new life to a classic character. Bossuet has aspirations of continuing his acting career and an interest in becoming a director someday, too.

CREDITS

CREW

Director	Nicolas Vanier
Original Characters	Cécile Aubry
Screenplay	Juliette Sales Fabien Suarez Nicolas Vanier
Producers	Frédéric Brillion Gilles Legrand Clément Miserez Matthieu Warter
Music	Armand Amar
Cinematography	Eric Guichard
Editing	Stéphanie Pedelacq Raphaelle Urtin
Set Decoration	Sebastian Birchler
Costumes	Adélaïde Gosselin
Music	Emilio Kauderer
Production Designer	Matias Tikas
Music	Damian Montes Maximiliano Gorriti

CAST

Sebastian	Félix Bossuet
César	Tchéky Karyo
Angéline	Margaux Chatlier
André	Mehdi El Glaoui
Doctor Guillame	Dimitri Storage
Lieutenant Peter	Andreas Pietschmann
The Mayor	Urbain Cancelier