

JÉRÔME SEYDOUX AND FRÉDÉRIC FOUGEA PRESENT

EVOLUTION MAN

MONKEY BUSINESS

A FILM BY JAMEL DEBBOUZE



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JAMEL DEBBOUZE

Running Time: 95 mins.

IN 2D AND 3D

French Distribution & International Sales

Pathé Distribution

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www.patheinternational.com



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THE STORY

This is the thrilling story of Edward, elder son of the king of all Simians (pre-humans) who is considered puny at birth and rejected by his tribe. He grows up in isolation, under the protection of his friend Ian. Incredibly ingenious, Edward winds up discovering fire, hunting, modern living quarters, love and even... hope. Generous by nature, he wants to share it all, overturning established order and leading his people with his brash personality and hearty sense of humor toward a truly human existence — where eating one's father just isn't done.



CHARACTERS



EDWARD

Edward is him. I mean, you know, it's me! I'm the son of the king but in actual fact I never thought I had parents. Except Ian, of course. He adopted me when I was still a tiny, tiny baby. I might not be very strong, but I'm plenty clever. So come on, step right up, I'll tell you the true story of prehistoric times.



LUCY

Seriously, isn't she the Simianest? Naturally, I mean she's my honey. Although I had to prove myself first. See, Lucy isn't always exactly easy to follow... especially when she wakes up on the wrong side of the hide. But anyway she is an angel that dropped right out of the sky.



VLADIMIR

He's my father's adviser. In actual fact, though, he doesn't give much advice and he's the one who has to do what he's told. He's not exactly courageous, but you got to admit, as dignitaries go, he's pretty funny.

VANIA

Look out, here comes something new! Here comes the heir to King Simeon's throne! He's strong, amazingly big, amazingly handsome, but at times he is also amazingly thick. But hey, I forgive him – he's my brother, though for years and years we didn't even know that. Besides, the dude's got class.





THE WITCH

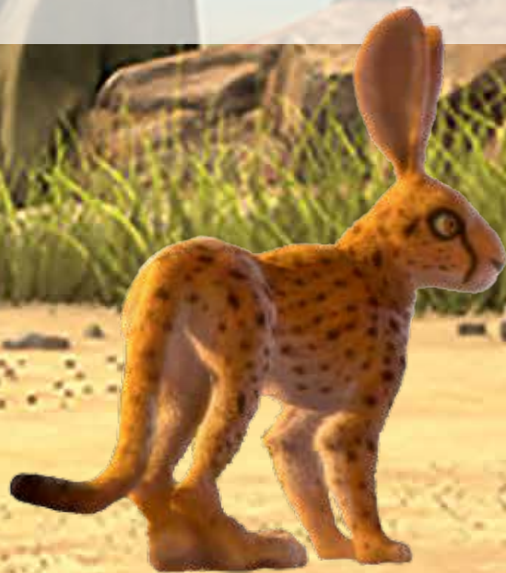
Now her I can't stand. With that crazy hair and the weird gleaming eyes, she looks like a real witch, or at least a real turkey-brain. I know she's gaming everybody in the tribe, all so she can keep her own power. And that is ugly, no lie!

IAN

This guy I love! No surprise there – I mean I owe him my life. He raised me like a son. I mean he raised me up. Now you can't always understand him when he talks, but it's not what you say anyway, it's what's in your heart. Right?

BUNNYSAURUS

In the beginning the bunnysaurus had four ears. He could hear anything going on, all around. But then his two front ears kept flopping in his eyes when he ran.



TORTTRICH

Long legs, long neck, pointy beak. The tortrich sure was something in its time. He had a protective shell but it slowed him down running so he had to give that up.




FIFTY FIFTY

Fifty Fifty is a unique bird. Only one of the species ever existed. He is said to have lived thousands of years ago and was enormously talented for communicating with other species.

JAWS

With a mane and big canine teeth, you might think he was the ancestor of both the wolf and the lion. But Jaws turns out to be as harmless as a poodle.



THE PROJECT

Director **Jamel Debbouze**

Based on the book ***Evolution Man* by Roy Lewis**

First published in England in 1960, the book sold 1.5 million copies in France and translations were also published in Italy, Spain, Germany, Argentina, Brazil, Denmark, as well as all the eastern European countries, etc.

