

REBELLES

A film by Allan Mauduit

SYNOPSIS

With no job or qualifications, Sandra, a former beauty queen (Miss Pas-de-Calais), moves back in with her mother in Boulogne-sur-Mer after spending 15 years in the South of France. She finds a job at the local canning factory, vigorously rejects the advances of her boss, and accidentally kills him. Two other women are witnesses to the scene. As they are about to call the emergency services, the three factory workers discover a bag full of bank notes in the dead man's locker. A fortune which they decide to share out amongst themselves. This is where the problems start...

INTERVIEW WITH ALLAN MAUDUIT DIRECTOR

Your idea for UGLY MELANIE came from a discussion one evening in the back of a taxi with Jean-Patrick Benes. Where did you get the idea for REBELLES from?

I was looking at a can of tuna and wondering how many you would need to contain a human body (laughs). For a long time I had wanted to make a thriller combined with a comedy with working class characters. For 7 years I tried to buy the rights to *Since the Lay-offs*, an American novel by Iain Levison, where an unemployed guy agrees to become a hitman while trying to find a better job. But Michel Blanc got the rights. So REBELLES came about from me giving up on that project. It was a blessing in disguise.

The thing which stands out about REBELLES is that it is a comedy set in a working class background, which is generally the territory of social dramas...

In French film it is true that social dramas monopolise the working class background. But that's not true elsewhere. Look at *THE FULL MONTY*, *BILLY ELLIOT*, *SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE*, *THE KID*... Ken Loach made *RIFF RAFF* and *THE ANGEL'S SHARE*, which were full of humour. It's the same for Stephen Frears with *THE SNAPPER* and *THE VAN*. I think that French cinema lacks working class characters we can laugh with. *THE MEASURE OF A MAN* is a great film, but in a worker's life, not everything is drama. I was also brought up on Anglo-Saxon literature, American thrillers, set in very modest backgrounds, and I have to admit that French film and literature - which are much more bourgeois by nature - get on my nerves a little. For REBELLES I wanted to set it in a port area, far away from clean town centres and large light-filled apartments. With characters who are fighting to survive.

Why did you make the characters female in a context which is usually the preserve of male archetypes?

For that very reason! I like to shift contexts. I call it "taking a step to the side". It makes you see things differently. Perspectives change, it's interesting. In the TV series *KABUL KITCHEN* I loved seeing Afghanistan portrayed through the prism of comedy. Here, shifting the thriller genre implies shaking upon the genre: Putting three female factory workers in a tuna canning factory with a mafia background means points of view are reinvented... And I like films which portray unconventional women. I'm not going to quote them all but *BOUND*, *THELMA AND LOUISE*, *ERIN BROCKOVICH*, an old western like *WESTWARD THE WOMEN* or a comedy like *YOUNG ADULT* with Charlize Theron are all films which inspire me and make me want to make movies.

And play the "Girl Power" Card!

So much the better, if that shakes up traditional schemas of paternalism and patriarchy which piss me off so much (laughs)! It's important to show today that men and women are equal whatever the domain, including in fiction. I have no hangups about my virility but I think I am naturally more comfortable in the company of woman. Or, to be more precise, I am very ill at ease in very virile atmospheres.

One of the challenges REBELLES sets is to avoid making the main character too likable straight away...

Yes, I really wanted attachment to Sandra to be progressive. Sandra is not likeable. She doesn't want to mix with the others or make friends. Sandra has not managed to capitalise on her beauty queen title. Coming back to her home town after fifteen years in the South of France is a step down. I was interested in portraying the character of a superficial woman at a time in her life where the varnish is starting to crack and the artifices of her beauty are withering away: she is 35 and it's time to take stock (laughs). She comes back to Boulogne-sur-Mer dressed like a bimbo, with her fake fur leopardskin coat, her bling sunglasses, her overdone make-up and her false nails. She has a very scornful attitude, both towards her mother and towards her factory coworkers. Her only objective is to leave again. I wanted to observe her transformation, the change in her trajectory. REBELLES has a background theme of acceptance: Sandra wants to reconcile with her roots.

Was it the chameleon aspect of Cécile de France which won you over?

