

# Elle in vogue

Photo: Felix Kalkman



Editor Job ter Burg first worked with Paul Verhoeven on *Black Book* back in 2006. He later edited on Verhoeven's *Tricked* (2012), the freewheeling "user generated" drama made through crowd funding and with the help of the general public. Now, he has edited *Elle*, Verhoeven's new feature starring Isabelle Huppert which will screen in competition in Cannes. Geoffrey Macnab reports.

"Working with Paul is always great," Ter Burg says of his collaborations with the Dutch director of *Basic Instinct* and *Total Recall*. He had stayed in touch with Verhoeven since *Black Book* and describes the filmmaker as a friend. Verhoeven had said he was keen to bring the editor on board on any subsequent projects that he managed to finance. Several fell through but *Elle*, Verhoeven's first film made in France, received the green light.

The editor describes *Elle* as "a film about a strong woman, which probably makes it quite feminist" but also as "controversial enough to rub some people the wrong way."

The main character, the editor continues, is "a very complicated person" who makes "weird decisions" and continually defies audience expectations. Huppert is playing a character out for revenge against a man who raped her.

"You have this great actress playing a character you may not always fully understand, but are fascinated by. That is one of the things that we were able to hook onto in the editing. Her performance was so powerful and her character is so fascinating."

One of the pleasures of working with Verhoeven, Ter Burg suggests, is that he allows his collaborators creative freedom. "He is not so much the kind of guy who gives people instruction because he likes people to do their own thing and then to respond to that. He can always change it if he feels he has better ideas. With most people I see him working with who he trusts and respects, he asks them to do whatever they think is right at first. Whenever it doesn't feel right, he can always change it."

With Verhoeven shooting digitally with more than one camera – "shooting most scenes with two cameras when it made sense, was something that liberated him" – it was inevitable that there would be a huge amount of material to sift through. That wasn't such a departure from *Black Book*, which

may have been made on film but nevertheless had 83 shooting days.

"To be honest, I think one of the hardest parts was that the action [scenes] in *Black Book* were fun to do. The action scenes in *Elle*, although there aren't too many, are very nasty because they involve physical abuse and that's not something easy to watch...going over that for a couple of days can be tough. If that footage is powerful and it is working – and it was – it really starts getting to you."

The editor is used to working with strong-minded auteurs. Alongside his films with Verhoeven, he has also done several films with Alex van Warmerdam. "I respond really well to films with great ideas and to filmmakers with interesting ideas. One of the greatest things about our job is that it is never the same...with strong directors, they never make the same film twice."

Ter Burg started work editing Martin Koolhoven's *Brimstone* (billed as the first Dutch western) immediately after finishing *Elle* – and he started working on *Elle* immediately after finishing van Warmerdam's *Schneider vs. Bax*. It has been a breakneck and very demanding schedule. Ask him what he is up to next and he sighs. "When this is done, I am ready for a little vacation!"

Cannes Competition  
*Elle* ◊ Job ter Burg, editor



'Paul rediscovered the free style used on *Turkish Delight*'

Paul Verhoeven's *Elle*

Production: SBS Productions (FR)  
Co-Production: Twenty Twenty Vision Filmproduktion (DE),  
Entre Chien et Loup (BE) Script: David Birke  
Sales: SBS International Sales