Screenplay by **Jamel Debbouze and Frédéric Fougéa**

based on an original screenplay by **Jean-Luc Fromental and Frédéric Fougéa**

Production **Pathé – Boréales – Kissfilms – M6 Films – Umédia – Cattleya**

In association with **Stellar Mega Films** and **Ufund**

With the support of the **Tax Shelter of the Federal Government of Belgium and the Investors' Tax Shelter**

With the participation of **Canal+, Ciné+, M6, W9**

With the support of the **CNC (New technologies in production)**

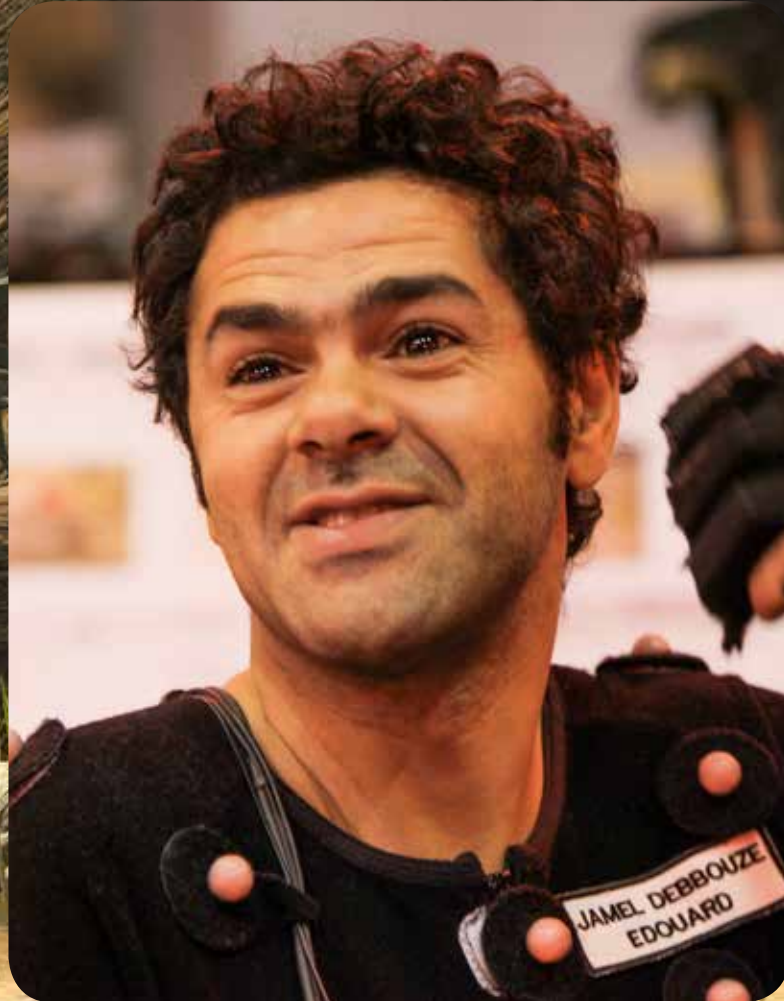
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Running Time **95 mins**

A FILM DIRECTED AND PERFORMED BY
JAMEL DEBBOUZE



INTERVIEW JAMEL DEBBOUZE

DIRECTOR, SCREENWRITER AND PERFORMING THE ROLE OF EDWARD

How did the EVOLUTION MAN adventure get started?

First I was asked to do a voice on a project that was already well on its way. I came up with two or three lines of dialog that got some laughs and I made a couple of suggestions concerning the structure. They asked me to work on a screenplay adaptation of Roy Lewis' Evolution Man. I hardly kept anything except the characters of Edward and Vania, making them brothers. I also preserved the world and the tone of the book, which I really liked. So after voice characterizations and the writing, they finally asked me if I wanted to direct. Little by little, the whole adventure was like a wave of offers that overcame me. I didn't make this movie — it made me. Between the time I showed up for one day of voice work and now, seven years went by. This is the biggest project of my life — I've never worked on anything with so much intensity and desire.

When did you first read Roy Lewis' book? For this project or long before?

I read it when I was in school, I was forced to. But I really liked the distance between the subject and the tone, meaning that it's you and me as apes, because it made the story more accessible. When working on the adaptation I decided not to stick to the original work. I really wanted to make it totally my own, to make the story embody what I was and what I have become.

You are Edward, who is born little and who stays that way. Bitten by an animal, that bite is going to leave him with a handicap to the right arm — it's hard to do more to embody a character, right from the start, who very quickly will get laughs from his misadventures.

Knowing that performance capture was going to be the method we used for shooting and that everything was going to be reconstituted, I knew there was to be no cheating whatsoever. So in the writing the character had to be me, such as I am. I invested a lot of myself, both in form and content. The film isn't far from being a metaphor for my own life.

You also worked on the language. Erudite and literary in the book, you have adapted it to our times, but also to you and your comic style. Was that necessary?

It's a coherent choice. Because it is me and this is how I move, how I think and how I talk. It was very important for me to stay close to my natural appearance — that's how I make the fewest mistakes.