That's what guided me to her... And I wasn't mistaken: Cécile bowled me over. She can play any kind of role. It is thrilling to see her go from MADEMOISELLE DE JONQUIERES to Sandra in the space of a few months. Cécile has a glamorous side, even when playing a failed beauty queen like Sandra. Her character has no morals and plays by no rules. Using the effect of contrast it allows the other two characters to play in a comic register. I had dreamed of a character like Marilyn for a long time: she is like one of those English girls who wear over the top clothing to go and get drunk in the pub. With Audrey Lamy we soon came up with the punk idea, in the true sense of the word: free and with no limits. Nadine is the sad clown, the one who tries as best she can to tone down the other two crazy characters. Yolande Moreau has the warm-hearted sensitivity which corresponds perfectly with Nadine's character: she is a mother, more down to earth and realistic. She is the first one who, in the changing room scene where Sandra responds to her attacker, considers that this money is going to bring them nothing but trouble. She is right, even if the beauty of the character is such that she too will undergo a change, empower herself while giving her marriage a well-needed shake-up.

How did you get the idea of such an improbable trio of characters?

With Cécile de France, Yolande Moreau and Audrey Lamy, we all wanted the characters to act seriously, with no comic undertone. With the script we had, there was a temptation to go over the top and enjoy ourselves, but right from the first read through, it was as though there was an unspoken agreement between us: everything would be interpreted very seriously, and the comedy would come from that. There is a lot of irony in the script but it is neither a parody nor a satire.

In the same way that the heroines are filmed, Boulogne-sur-Mer is not filmed with pathos or in a depressing atmosphere...

I hesitated over the decor for a long time because the North is always being portrayed as poor, with rows of terraced houses and shut-down factories. But there are not many canning factories in France: Boulogne-sur-Mer is France's largest fishing port and I wanted Sandra to have to handle fish (laughs). This town does not inspire sadness in me: it's a wonderful setting, open onto the sea, suitable for a thriller, such as the scene where the women gather at the docks at night to get rid of the compromising tins. Vincent Mathias, the head cameraman did some great work on this scene. I wanted Sandra's mother to live in a mobile home. When I was location scouting I realised that the cheap campsites in the outer Paris region are full of foreign workers and their families in the winter, all trying to survive. In France, we are unfortunately not that far away from the American trailer parks where the working class live (or try to).

What visual imprint did you want the film to have?

We shot between the end of the winter and the beginning of Spring. I had written many outdoor scenes to give the film the dimension of a western and to have the characters confront nature. With Vincent Mathias, we both agreed with the idea of warming up the image by accentuating the browns, the ochre and the yellows to match them up to the environment of the mobile home where Sandra lives. The other dominant colour is green. Red and blue were rarer, and were kept to the factory. This research into colour developed during discussions while the film was in preparation. The scouting photos were "calibrated" by Vincent so that the appearance was decided upon before

shooting began. The work on the costumes is the first stage where I can develop the characters with the actors. And that is worth all the speeches in the world! Pierre Canitrot, the head costume designer, is a magician: The tacky South of France look worn by Cécile de France at the beginning of the film was found at the first fitting. For Audrey Lamy we had great fun with photos of English girls letting their hair down at the weekend, the characters of TRUE ROMANCE and U-TURN: we came up with a "White Trash" look for Marilyn with her electric blue jacket, her shorts and her out of place tops, and the incredible platform shoes... For Yolande Moreau it was almost frustrating because Nadine is an understated character. However we did find her a raspberry red coat and a flamboyant red hair colour which added a certain something. And an mega-lucrative accessory: her sawn-off shotgun!

Where does this desire for fantasy come from, which is rather rare in French comedies?

From my personal taste. Boulogne-sur-Mer is not exotic in itself but that's no reason to be visually bored out of your brain. Films bore me when you can feel a certain visual laziness, a lack of inventiveness. And then this styling corresponds to the story I'm telling: these three women are living an adventure which is larger than life, extending beyond their situations. For this reason we needed to create a decor which had a double meaning. First of all the factory is shown in a functional dimension - it is there for putting fish into cans - then in its black comedy dimension, where it is used to put a man into cans. Nadine's little house, with its rustic living room, ornaments, allows us to describe the reasonable character played by Yolande Moreau. The final shoot-out in her dining room relates the extraordinary adventure which these three women are experiencing. The mobile home gets the same treatment with Cécile de France's shovel wielding!

