



# THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES OF ADELE BLANC\_SEC

Autumn  
Season  
2011



Adele Blanc-Sec is the latest in a long line of films from its writer, director and producer Luc Besson, including 'Subway' and 'The Big Blue', 'Leon' and 'The Fifth Element'. Besson set out in the 1980's to 'change the look of movies by making them better, more convincing and pleasurable to watch'. The 'Cinéma du look' movement valued a highly visual style, which left the director open to both criticism – 'the most Hollywood of French Directors' – and praise – 'one of the best film producers, for refining and revolutionizing action film'. Certainly his films are action packed, but the style shows through; if this is Hollywood influenced, it is just a shame Hollywood is not more influenced by him.

Besson's own inspiration has often come from comic books, including 'The Fifth Element' and 'The Extraordinary Adventures of Adele Blanc\_Sec'. Adele is the brainchild of Jacques Tardi, who started writing comics in 1969, at the age of 23. A highly versatile artist, Tardi successfully adapted novels by controversial writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline or crime novelist Léo Malet. In Malet's case, Tardi adapted his detective hero Nestor Burma into a series of critically acclaimed graphic novels, though he also wrote and drew original stories of his own.

In the 'Adele' series, Tardi recreates the Paris of early 20th century where the moody heroine encounters supernatural events, state plots, occult societies and experiments in cryogenics.

His style can at times seem similar to Hergé's early *ligne claire* style (clear line), and typically features an asexual hero (Adèle Blanc-Sec can be quite a misandrist at times), but Tardi's work also satirises the concept of the flawless hero by using a series of inept, naive or anti-heroic main characters. His audience is mainly the literary, French-speaking adult public.



Luc Besson has taken Tardi's story and added his big-budget movie style to produce this adventure fantasy. Adele, a wisecracking, hard-living adventurer-cum-novelist, travels to Egypt to retrieve a mummified doctor who she hopes to return to life to save her comatose sister. Back in Paris, the French Professor she hopes will help her do this has just managed to hatch a pterosaur egg, which is flying round Paris terrorising the locals, and killing a former prefect.

Adele's return to Paris only serves to complicate the picture, when the revived Mummy decides to bring back the rest of his court, on show in the Louvre. Adele sets out to find the pterosaur whilst 'entertaining' the Mummies and saving her sister.

Played with a breezy, almost klutzy charm by Louise Bourgoïn, Adèle is a feisty, unflappable and brilliantly caustic heroine. Her arch nemesis, who pops up in Egypt and Paris, is played by Mathieu Almeric.

A stylish action film to laugh along with and enjoy rather than analyse its deeper meaning.