Was changing the title part of a different global vision of the story?

We can disagree, it's no big deal. That's substantially

what Edward says. But he decides that eating your father is barbaric and he stands alone, just as I have done at times. Now, are defenders of evolution always right when they face off with the others? Not necessarily. Look at atomic energy and the bomb, internet and its excesses. What I wanted to say through Edward was that, whatever happens, we must try to be civilized. Respect, courtesy, comprehension are like muscles that you have to strengthen. We should all prevent one another from going too far, from stepping over the line. We should decide together what path to take.

The apes in my story come together after the destruction of their tree, which is their home. Do we really have to wait until it gets to that point ?

Edward, in any case, does represent the "evolution man," the one who brings the species to the next stage by walking upright and taming fire.

He has been banned by the group, so he has to cope. In spite of himself, he discovers fire, friendship, love — all by accident, but not only by accident. Edward is an optimist who also invents music and hope. What moves him is the energy of humanity. He has no prejudices, doesn't judge anyone — he stays positive in every situation because he's convinced that solutions come through people and out of goodness.

And when he says, “He hits us because he doesn’t know us,” isn’t he also alluding to contemporary problems like ignorance and exclusion?

I don’t want to oversimplify, but yeah, I wanted to talk about underprivileged neighborhoods where people might feel excluded, cast to the side by society. But it’s also just all these schoolyards where you find yourself excluded because of your clothing, your nose, your hair, your skin color or the way you talk. For those kids, those young adults, I think there are two ways to react. You’re either frustrated and you cultivate hatred of other people and of the system, or you transform your frustration into joy, as strange as that might sound. In my own case, shame was a driving force and I was lucky enough to see it very quickly replaced by love.

The progressives versus the conservatives. Is that a contemporary paradigm, now and always? What was the message you wanted to convey on that score?

That’s always been contemporary, right from the dawn of humanity. Some people live in the past, others in the future. Not many are firmly anchored in the present. It’s harder and harder to really sit down and make a cool-headed assessment about where we are with that. The action-reaction duality has been the way mankind moves forward. You go as far as you can until destruction and then you’re reborn from the ashes – that is the

mark of man. That’s what our story winds up with, too, but I’m from a generation that doesn’t want to tear everything down. I’m sure we can do the opposite, build and embellish. Laughter, kindness and goodness are, to me, the three greatest virtues of our species.

Progress helps your Simians improve their lives but then they quickly close themselves up around their possessions. They’ve hardly gotten started and already the jealousy and exclusivity have started.

It seems to me that we have been very adept at shutting out happiness. We have a hard time being satisfied with what we have, with saying, “That’s it, now I’m good.” I force myself to stop and look around and say to myself life is great, I have a roof over my head, a family I can feed, without being envious about anyone or anything. But if you don’t have that essential principle, it’s easy to cultivate less noble thoughts. It’s human. The whole thing is not to have it in for your fellow man just because he’s there. It’s often fear that makes us think poorly or act poorly. As soon as you let fear inside your walls, you become a jerk. It’s like water, it seeps in all around. Fear can destroy the world. The witch in the film symbolizes those fears, the ones we’re being sold all day long, the ones that pit us one against the other, the ones that keep the monkeys from climbing down from their tree and living in freedom. Edward becomes who

he is because he decides not to be afraid anymore. When you make that decision, guess what happens. Just like in IRON MAN, an impregnable armor engulfs you. It’s also called self-confidence.

After being banished by his clan, Edward is taken in by a solitary and somewhat simple ape by the name of Ian. Who is this character?

He’s not far from autistic, talks like an octopus. Thanks to Arié Elmaleh, who isn’t recognizable at all in this performance. Ian is Edward’s childhood friend who lives alone, feeling excluded by the group because he can’t talk like they do. He’s a big, sweet white monkey who blows bubbles now and then for fun, or calls to his bird friend, Fifty Fifty. Ian just happened to be there to take Edward in at his birth. He protects him and never judges him – they are friends for life.

These two characters, Edward and Ian, are both excluded because they are handicapped, but it becomes clear that one is a genius inventor and the other is a visionary. Do you think being different is at the root of world progress?

Edward and Ian have no choice but to count on one another, because the rest of the world doesn’t want any part of them. That’s a feeling I experienced in the flesh. What I like about those two characters is that they’re

like my parents – they’ve lived through really hard things but they’re not angry about it, they have no rancor. That’s what my mother communicated to me. I am absolutely convinced that it is the optimists, with their energy and their infectious power, who are responsible for mankind’s advances. They try to convince you that the pessimist is intelligent. Wrong! That’s just posturing. Imposture, even! It’s optimism about the future that does it! Edward and Ian only want to join the party, but if they’re excluded then they’ll make their own and the whole world will want to join their party. Do you realize how much influence those underprivileged areas have on France in terms of style, sports, music, film and literature?! How can those people still be excluded in their own country? That’s just like with Edward and Ian – it’s a riddle.