Is there any deliberate provocation in REBELLES?

Yes, but without any meanness or harshness. I prefer irreverence. Comedy is a fantastic vehicle to tackle subjects which I am very fond of. Villaine was a film against the diktats of appearance and REBELLES begins with the character of Sandra, victim of the same diktats, even though the rest of the film is more about the 3 women taking their fate in their own hands... in a somewhat gruesome way. I would love REBELLES to be seen as a "Rock n Roll comedy". I listen to rock n roll every day. I'm a big fan of Velvet Underground but the film is more like English rock such as T. Rex, with, I hope, its popular, accessible, extremely nice side.

In the current context, REBELLES is not going to escape the #MeToo label!

I'm afraid it won't (laughs). But I also know that anything and everything can be said, especially on social networks. I wrote this film well before all that and I never wanted to ride on the coat tails of that movement. #MeToo is a very important standpoint which is making attitudes evolve in the right direction. Those who think it is too radical should remind themselves of what the situation used to be like. But REBELLES is a feminine film; not a feminist one. It is not claiming to make a statement or stake a claim. I do not judge the heroines of my film in any way. I never wanted to claim that the solution to sexual abuse is to cut off men's dicks... even though that is what happens in the film (laughs).

The scene where Sandra's assault ends up with Jean-Mi, the factory foreman, being castrated, is classic, treading a fine line between discomfort and burlesque. How did you do that?

We filmed it over the last two days. It is a scene which was difficult to tackle. But the actors managed to relieve any tension which it could have brought. Especially Patrick Ridremont, a very funny guy, who was brave enough to accept the role of Jean-Mi.. Showing this severed penis twitching like a headless chicken meant trying to achieve a grotesque, tragi-comic effect. It is excessive in the vein of black comedy. This scene must make the spectator laugh about a horrible situation: it is a fundamental scene in the sense that it sets the tone and launches it. If I had censured myself then, I would have sabotaged the whole spirit of the film.

The male characters, especially the mafioso played by Simon Abkarian and the cop played by Samuel Jouy, are as unpredictable as the heroines!

They are trapped in uncomfortable positions. They have to make choices. I like this idea because it characterises men of today. We have been fed by several centuries of dominant patterns and questioned about our virility. Even though I feel that I accepted my feminine side a long time ago, daily life sometimes makes me react in a very conditioned way. Simon's character is literally stuck between these women and his bosses: he knows what will happen to him well before the end of the story. In my view, his destiny is a happy one. I was saying to Simon Abkarian that he wouldn't exchange that final moment on the beach with Cécile de France for anything in the world, even if it means he has to die. Simon portrays the anti-hero of thriller novels... Samuel Jouy's character is also a double-sided one: good cop / cop gone bad; he's looking for the culprits and yet is the lover of one of them. Mercenary and sentimental at the same time: they are there for the money and nothing else. They embody a much more basic masculine pattern... the old-fashioned kind!

REBELLES is the first film you have directed alone, after co-directing UGLY MELANIE and KABUL KITCHEN with Jean-Patrick Benes. Was there more pressure?

No but it meant a lot more work! With Jean-Patrick we were linked by a longstanding working relationship and a bond which is continuing as we're writing a new film. But the idea for REBELLES came from a personal desire: I co-wrote it with Jérémie Guez, a mega-talented young writer. It is a film which I had to direct alone, like Jean-Patrick did with ARES, his science fiction thriller. On set I have to admit that I was a happy man. I honestly could not have wished for a better cast, they made it all so easy for me.

You reinvent the scene of the family argument between Simon, Sandra and her mother in the mobile home, by giving it a Dantean dimension: in what way was this a wager?

It was like doing a balancing act, even though everything was rehearsed, choreographed and lots of mechanical and virtual special effects were used. As a director, during a scene like that I both take pleasure from it and feel the danger. I only think about the spectator: the idea at this point in the film is to take them out of their comfort zone, question how they see Simon, showing them just how far this little crook is prepared to go to save his skin. The scene has to go far, the characters are in danger, we must be afraid for them, we cannot anticipate how their confrontation will end. If they don't believe in it, it's all over. Simon Abkarian succeeded in expressing all the contradictions of his character: he is violent and at the same time tries to justify himself, which I see as funny because it's pathetic. Therefore terribly human. I also like the scene where Simon Abkarian and Béatrice Agenin reveal to each other the scars they given each other years ago: their reunion exceeds the pain of the past. And I show that they both give as good as they get.

