

Futurikon
presents



MINUSCULE

MANDIBLES FROM FAR AWAY



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MINUSCULE 2

MANDIBLES FROM FAR AWAY

a film by Thomas SZABO and H            

DATE OF RELEASE...

89 min - France - 2018 - Scope - 5.1



Check out **Minuscule AR**, the **Augmented Reality video game** of Minuscule's world.
Available on 30th January 2019





Synopsis

As the first snowflakes fall in the valley, it is high time to gather supplies for winter. Unfortunately, in the process a young ladybug is trapped in a parcel... that is shipped off to the Caribbean!

There is only one way out: gather the dream team again! The ladybug, ant and spider join forces once more on the other side of the globe. A new world, new encounters and new dangers...will the rescue squad make it in time?





HOW IT STARTED

Minuscule started life as a short film which went on to inspire a TV series and feature-length movie, the writing of both of which began at the same time. The series was broadcast in more than 100 countries – including France, Japan, United States in the rest of the world, while the DVD of the series sold over a million copies in France and as many again, appealing to all age groups in all cultures.

The first movie, *Minuscule: Valley of Lost Ants*, was released in more than 50 countries to a global audience of 5 million people. Critically acclaimed, it won the 2015 César for the Best Animation film (the French academy award).

Several years later, a new adventure began, on the other side of the world, in the Caribbean.



INTERVIEW WITH

Thomas Szabo and H  l  ne Giraud

Directors

What sparked the idea of creating a sequel to Minuscule: Valley of Lost Ants?

H  l  ne Giraud: While we were working on the second series, we decided we wanted to take Minuscule to Guadeloupe (French West Indies). At the time, it was outside our budget, but the desire never left us. When our producer, Philippe Delarue at Futurikon asked us to make a sequel to the first feature, we decided the time had come.

Thomas Szabo : Writing sequels is tough: viewers want to rediscover what they liked about the first film, while also experiencing something new. The writing also had to take a new audience into account, viewers who won't have seen the first film. The journey to Guadeloupe helped us switch things around and create a new environment, a new cast of insects and animals, while sticking to the basic principle of Minuscule.

HG : It felt especially important to keep the main characters of the first movie - the ladybug, the ant and the black spider. We had noticed how attached the audience had grown to them and I think people would be disappointed not to find them again.

Shifting the Minuscule world to the Caribbean also helped you appropriate codes from other genres.

HG : We are fond of basing our films on very broad narrative archetypes. The first film was a war film, with slippage into western and heroic fantasy. Minuscule - Mandibles from Far Away is an adventure movie, using a full-range of adventure movie themes: the dangers and pleasures of exploration, the quest to reach beyond personal limits, the encounter with the unknown, etc.

TS : We wanted to reconnect with the atmosphere of the film adaptations of Sinbad's adventures, with Ray Harryhausen's special effects, like Nathan Juran's The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad. We wanted to take our characters sufficiently far away so that at some point they slip into fantasy, as if they have to break down the barriers of their own realities.

It is a commonplace experience in adventure tales: when we wrote the encounter between the insects and the hairy caterpillars, we were thinking of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and the hero's encounter with the reclusive Kurtz in the heart of the jungle.

Humanity is more present in the second movie.

TS : In Minuscule - Valley of Lost Ants, we tried to keep humans as far in the background as possible. In the series, humans are only ever seen from behind, or framed waist downwards. Above all, the human characters never interact with insects' actions. In Minuscule: Mandibles from Far Away, however, the two worlds – both big and small – become more permeable, which helps drive our desire to expand the limits of our own world.

LN : We managed to twist the rules of Minuscule to remain within reasonable limits. Humans, for example, don't speak. They only use body language.

TS : The actors were selected for their comic timing. We need actors capable of playing in a silent-film register, which is harder to do than you can imagine.

This desire to implicate humans has had a strong impact on direction

TS : This choice did indeed change the writing, involving more elaborate camera movement. There are more frequent changes of scale, switching from the human scale to the insect scale. Such transitions are constant during the film, because the two worlds had to be connected in a very flexible way. We were constantly on the look out to create a globally coherent world.

The direction is much more dynamic than in Minuscule: Valley of Lost Ants.

TS : In the first movie, we were filming with huge relief cameras which meant filming was more static. Minuscule: Valley of Lost Ants was also a continuation of the series, composed of a series of fixed frames. We wanted to adopt the same style as animal documentaries, with a hidden camera perspective, the camera concealed amid the grass filming insects. For Minuscule: Mandibles from Far Away, working with the director of photography, Dominique Fausset, we wanted to break free from this approach, without becoming totally baroque.