Why did you decide to direct the film in “performance capture,” which is a first for Europe?

That was Jérôme Seydoux’ decision and, frankly, right now he’s the only one who could do it. You need courage, vision, time and money to start down that path and hope to fight in the same weight class as the Americans. France has some powerful resources in that area. Marc Miance, for example, who founded the company Let’So Ya – he’s a genius. The Americans offered him a

boatload to come be number five on one of their projects. We offered him a thimbleful to be our number one. And he took our offer. We worked in India with a studio that worked on the FX for LIFE OF PI. When I was there, I found myself in a waiting room with John Lasseter (TOY STORY, CARS 2). Can you imagine?!

What did you like about the technique?

Performance capture is an incredible middle ground between live action and the screen. It is truly this technique that gave me so much impetus to get involved in this project. At the outset, we had only produced a little test of about five minutes. I showed it to my 9-month-old son and I watched his eyes go from the computer to me, from me back to the computer. I could see he was thinking, in that box there’s a monkey who looks like my father. That was the magic. It gives true life to animated characters.

Where was the film shot?

In Stains (Seine Saint-Denis, on the outskirts of Paris), over two months in a 10,000 sq. foot space equipped with seventy cameras set up around 360°, with forty computers and an almost-organic hard disk of monumental proportions. From time to time, we had to let it rest before we went back to shooting.

And for you what were the advantages of performance capture?

The possibility of shooting fifteen minutes without ever stopping – which explains the hard disk’s distress – and no change of lighting, without worrying about marks you need to hit or make-up or hair that had to be fixed. It’s incredibly liberating because the only constraint is the acting itself.

Did you have trouble getting actors to take part in this adventure?

It’s pretty complicated just finding actors who can act, dance and sing. But when you start telling them they’re going to be spending ten hours a day kneeling or on all fours, there’s suddenly an echo in the room. We went out and got dancers, especially those of the R. Style dance group and stuntmen. Cyril Casmez, who directs the Singe Debout (Standing Monkey) company worked with us for eight months on monkey movements. And then we did have a few actors who signed on. Arié was wonderful – I put him through so much. Patrice Thibaud, who was part of Jérôme Deschamps’ theater, is an incredibly gifted mime. He plays the roles of Sergey and Vladimir. But let’s not forget Christian Hecq of the Comédie Française, Dorothée Pousséo, who has an incredible voice, Youssef Haddi who plays Marcel, the first of mankind’s stupid idiots.

The characters of Sergey and Vladimir, played by Patrice Thibaud, look and sound like Louis de Funès. What's he doing in this story? Is this some kind of homage, introducing him to younger audiences?

Louis de Funès doesn't need me to be recognized, including by younger people, who adore him. There is a nod to Delusions of Grandeur (LA FOLIE DES GRAN-DEURS) which is far and away one of my favorites. How I would have loved to have been there, to have taken part in that. Yes, it is an homage because Louis de Funès has meant a lot to me and, I repeat, this film is sort of my story. Mr. de Funès got me to go wild. He influenced me and he still influences me. IRCAM developed software for this film so that they could recuperate as many phonemes as they could from the archives in order to reproduce his voice. A mammoth task for a mammoth figure in comedy.

There is also a journalist in the cast of the film. What made you decide to use Mélissa Theuriau, your wife, in the role of Lucy?

It wasn't premeditated. In the writing stage, I bounced a lot off Mélissa. She would read and I would take her woman's point of view into account. She would push me to my limits, forcing me to dig for my female side, as they say. Sometimes we would just start acting some

scenes and, little by little, in that verbal ping pong, I realized I had a heavy hitter on her side, that she was spiking the ball right back at me, sometimes even hitting some overhead smashes. In short, there was an actress inside her and I had just brought her out. I asked her if she would audition. The production called me up immediately after the auditions to say, "We have our Lucy." Mélissa's way of taking on the role was remarkable. She is charming and wild, she's like Beauty and the Beast all rolled up into one. It's also her voice, with that slight Brazilian accent. I finally realized that she had always wanted to act.

And you – comedian, actor, producer – how did you take to this first experience as a director?

I got off on it to an amazing degree, like I was both coach and player. Directing other actors, giving them my opinion, communicating my sensibilities, making the choices, it was like I had been doing it all my life.

The musical score also resembles you. Who was overseeing the choice of songs?

Nina Simone, Barry White, Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder... Soul – music of the soul, universal music – has always made me dream. It also softened me, surely because it puts love square in the middle of everything.