Did the actors share your enjoyment of shooting a scene like that?

Yes fortunately! That didn't stop Simon Abkarian from apprehending that moment - it proves he's a sane man (laughs)! Cécile de France and Béatrice Agenin had another problem: they stand up to the assault and to Simon's blows. It was unthinkable for me that they wouldn't fight back. It is the essence of the Girl Power I envisaged for the film and which the actresses loved: the female characters are masters of their destiny; they have the power to act and they seize it. They don't need men to commit errors. Or to succeed. In film, women are too often collateral victims of decisions made by men: in REBELLES this never happens!

Which of the three rebels of the film is most like you?

Trick question (laughs). The obvious one is Sandra: I left my small town to come to Paris and I would have felt just as bad if I had gone back after several failures... Marilyn is a fantasy: I would have loved to own my punk side, like her... But actually I feel closest to Nadine. I am a reasonable person who gets up every day and says: "life is too short, take risks!"

INTERVIEW WITH CECILE DE FRANCE, AUDREY LAMY AND YOLANDE MOREAU

AN EXTRAORDINARY TRIO

Cécile de France: I fell in love with the script as soon as I read it, so original and quirky, and I called Allan immediately. It's quite rare to read a project which is set off the beaten track when most French comedies are set in a trendy environment!

I have played quite a few nice, sane, sunny girls, so finding myself playing Sandra, who is not immediately likeable, was very enjoyable. Sandra is a failed beauty queen, embittered by lack of love in her past too. There is a piece missing in the jigsaw of her personality. It was a real delight to develop the character. I do this job because every time I feel the same childlike pleasure. I go back to being a 12 year old who collects hats and disguises and loves to dress up for fancy dress parties.

Readings with Yolande and Audrey allowed us to get the right dynamic, a comic tempo. Allan wanted us to act seriously. He also chose us because our temperaments are complimentary: Audrey plays Marilyn a little bit like Robert Carlyle in TRAINSPOTTING, the thin nervy guy who charges up the atmosphere (laughs). Nadine is the reasonable one of the group, more sensible with her feet on the ground, compared to Sandra who is a hothead with no rules or morals.

The karaoke scene was one of the occasions where we could let ourselves go. It was sweet to see Nadine get over her shyness and pick up the microphone. The illusion is such that we could imagine Yolande Moreau behaving in exactly the same way, although it is a subtle variation of the clown character which she has perfected over the years. Yolande captivated me, and Audrey totally cracked me up. Her energy is infectious, generous, to the point where our complicity while filming turned into a true friendship.

Audrey Lamy: Marilyn is a punk in the sense that she is free, upfront and refuses to be pigeonholed. She is a true rebel, not caring what others think of her. She could kiss you while thumping you at the same time (laughs). She has an extreme way of thinking: we never know what to expect because she acts before thinking... The role was developed gradually. I had just finished the series SCENES DE MENAGE and I wanted to change what I looked like physically. Allan saw me as a blonde. I wanted darker colours. We found a solution together: sticking a black fringe on a dyed blonde wig. The work on the costumes did the rest!

It was the story of three women factory workers who find themselves in a story which is crazier than they are and who will take control of their destiny, which I loved straight away. They seem strong because of their appearances but you just need to scratch the surface to reveal their sensitivity: Marilyn is nothing without her son; Sandra arrives in Boulogne-sur-Mer curling her lip in scorn, then gradually reconnects with her roots; Nadine, who lives with a man who is a layabout, will reconquer her position within her family. What touched me was seeing them evolve and become empowered without disowning who they were.

When I knew that Cécile and Yolande were going to be involved I was extremely flattered to work with them. I admire them hugely. Allan highlighted the temperament which singles us out. He chose Yolande for her unusual turn of phrase, her candour and her astonished expression. Cécile was chosen for her leadership characteristics, down to earth and fearless. For Marilyn he wanted to exploit my energy and the speed of my speech, while allowing me to also explore other paths. Marilyn is not just a ball of energy, she is also tender-hearted. She is a mother who underestimates her son and who rediscovers the little boy who lives with her.