There is a qualitative leap between the computer-generated imagery of the first film and those of the second.

TS : We wanted to take our achievements from the first film and build on them, at every level, including the CGI rendering. Futurikon's decision to base production 100% in France helped this qualitative leap. The French services company that took care of this aspect of the movie and exceeded all expectations. Hélène and I were often astounded by what they sent us: the storm scenes are incredible; the slightest attention to detail of settings and props is astounding. They even added CGI dust to the cracks in the floorboards of the flying galleon. One of our favorite shots is the snow falling on the ship: each digital snowflake is different, as they touch the galleon they gradually melt.





HG : The CGI teams achieved the finest craftsmanship. We were using a new rendering engine which enabled us to produce a finer finish for materials and the translucent quality of some insects. Obviously we couldn't be too realistic but I'm pleased with the balance. It is particularly noticeable with the praying mantis, whose translucence has benefited from a technique previously used in only two films until now: our own and the Disney Studios production, Moana. The other new feature is the use of photogrammetry, where an environment is photographed from every angle then reproduced in CGI. The result is total realism. For example when the ants arrive at the food store, in one dollying shot, we switch from a shot of a village in Mercantour National Park to an environment composed 100% in CGI. The transition is completely undetectable. We always try to combine the various techniques, whether for exteriors, studio decors, models or CGI. Photogrammetry really helped us here.

Despite all the digital technologies available, you're still very attached to modeling.

HG : You have to remember that, at root, Minuscule is about crafting stories. Thomas and I produced it practically alone with limited means. Even if we did have a larger budget for the films, we didn't want to lose the «hand-made» feel of the series. The films should be optimized versions of what we were originally doing. Furthermore, I deeply believe that the viewer's reptilian brain knows instinctively whether what is

on screen has a real physical existence or if it is computer-generated. This is another reason why we like models.

TS : For example, the inside of the shark had to be produced as a model in order to work transparencies properly and obtain the detail of the accidents and the mini-collisions of the water in the background. We know the decor isn't completely realistic, but this crafted feel brings an off-beat humor we love. Nothing is more wonderful than a beautiful well-filmed model.

HG : And even when there were completely CGI decors, we worked on them to discover the patina, the highly tactile feel of small-scale models. The galleon, for example, was created as a model, before a CGI version was produced.

The variety of decors is impressive from the Caribbean ladybug tree to the cave of the hairy spider, and from the jungle to the beach.

HG : For several weeks, we travelled the length and breadth of Guadeloupe's islands to film deep within the forest or on unspoiled beaches - places only locals know, like the Crawfish Waterfall. We returned to film in Mercantour and in Nice airport, but we also had a lot of complete decors, which is why the design period of Minuscule: Mandibles from Far Away took longer than the first movie. I undertook six months of intense work with four highly talented conceptual artists to create the environments but also the new characters.

TS : We also had many more human-scale decors, another new aspect to work with. Our production designer Franck Benezech built a food store and sidestreet in the studio, as well as a warehouse, the ladybug tree and the inside of a submarine. Not only does studio work help us to have total control over settings but these decors also give a slightly off-beat feel: it's our reality, one step-removed. This is also why we wanted to create our own pick-up, rather than hire a standard white utility vehicle. The arrival of the truck at Nice airport produces an interesting graphic surprise, like two worlds colliding. The whole film is constructed like this, with elements inhabiting environments foreign to them. This aesthetic mechanism is typical of adventure movies.

Mathieu Lamboley created the soundtrack.

TS : Minuscule: Mandibles from Far Away is more musical than its predecessor, an understatement in itself! There is over one hour of music - vast for any film. Mathieu's composition is highly meticulous and complex. We've often said that his work is Sergei Prokofiev's «Peter and the Wolf-meets-the-Insect-World». We're essentially working with leitmotifs, which we modulate and link together depending on events. The music tells the story of the film; it's not simply a musical accompaniment. I worked with Côme Jalibert's sound team in the same way. We spent five weeks devoted solely to recording sound effects, a very important aspect

of the film. The sound effects and soundtrack were allowed to be slightly off-beat but never cartoon-like. They really help immerse viewers in the film but also help to bring the CGI characters to life. The music was recorded in France by the Île-de-France National Orchestra (ONDIF) who very much enhanced the musical impact of the film.

You also focused on character psychology.