Soul transmits good vibrations and important values. I think it goes perfectly with the relationship between Lucy and Edward. Let's not forget Shrillex, Merlot and DJ Kore who wrote an absolutely crazy piece for the scene in the cave.

At the end of the story, Edward could become king of the Simians but decides not to. Why is that?

He never has been king, and never wanted to be. It was never even something he thought about. Power doesn't interest him. What he wants is to be part of the family. What counts for him is human warmth and energy. He is all about the question, "What is it that we can all do together?" I hope that today more and more people are thinking the same way – this film is all about FAMILY. •



INTERVIEW

MÉLISSA THEURIAU

WHO PERFORMS LUCY

For you, what is the greatest difference between Roy Lewis' book and the adaptation Jamel imagined?

It seems to me that Jamel transformed Roy Lewis' pessimistic vision a little. What he wanted to express, in his own way, through laughter, is that out of chaos comes hope, that rejection can breed curiosity and a desire to make it out alive. Everyone can find his place. And those are messages that make sense.

The French title translates as "Why I Didn't Eat My Father," roughly the opposite of Lewis' subtitle How I Ate My Father. Is that a message in itself?

I love the title. It expresses the refusal to just accept everything, obediently, like sheep. "I will not eat my father." It expresses the will to go against what is considered inevitable, the will to rebel, to find another way to go forward, to be happier, freer and respect each other more.

Why did you agree to play Lucy, who is a revelation for Edward, who when he sees her just invents love, which by the way is a nice homage to your own marriage?

In any case, it was really something to shoot. This project came into our home years ago. We had a lot of exchanges about it. I knew Lucy really well from having

rehearsed Jamel in the role of Edward. But neither he nor I ever envisaged my playing the role. Then when he started casting for the role I was anxious to meet the person who would play her. And only after not finding that person did I dive in. One day when we were rehearsing, miming our Simian characters, Jamel just went stock still and he said, "You're Lucy." We laughed about it and then, finally, I dared to give it a try. I was still a "forbidden zone," I was pregnant, but no matter – Lucy was a fantastic character. I went in to audition for it, figuring at least I will have tried.

Did the desire to act originate with the preparation of this film, or does that go back further for you?

The desire to act, especially in theater, goes back to when I was at journalism school in Echirrolles. We had a fantastic teacher by the name of André Targe, dramaturge and filmmaker, and I loved his classes. I was one of the less focused students whom he picked on regularly. One day, to win him over, I interpreted a text in front of the whole class. He gave me his encouragement and confidence. He really pushed me to commit to that direction. That moment, when I was 22, never left me. The desire remained. And now it's come to the fore.

With performance capture, it's not exactly you that we see on the screen. Did that contribute to your decision?

That helped me make the leap, yes. And it totally removed my inhibitions. And there were no rushes to look at, no reason to look at yourself and start to doubt. We were all wearing our lycra suits, all on the same level. The only thing that counted was the energy and commitment, and then there was Jamel's attention to detail. He might ask us to play the same scene over and over until two in the morning, as long as there was one movement or one expression that didn't correspond to what he wanted. Every part of our bodies needed to move like a monkey – even the slightest exception was visible.

What were the acting limitations due to performance capture technology?

We started in spring when the weather turned really nice, but we were spending all our days in the darkness of the enormous Stains set. It was 85° but we were bundled up in our suits. Every morning, it would take forty minutes to set up the battery of captors all over our bodies and faces. The least movement made before they started rolling and all the cameras that were

turned on would bug and, basically, the work of thirty crew members specialized in motion capture would be wasted. One of the difficulties of the technology is that you absolutely must not touch your partner because any contact meant the take was through. Pretty complicated when you're playing a fight, or even a love scene. You have to hit the other person without even brushing him. You have to cuddle in someone's arms but never really touch. I remember Jamel telling me at the end of the shoot, "After that you can play anything."

He also says that the technology frees actors up. Did you feel that way?

I have no frame of reference with other kinds of shoots. What I did appreciate was how long the takes could be. When you're shooting for ten or fifteen minutes without a cut, it seems to me you have enough time to forget yourself. After fifteen minutes of rage or chase, played at 120%, I was no longer Mélissa. I had become Lucy.

Did you do any physical preparation?

I gave birth a little while before the shooting started, so I had to get into shape very quickly. I did a lot of running and worked out in the gym. I worked twice a week, like everyone else, with Cyril Casmez, in order to get used to the monkey movements, their way of walking or moving their shoulders and head, which is very different from ours. The shoot was a very physical exercise. By knee-

ling or running on all fours for so long, we all suffered, to greater or lesser degrees. But the adventure, the collective energy, all the goodness we were conveying probably contributed to getting beyond the pain.