Yolande Moreau: I fell instantly in love with the story. Nadine, Sandra and Marilyn's lives are ordinary - they are anti-heroines - but what happens to them is extraordinary. The succession of

events is surprising: they are taken unawares then reveal a capacity for reaction which is amazing and touching. I love the unashamedly punk side to Marilyn and the way Sandra is like a beautiful injured deer beneath her apparent toughness.

I am always being offered roles of loud-mouthed women: I could play them non-stop, but what would be the point? Nadine contrasts with these types of role: she seems to be the most reserved but she is a warrior. She is the one who keeps the ship afloat. Even though her husband doesn't lift a finger to help, she is attached to him, to her family, to the small amount of security she has made for herself. Out of the three women she is the one with a sense of responsibility, even though her moral considerations quickly collapse (laughs).

I intellectualised Nadine to begin with but when I began to play her, I knew I had to keep her real. And that cannot be calculated. With Cécile and Audrey we were instinctively in agreement over this point: to act realistically, be in the moment. During filming I don't want to watch myself on the combo or correct myself. I prefer to act with my guts rather than with my head.

GIRL POWER

Cécile de France: Even though Nadine, Marilyn and Sandra are immersed in a universe which is usually reserved for men, they don't play at being blokes. The "Girl Power" aspect soaks through the film in the right way: the women are active and in charge of their own destiny. They have grown up in a man's world like every one of us, with its codes of heroism and toughness which are sometimes just as ponderous for men. They are clumsy, make mistakes and that is what makes us fond of them. I admire them because they do not give up. They fight, play with guns and use their feminine charms: charisma, seduction and authority! With REBELLES, it's the women's turn to get their hands dirty, fight in the mud, have blood on their faces and display their scars. In films, directors often forget that actors have a body and can use it! I loved hitting things with my shovel (laughs).

Allan wrote REBELLES before the #MeToo movement was created, which makes him a precursor, not a follower. As an artist and an intellectual, he is sensitive to the evolution of society. Through this film he sees this first hand but it is above all his love of all kinds of film which feeds his inspiration: ERIN BROCKOVITCH, THELMA AND LOUISE, WESTWARD THE WOMEN, YOUNG ADULT... He has never tried to put across a point of view, adopt a position. At this crucial time where women's voices are being freed, if the general public are enthused by the film, debate it and if it helps the struggle against prejudice, so much the better: that's one of the functions of fiction! The roles Allan gave to Samuel Jouy and Simon Abkarian also show how much he loves all his characters. The cop is mercenary and sentimental, sexy and glamorous too. The crook is an anti-hero who we love and seeing Simon embody him with such intelligence was a joy.

The scene with the castration of Jean-Mi, Sandrine's attacker, was a wager in terms of script and visuals. With Patrick Ridremont, who plays him, we follow the tragic-comic path not only to make the situation credible but also to diffuse the tension. The mistake would have been to make the scene gory and trashy from start to finish, but Allan knows how to change the tone. There was a feeling of solidarity while shooting this scene. On screen everything seems believable even though the situation is improbable. Probably because the beginning of the film has already taken us off on a journey with its quirky humour and refusal to judge the characters. The only real bad guys in the film are Belgian... and no I didn't try to get the script changed (laughs). They are the archetypal villains of thrillers and I find that funny in the same way that Tarantino's villains are!

Audrey Lamy: REBELLES never says that blokes are all stupid and that woman should claim all the power. Allans method is more intelligent: he reverses the roles. Nadine, Sandra and Marilyn club together, argue, betray one another, just like the heroes of thrillers who are usually played by men. But the men in REBELLES are not just ornaments: the cop and the crook both have depth

and a trajectory. Allan has made a feminine film, not a feminist film: he does not try to pitch one side against the other and his three heroines are all totally feminine, sexy and glam. I don't like it when women are pigeonholed into stereotypes or when the image of men is degraded. I like people: it doesn't matter what kind, we are supposed to unite over the same values and defend them. REBELLES questions what anyone is prepared to do today to survive. Allan is not ambiguous: he is up front and has made a film which is rooted in its era.

Jean-Mi's castration proves his audacity. He goes from discomfort to burlesque by opting for a quirky musical score. When Jean-Mi arrives in the changing rooms it is terrifying: we believe in his badness and cannot imagine any outcome other than rape. Sandra defends herself as best she can... what follows is a kind of seedy Tex Avery cartoon!