TS : The two films were also character studies somehow, which was not at all the case with the series. In the sequel, we wanted our characters to surprise, and take them out of their familiar behavioral zone.

HL : We wanted for example to develop the character of the black spider, an unusual character whom we adored but whom we hadn't yet quite grasped. In Minuscule: Valley of Lost Ants, she was confined to the doll's house, so we wanted to release her to explore the potential of her character and mystery. She is still a surly and solitary figure but here we see her helping her fellow-insects. The ant meanwhile is no longer leader of the group; he is now the spider's lieutenant, so suffers as a consequence. To us, these trials and tribulations make him more touching. We expanded the ladybug's personal development: in the first movie, the child ladybug grows into an adolescent. Now he is confronted by parenting issues, before undertaking a brave choice at the climax of the movie.



This desire to develop characters was only possible through extensive work on animation.

TS : We learned a great deal about characters in the first film and we were able to develop their behavior, touch on very subtle aspects - the flicker of an eye, a wiggle of the hips - alongside Futurikon's animation director Thomas Monti and the whole animation Studio. But we also had to keep continuity with Minuscule 1, i.e. refuse anthropomorphism, use very neutral expressions, and not over-animate our characters, as is the case with most CGI animation films. Situations and direction are the main vectors of emotion. We really worked using the Kuleshov effect.

This is also what makes the Minuscule movies purely cinematic.

TS : There is no dialogue and the characters' expressions are ultimately highly restrained. Narration is completely visual,

and relies on what the camera gives us, which is sometimes very complex to resolve in terms of direction. Especially because sometimes the ideas we are trying to express can be quite complex. One example is the child's relationship to the ladybug. It is also for this reason that the role of film editing was very limited: if two shots are inverted, the meaning is lost. Everything is played out at the writing and storyboard stage.

HG : We couldn't use dialogue to compensate for any oversight in direction. So we tried to simplify things, which is extremely complicated to do. Minuscule is devoid of artifice, at least not in its terms of its direction. There is little embellishment.





Futurikon: the production company

The partnership between the directors and the producer of Minuscule Philippe Delarue (Futurikon) began in 2004, while they were working on other Futurikon projects. Hélène Giraud and Thomas Szabo presented the original short film of Minuscule to Philippe Delarue who was immediately won over. He offered to finance a pilot with a view to creating a series but also to develop a feature-length movie.

Several years later, after two successful seasons of the series and one César award for Best Animation Picture for the film in 2015, Philippe Delarue was well aware that the authors' creative world still had much to offer, so suggested the directors produce a sequel to Minuscule-Valley of Lost Ants. During the making of season 2 of the series, the directors already had a hunch that Guadeloupe would make a perfect setting for their characters, and it was immediately decided that the archipelago should host this new installment. Thus the Minuscule 2 adventure commenced!

The wild location of the National Parks

While the miniature heroes of the saga are digitally animated, the decors are very real. It is Minuscule's creators' badge of honor to communicate the natural beauty of these spaces, out of their desire for authenticity and in the belief that this natural beauty is perfect in itself. Minuscule is an ode to nature, celebrating the diversity of the flora and fauna in our prairies, forests and rivers. In parallel with the contemplative aspect of the saga, there is the off-beat humorous side, a unique perspective of flourishing wildlife around us. Shooting the Minuscule films has involved partnerships with the National Parks and regional bodies governing the film locations in order to identify the best sites for the film's needs and also respect the environment.

For the first feature film, Minuscule's directors Thomas Szabo and Hélène Giraud took us into the Écrins and Mercantour National Parks. They spent months exploring the parks to pinpoint the most atmospheric settings: its mysterious undergrowths, its enchanted clearings and the most expressive streams to give an epic, majestic dimension to the miniature adventure.

In the second film, this love affair with France's national parks continues. The creators of Minuscule have taken their adventure into tropical climes. Entranced by the incredible biodiversity of Guadeloupe (French West Indies), where

the film's action takes place, they take us to paradise beaches, spectacular cliff plunging into the ocean, luxuriant rainforests and the tangled liana of the canopy. Guadeloupe National Park is home to an astonishingly unique variety of animal species and plant life. All these natural elements have provided sources of inspiration for the Minuscule artistic team. Part of the story also takes place in the Mercantour National Park, where the adventure first began.