What were the most difficult moments for you?

When I saw Jamel doubting, during the writing or the preparation. And then I had a few moments of apprehension of my own. Didn't they make a mistake when they cast me? Will I really be up to the task? Can I really be intimate in front of the whole set? Fortunately, we began the shoot with the most difficult scenes between him and me. The fear went away pretty quickly.

Is it your voice with that attractive Brazilian accent we hear?

Jamel did in fact make it more difficult for me because he wanted an accent which wasn't exactly identifiable, somewhere between Romanian and Brazilian. We had to maintain and remember that Lucy was from elsewhere, that she lost her whole family, and that there are certain things she doesn't understand.

As an insider and an actress on the film, how would you define the message that Jamel wanted to get across?

That you don't have good on one side and bad on the other. No one is born with criminal genes, or violent ones,

or evil. That's what we are searching for. And more than anything, what Jamel wanted to get across through Edward is that it's better to make a strength out of being rejected. And then there's that desire to share, to be united, to be together. Maybe it's a sort of utopia that doesn't always come from experience of real life, but it can guide us. That's what he wants to say to kids, to teenagers, to anyone who comes to see the film.

What will you take away from this experience? What will be your greatest memories?

Beyond just finishing this long-term project, I would say meeting with people from so many very different walks of life – stuntmen, dancers, technicians, actors. That's Jamel's greatest strength, bringing people together and instilling in them that energy and a sort of hope and self-confidence. He has his down moments but I have never seen him pessimistic. He is positivism incarnate.

Has this made you want to go further?

This shoot soothed me. I was lucky enough to seize a wild opportunity and to experience something which is perhaps unique. We'll see if there are other great opportunities in my future. In any case, I will have experienced this one to the hilt. •

A FILM SHOT IN MOTION CAPTURE!



INTERVIEW

MARC MIANCE

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

How long have you been working on this project?

After several months consulting, I took charge of the film's production in the summer of 2010. When I came on the scene the project had been around for a while and it was supposed to be a traditional animation project. As I re-read the script – which I had already seen at earlier stages – I immediately recognized what Jamel had brought to it. There was different dialog, a different tone and vision from the book. He had left his mark everywhere and it was obvious to me that he should play the main character, Edward. That's when I suggested we do a test in motion capture because I felt that was the best technique for this particular situation, for this story. When we saw the results of the test, when we discovered this caveman Jamel for the first time, "MoCap" became the obvious choice for everyone involved and Jérôme decided to shoot the film that way.

Is it actually "motion capture" or "performance capture"?

Motion capture was born in England at Oxford University. First designed to measure movement for scientific purposes and the study of certain pathologies, especially as they pertain to the human skeleton, it was then harnessed for video games and film. The term "performance capture" was

coined when we started portraying actors' facial expressions and eye movements in addition to their body language. That is in fact the technique used for this film. But anyway, it's a matter of vocabulary and you can simply call it "MoCap".

What was your role in this adventure?

As executive producer, I was at Jamel's side for five years, throughout every stage of production of the film. I had a pre-eminent role in the form it took, meaning how the literary object would be transformed into a cinematic work. I suggested MoCap for shooting, for the expressions, and I worked closely with the visual team on graphics and technology for producing the images.

Jamel Debbouze tells us that a major American studio made you an attractive offer on one of their projects.

Why did you prefer to do this one?

I got offers before and during this film. None of them would have allowed me to do what I did on EVOLUTION MAN, that is, the first French animated film entirely made in MoCap. Previously the technique had been used in two different ways – very successfully for FX on live action films like LORD OF THE RINGS, PLANET OF THE APES, or AVATAR, and in my opinion less successfully for animated films like THE POLAR EXPRESS or BEOWULF. The best of these experiments is still the

adaptation of TINTIN. Steven Spielberg's film is fantastic, but it seems to me that the emotional connection to the characters is still too limited, especially for the faces. In that regard, I think we took a decisive step forward on EVOLUTION MAN. The script was ideal and the choice of technique made sense. I knew that in Pathé, we had an ambitious partner and we could explore this new form of animation. But above all, I believed in one thing – that capturing Jamel, both literally and figuratively, is one hell of an experience.

What artistic prep work was done for the characters and the sets?

First we had to create the universe – design the sets and the characters in keeping with Jamel's vision. Then we had to cast it and adapt the drawings and their 3D versions to the actors. So each character became the digital container for an actor!

But in the case of Ian, played by Arié Elmaleh, the character doesn't resemble the actor, even though Edward looks like Jamel?