Some people will bring up the #MeToo reference but there is nothing militant about the film. Allan just portrays three ordinary woman in a benevolent and modern way - three women who seize the opportunity to change the course of their lives.

Yolande Moreau: In thrillers it is usually the guys who are at the heart of the action and the dodgy money deals. REBELLES is enjoyable because Allan shows women who are in the thick of it and who intend to have the last word. REBELLES is a feminist film... without staking any claims! Linking it to the #MeToo movement would be over interpreting things, especially the scene where the dick is cut off (laughs). #MeToo has freed women's speech. It is very important, but REBELLES is light years away from that.

The "Girl Power" in the film owes as much to the singularity of the trio as to their credibility. Allan does not fall into the conventions of a chick movie where each character sees running away as providing the possibility of a renaissance. There are many ways to become empowered : Nadine loves her town and her husband and does not plan on radically changing her life. However having a little extra in the cookie jar doesn't hurt (laughs).

Allan Mauduit, a mix of all genres

Cécile de France: Actors need to be reined in and Allan loves them enough to know how to manage our impulsiveness, our often childish desire to overact. He knew just how far we could go in the comic register. After Vilaine, which he wrote with Jean-Patrick Benes, REBELLES is the first film Allan has made alone. He has always been humble yet perfectionist. He put all his heart and energy into achieving his dream. Like UGLY MELANIE which already criticised the diktats of appearance, REBELLES is inspired by women. And it is great to feel him filming you in the way that Tarantino films Uma Thurman: in a sexy, glam, unselfconscious way.

Allan is also guided by his love of genre films and complex characters. The scene of the mobile home is a great example of visual audacity and bias: it is the result of an extensive research on colour with Vincent Mathias, the head cameraman. Everything is thought out, with lots of coherence, including the Western aspects. Like the film-makers who liked to film Clint Eastwood's blue eyes in the dusty desert, Allan loves "Badass Girls"!

Audrey Lamy: When a script is accomplished in terms of characterisation and plot, trust is gained. I knew Allan through the already crazy universe of UGLY MELANIE. Allan is not afraid to shake up conventions and mix references: in REBELLES there is a bit of the western, black humour, the absurd, tragi-comedy, thriller and a very Californian aesthetic.

Allan is a man who knows how to write for women, who like to film them but he is also a director who loves it when others propose ideas. Improvising needs a framework: as soon as an actor tries to make people laugh, they have a 50% chance of failing totally! REBELLES is such a balancing act that he did not let anything slip through the net and he was right. In film, the slightest grimace is magnified by a thousand, it's awful (laughs). Allan gave us freedom when we managed to convince

him. In the castration scene we were talking about, Marilyn tries to comfort Jean-Mi by talking about plastic surgery to him, and he is furious and starts to yell at her. In the script, Marilyn stops there but I carry on beating him up even though he is on the ground covered in blood. Allan was delighted!

Highlighting femininity, giving great ambivalent roles to men, mixing up genres and tones, that's very similar to Tarantino and I think that REBELLES is in this style. I can say that because I didn't write the film (laughs).

Yolande Moreau: Allan's writing is both funny and trashy. On screen the result is faithful to his intentions: a nervy way of filming, a style which never overshadows the plot, the absence of judgement of any of the characters and the pleasure he has in filming women. His universe reminds me of FARGO by the Coen brothers, of whose work I am a big fan.

Like Cécile and Audrey, I love improvising. Every time I rediscover what I loved about mime and my work with Jérôme Deschamps. Allan knew how to listen to us when it fitted in with the quirky humour he wanted. In the scene where the girls go to comfort Sandra and her mother after Simon's intrusion, Nadine offers to make them an omelette. "With eggs" she adds. That came from me!

Allan does not film under sufferance, which is fundamental for me. It is so rare to see film maker take such risks, treading a fine line between darkness, comedy, emotion and pure entertainment. Beneath the surface Allan also talks modestly about family relationships, whether they are blood ties or emotional ties. His view of fatherhood touched me: without giving away the plot, he has a way of glorifying feelings when everything else degenerates, such as in Sandra's mobile home, then soothing them, as in the beach scene. The economy of words is wonderful, emotion without pathos...