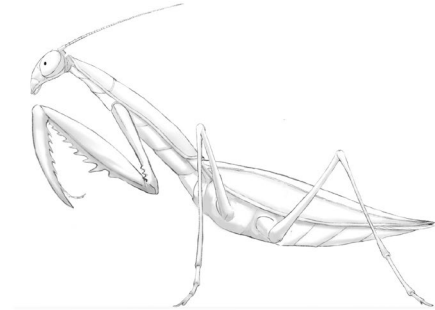
Guadeloupe Regional Council and its Film Bureau welcomed the Minuscule: Mandibles from Far Away production team with open arms and helped the film crew to discover the incredible wealth and wonder of the local landscapes. A close partnership was created, offering invaluable assistance on such a complex shoot.

Alongside the Guadeloupe National Park, the French National Park organization and Mercantour National Park again teamed up with Futurikon in sharing the emotions, respect and ideas inspired by biodiversity. Today's society offers few supports to communicate such values to younger generations and promote awareness about the micro-fauna around us. The aim is to set people dreaming, and foster our love of nature through the Minuscule world in a creative and amusing way.

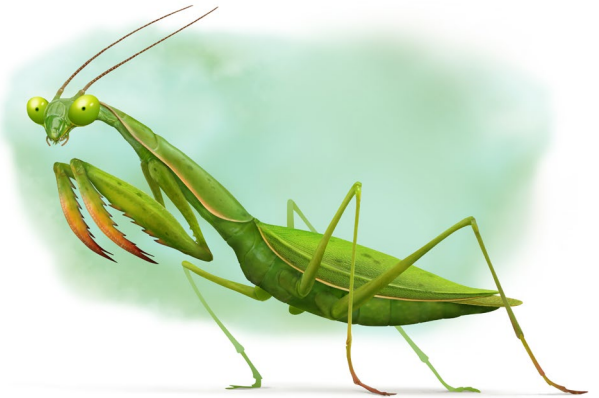


Animation 100% Made-in-France

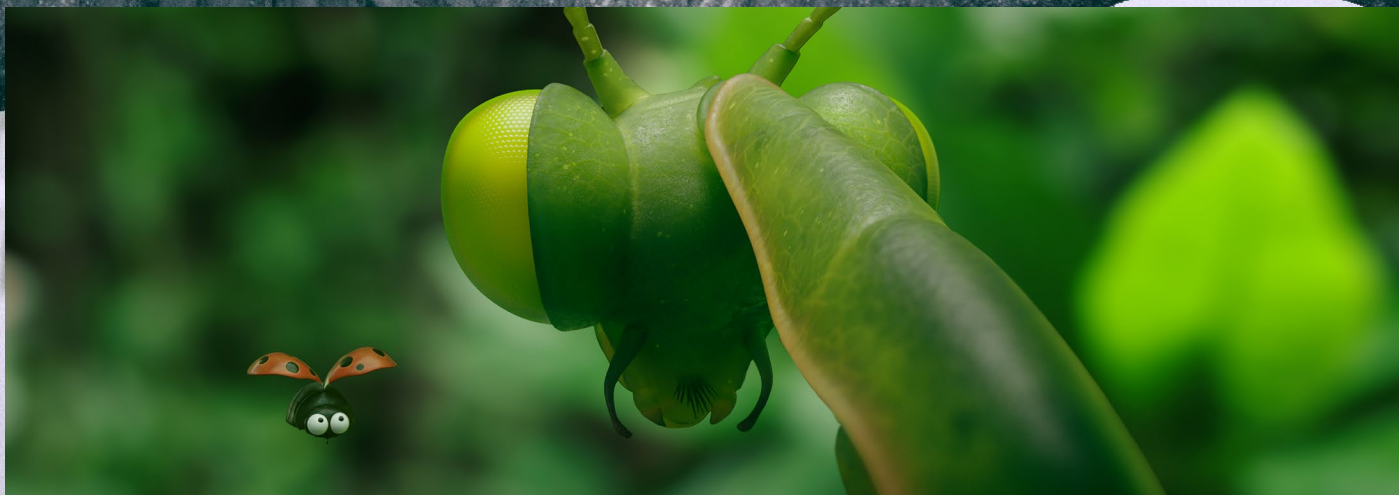
Minuscule is the only French film of recent years to have been entirely produced in France. Futurikon also called on the French animation studio and the special effects, image rendering and compositing studio VFX. Inspired by the desire to optimize the movie's quality, the producer Futurikon chose to localize production entirely in France. The new film hence offers a distinctive qualitative improvement on the preceding work, which augurs well for the third and final part of the saga.