In an ideal world, we wanted actors whose physiognomy went with the characters but that wasn't always possible. Arié is the only person whose body language we found

convincing for the character of Ian. He's the same size, the same long arms as our likeable Simian, but not his portly bearing. He was shot with an artificial belly so he would have the appropriate bulkiness. Edward is the character who is closest to human in the film – we kept Jamel's basic proportions and re-interpreted his face. Since Jamel also incorporated his own experience into the story, there was a certain logic to recognizing him right away.

How about for Vladimir and Sergey, the two Louis de Funès characters in the film?

Patrice Thibaud, the actor who does his body movements best, is larger and more massive than Louis de Funès. So we started from his skeleton and we thinned him down digitally, removing flesh from his outline. The facial expressions were made by computer using file photographs and video. For the voice IRCAM developed new software which analyzes the content of an actor's voice. Patrice gives us the dynamics and the phrasing. Afterward, the sound bites are digitally synthesized from a library of Louis de Funès voice samples to give it the proper timbre and vocal range.

Is the technology totally and exclusively in the service of the content?

That's what makes this production so interesting. At Prana, the studio in Mumbai, we have three thousand terabytes of body hair, bark, moss and leaves! Put

that kind of complexity together with Jamel's hyper-inventiveness and the production becomes one heck of an adventure. All of that technology was marshalled to serve his narrative and artistic sensibility.

Everything is virtual, but actually nothing is – is that a fair way to state it?

The film's sets are the perfect illustration to answer your question. Entirely designed in 2D, then in 3D, they don't exist. Nevertheless, everything was shot in the real world. So at a certain point everything has to exist even if it's not in the shot. That goes for the props as well. Typically, the concourse, or the center of the tree where many of the scenes take place, was first imagined on a computer screen. Then we had it built – in the form of an open space so that the cameras can film right through it. The actors couldn't possibly perform well in a completely empty space. If they have to step over a tree root, the shape of that root is going to exist on the set and be true to within a fraction of an inch of what they need to step over. The credibility of the film in 3D depended on us going through this.

How was the set organized for shooting?

In Stains, we had a 10,000 square foot space with a 1600 square foot capture area which could accommodate up to fifteen actors at once, surrounded by seventy Vicon 4K cameras shooting 100 frames per second. Eighty technicians worked together to run the gigantic

set which we built for this event – first time ever in Europe! A data center was set up close to the shoot in order to record the enormous flow of information from the seventy cameras, all shooting simultaneously. To prevent the actors from getting depressed cooped up inside that space, we printed images from the film's graphic world on to a thirty-five yard tarp. A little taste of the savannah!

And how was each of the actors equipped?

First, they all wore a jumpsuit equipped with about forty markers for the capture of body movements. After that, for facial expressions, things got more complicated. A year and a half prior to the shoot, we acquired a headcam technology from an American firm. Fantastic, except each headcam weighs about eleven pounds. We quickly came to the conclusion that we couldn't possibly ask the actors to work under those conditions, with all the headaches and backaches that implied. So Alkymia, our tech company, developed a new headset, 100% French, which we called "Thirdeye" and which only weighs about a pound. It was perfected the weekend before the first day of shooting. That was an adventure within the adventure!

What were the advantages and the disadvantages of this technology, for the entire cast?

Shooting in MoCap is magic for an actor. He can't see his image at all because we are only capturing his

movements. Only the purity of his acting remains, his body language and his expressiveness. It's a playground for the imagination. We could shoot ten or twelve shots in a row, which is not far from filming live theater – with absolutely no constraints concerning lighting, sound or make-up. That, of course, makes for an incredible freedom in acting, though there are certain constraints, like the headcam, with its attachment more than a foot from the face, which demands that certain precautions be taken. Everyone got used to those constraints pretty quickly.

How was it possible for Jamel to be an actor, complete with the headset and the body suit, and at the same time the director?

Thanks to MoCap, Jamel was both in front of and behind the camera at the same time, even while in character! When you do a film in MoCap, certain basic models of movie shoots change. In a live action film, there are two periods of directing – the first when you're on the set, directing the actors as they play the scenes and the second when you're in editing and you choose the order

of shots. With MoCap, because you're shooting 360° all the time, the shot is framed and edited at the same time. In this stage you can edit the scene by changing the point of view and so choose the one you want as a function of what you want to say. Jamel's vision was decisive over the two months of shooting and then all throughout the year of framing/editing that followed.

Why did you do all the post-production work in Mumbai, India?

Prana was basically a strategic choice for the executive production. I wanted to give the direction as much leeway as I could, but still maintain image detail comparable to American productions. Prana (TINKER BELL, PLANES 1 & 2) was the ideal partner, both for their expertise and their impact capability. My wife (and associate) and I decided to move to India for a year in order to supervise the birth of the film's graphics – the creation of the vegetation, all the organic matter such as skin and hair, as well as the lighting and the color rendering was all done in time with the monsoons.