Once upon a time in the North

Cécile de France: Allan made Boulogne-sur-Mer into a real cinema decor, without making it sad or pathetic. The port is the gateway to adventure, elsewhere, where even the most extravagant things seem possible. We filmed in March, it was very cold, sometimes it snowed and we had to dig up the ground, "get to it" as our characters do. It was quite a physical shoot and I love that! The North reminds me of Belgium and the working class environment I grew up in. In the canning factory we were in close contact with reality and people. As close as possible to the reality of our characters.

Unlike Sandra, I have remained extremely attached to my roots. In REBELLES I rediscovered a part of my identity, almost as though the film could have been written and directed by a Belgian! When Allan added trumpet to the music of the film it reminded me of my childhood with the brass band tradition, and the majorettes. The people are up-front, do not care about their appearance; they strip everything down to life's essentials, survival.

Audrey Lamy: Allan does not portray the heroines' background in a wretched, pathetic way. He filmed the North with real affection and a desire to make it beautiful. He wanted to shoot in Boulogne-sur-Mer because of the script - the port and the canning factory - but he never caricatured it. The first scenes of the film are very beautiful and the night scene where the girls try to get rid of the cans of tuna has the look and feel of a thriller. Allan did a lot of preparation with Vincent Mathias to create a strong visual style and make the settings cheerful. What is the point of showing women working their fingers to the bone in a factory, finding it hard to make ends meet if you make the setting of their daily life depressing as well? The factory workers who were extras in the film were delighted: they taught us their skills and demonstrated the solidarity which unites them. They have self-deprecating, black humour, which allows them to gain perspective on the

toughness of their job. They are women who hold their heads up, warriors, just the kind I love. Playing Marilyn who comes from a working class background makes sense: she is a woman who wants to be listened to, respected and wants to fulfil her dreams. Even though it's not absolutely necessary to shoot your boss to achieve that (laughs).

Yolande Moreau: I also handle fish at home: cutting up mackerel or sorting fish doesn't scare me! (laughs). With Cécile and Audrey we talked to the workers a lot - they play extras in the film - and they were delighted to escape from their daily lives during the filming. One of the surprises of the film is that it begins and ends with a luminous image of Boulogne-sur-Mer. Although we can tell daily life is tough, Allan was clever enough not to overdo things: he captured the atmosphere of this town and brought out its warmth and beauty.

An indefinable comedy?

Cécile de France: In REBELLES there is an English feel to it, between Stephen Frears and Ken Loach, with a hint of THE FULL MONTY too - these are all references I love. How many films can combine thriller, modern western and tragi-comedy? There is a place for inventiveness, fantasy, irony without mocking. I don't see Allan as provocative. For me REBELLES is a feminine rock and roll comedy. Rock started off as a form of expression of everyday life in working class areas. REBELLES positions itself in the same rhythm and does not overcomplicate things: it is dynamic, joyful in spite of the roughness, exciting. The story surprises us, takes our breath away without ever diminishing the humanity of its characters. I love directors who think of the audience's pleasure: Allan wanted to take them on a journey, move them, delight them.

Audrey Lamy: It is complicated to define the film as it mixes so many genres and plays around with labels. I like the idea of a rock and roll comedy: it's positive and electric. In the way that the things which happen to Marilyn are: the scene where I drive off the road and the car goes into a roll over, or the one where I hide behind the exploding cow, the shoot-out at Nadine's house... It's rare for an actress to be able to hold a gun, punch and head-butt people, get blood on her face! Allan showed audacity but it is these relationships between people which interest him: it is by injecting sensitivity, friendship and love into the story that REBELLES takes on its full meaning.

Yolande Moreau: there is a very English tone to the film, funny, upfront and close to working class environments, like Ken Loach's RIFF RAFF which I love. It will be fun to see whether the general public will consider it trashy or not. Personally it's not the scene where the penis gets cut off which I find seedy: it's the idea of cutting up a guy and dividing him up into tins of tuna (laughs). REBELLES is a situation comedy - the tone is given in the opening credits which are very sophisticated, and the choice of music - with some totally crazy moments, like the shooting scene at Nadine's. Everything was minutely choreographed by Allan. In just two days of filming he sent the decor flying: it was draining but we knew the result was going to be explosive! REBELLES does not lapse into gratuitous meanness or purely jokey humour. The film is amoral and that's what I love about it.