

Intergalactic War, Captain Underpants and Princess Salome

 By [Daniel Dercksen](#)

20 Jul 2017

A dark force threatens to destroy the universe in the visually spectacular new adventure *Valerian And The City Of A Thousand Planets*; a mean school principal is transformed into a bumbling superhero in *Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie*; an elderly school teacher falls in love with a young student in the French-German drama *Things To Come*; and the National Theatre Live production of *Salome* turns the infamous biblical tale on its head, featuring an international cast under direction of South African Yael Farber.

Valerian And The City Of A Thousand Planets

The futuristic action-adventure is set in the 28th century, where special operatives Valerian (Dane DeHaan) and Laureline (Cara Delevingne) maintain order throughout the universe for the government of the human territories. Under orders from their commander (Clive Owen), the duo embark on a mission to Alpha, an intergalactic city where diverse species share their technology and resources for the betterment of all. The ever-expanding metropolis is also home to sinister forces that jeopardize the future of mankind. This French science fiction action film was produced, written and directed by Luc Besson.

Long before Luc Besson became one of the world's foremost action auteurs — writing, producing and directing a string of iconic hits — he was a young boy transfixed by a comic-book series called “Valerian and Laureline,” which debuted the decade before he happened upon it. Recalls the filmmaker:

Constrained by the relatively primitive visual effects technology available in the 1990s, Besson knew it would be some time before he was able to create the wondrous “Valerian and Laureline” universe he knew the source material deserved.

“When I went back to read the comic books again,” he recounts, “I decided it was impossible to make the films. The technology at the time was not good enough to re-create all these worlds and aliens.”

It would take a seismic jolt and a huge evolutionary leap forward in visual effects to enable the filmmaker to bring “Valerian and Laureline” to life. After James Cameron invited Besson to the set of his space epic, *Avatar*, the French director made up his mind.

“When *Avatar* arrived, it made everything seem possible. I remember thinking, ‘One day I will come back to sci-fi with these new tools, where the only limit is your imagination. That’s when I decided to make *Valerian*.’”

Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie

In the superhero comedy *Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie* (21/7) George Beard and Harold Hutchins are two overly imaginative pranksters who spend hours in a treehouse creating comic books. When their mean principal threatens to separate them into different classes, the mischievous boys accidentally hypnotize him into thinking that he’s a ridiculously enthusiastic, incredibly dimwitted superhero named Captain Underpants.

This hilarious and zany animated feature is based on the best-selling author and illustrator Dav Pilkey’s beloved Captain Underpants book series. Produced by DreamWorks Animation and Scholastic Entertainment, and animated by Mikros Image, it is directed by David Soren.

One of the delightful ways *Captain Underpants* stands apart from other CG-animated movies of recent years is in how it utilizes several different visual styles and formats to capture the boys’ adventures. The filmmakers have included various types of animation and even live-action sock puppets, just as the books incorporate comics created by George and Harold and Flip-O-Rama—a traditional “flipbook” method that uses illustrations on consecutive pages.

“We wanted the comic-book sequences in the movie to be hand-drawn, our version of what a couple of fourth graders would draw,” explains David Soren.

“That meant limiting our tools to better resemble those used by a child. Using a cruder, limited animation style, colored with markers or pencil crayons, all composited in a simple way that could have been taught in an Animation 101 class. The idea was to start the comic book sequences using primarily still imagery, and the deeper we go into the actual adventures within the comics, the more immersive and graphic we get.”

Things To Come

Isabelle Huppert is as brilliant as ever in her earnest portrayal of philosophy teacher Nathalie Chazeaux in this French-German drama. As Nathalie is trying to carve out a new direction in life amidst student demonstrations, the questioning of her intellectual relevance, defining relationships coming to an end and becoming a grandmother, her former star student Fabien unexpectedly becomes both a compassionate friend and a fervent intellectual sparring partner.

Things to Come has screened at numerous film festivals and won Hansen-Love the Silver Bear for Best Director at Berlin International Film Festival 2016.

Isabelle Huppert's performance won her several awards for Best Actress, incl. The New York Film Critics Circle's and the Los Angeles Film Critics Associations'. Directed by Mia Hansen-Love, starring André Marcon, Roman Kolinka. French, German, English with English Subtitles (2016)

National Theatre Live: Salome

Acclaimed South African writer and director Yael Farber directs an international cast in an urgent, hypnotic re-telling of Salomé, filmed live at National Theatre's Olivier stage.

An occupied desert nation. A radical from the wilderness on hunger strike. A girl whose mysterious dance will change the course of the world. This charged retelling turns the infamous biblical tale on its head.

Please note: Salomé contains nudity, and the characters depict and refer to sexual violence.

Salomé releases on Saturday, 22 July 2017, for four screenings only: on 22, 26 and 27 July at 19:30 and on 23 July at 14:30 at Ster-Kinekor's Nouveau cinemas in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Cape Town, and at Ster-Kinekor Gateway in Durban. The running time is approximately 2 hours and five minutes, without an interval

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ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

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