MANDIBULA - Profil
M2



MANDIBULA
M2

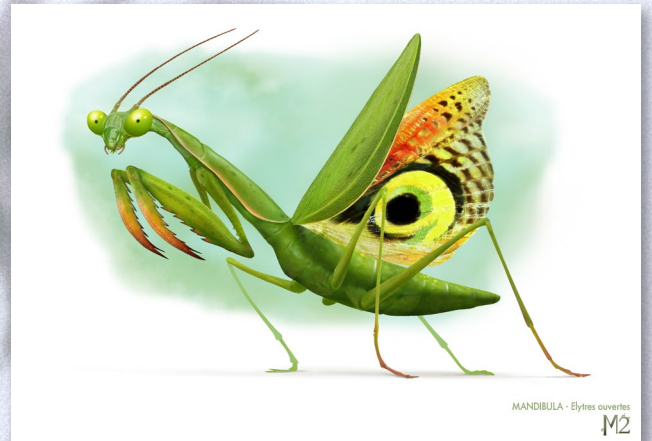
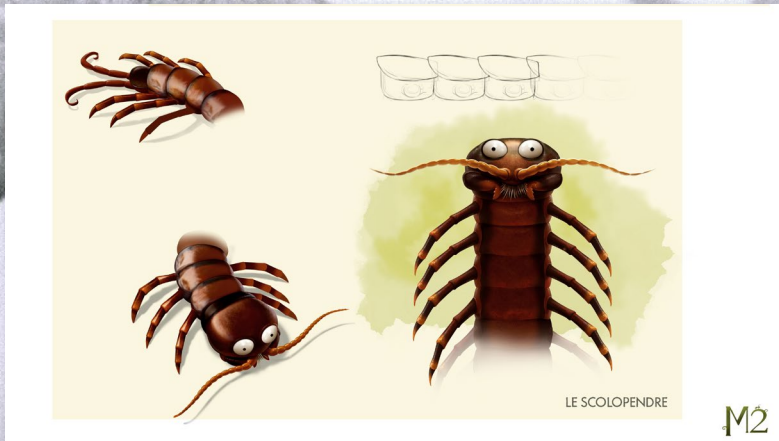


Preparatory sketches



RECHERCHE CHENILLE

M2



Music

Minuscule is one of the rare French films of recent years whose production has been entirely French-based, right down to the film music. The soundtrack was recorded by the Île-de-France National Orchestra (ONDIF) in its new studio specialized in film music recording; Minuscule is fortunate enough to be the first film to enjoy their magnificent facilities.

Minuscule: Mandibles from Far Away is more musical than its predecessor, an understatement in itself! There is over one hour of music - vast for any film. Mathieu's composition is highly meticulous and complex. We've often said that his work is Sergei Prokofiev's «Peter and the Wolf-meets-the-Insect-World». We're essentially working with leitmotifs, which we modulate and link together depending on events. The music tells the story of the film; it's not simply a musical accompaniment. I worked with Côme Jalibert's sound team in the same way. We spent five weeks devoted solely to recording sound effects, a very important aspect of the film. The sound effects and soundtrack were allowed be slightly off-beat but never cartoon-like. They really help immerse viewers in the film but also help to bring the CGI characters to life. The music was recorded in France by the Île-de-France National Orchestra (ONDIF) who very much enhanced the musical impact of the film.»

Thomas Szabo

The original soundtrack will be released worldwide on a CD and digitally by BMG





Minuscule AR Augmented Reality video game

Much to our delight, the Minuscule are among us. They are everywhere: on our screens, and now even in our homes! Minuscule AR offers an unforgettable gaming experience, in which the Minuscules embark on remarkable AR adventures. Get ready to discover astonishing and lovable creatures along this fantastic quest: experience the Minuscule AR adventure!

3 different mini-games, 2 different modes and a high replayability potential. A fun and accessible game for the whole family, even if you haven't seen the film yet!

Contact : Romain Bonnin
romainb.romainb@gmail.com



Technical list

**Directed by**

Thomas Szabo & Hélène Giraud

Based on an original idea of

Thomas Szabo & Hélène Giraud

Produced by

Philippe Delarue

Original score

Mathieu Lamboley

Production design

Hélène Giraud

Production

Futurikon

Co-production

IFilmFilm Entertainment
France 3 Cinéma

Associate producers

Géo PLC
Flair production
World in progress studio

With the participation of

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Editions Montparnasse
Canal+
France Télévisions
OCS

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Music publishing

Futurikon SA
BMG Rights Management France

a film by Thomas SZABO and H    ne GIRAUD

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