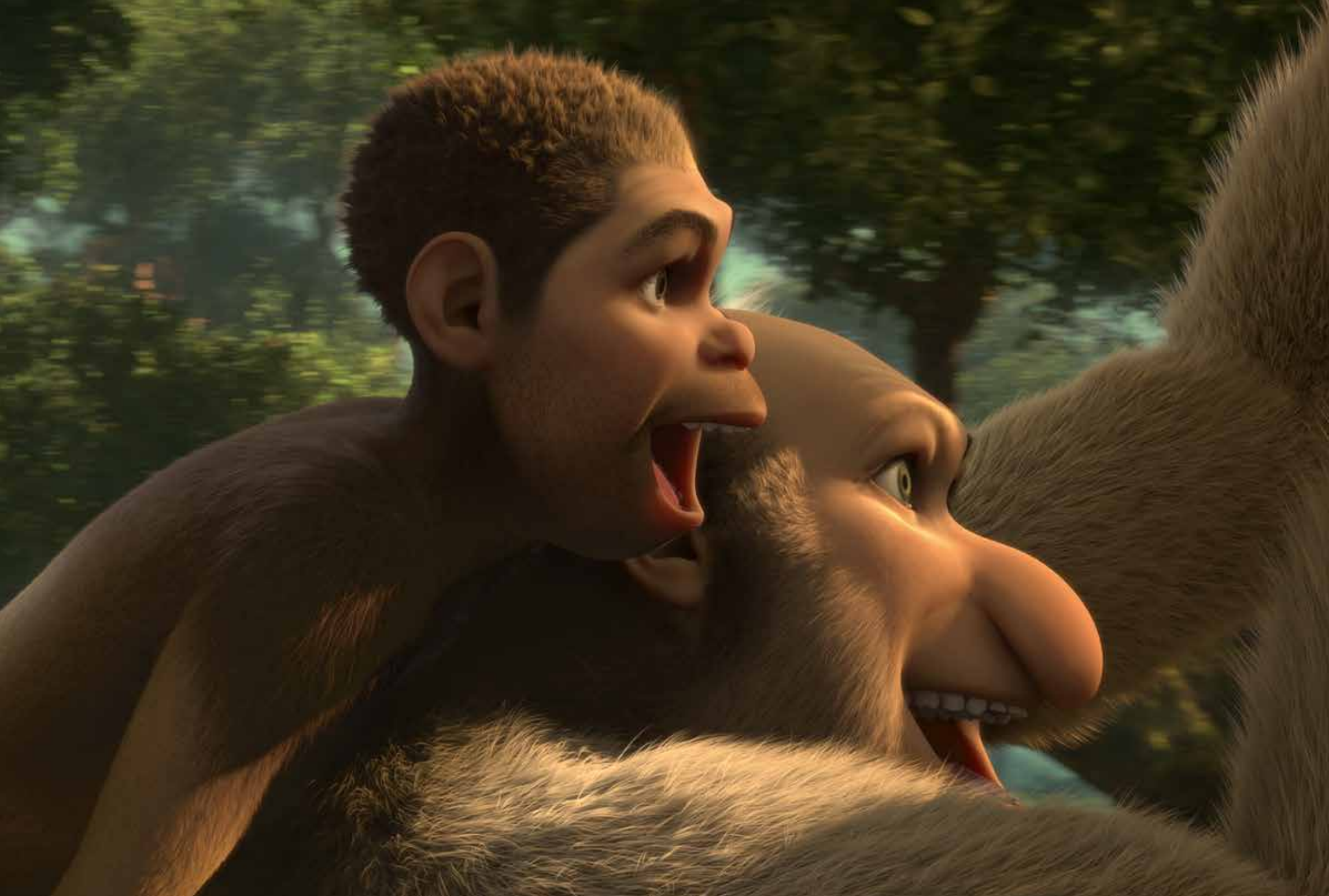
Do you develop a sort of God complex?

Either God or slave. Despite all those computers, the work is nothing more or less than large scale craftsmanship, and so an incredibly daunting mountain of work!

Without Jamel Debbouze, could this film have been made?

We put the technology at the service of his improvisation, his creativity. What I brought to the form only made sense because it was Jamel. The optimistic message he wanted to get across is something I totally adhere to. But I would go even further: to experience the adventure that we experienced, to produce a film of this size, over that long a period, you had to have an optimist at the helm. Not one of the partners in this film – whether in Paris, Stains, Mumbai, London, Brussels, or higher up in Pathé – will tell you the contrary. We all made this work together, each giving the best of ourselves. That, it seems to me, is another overriding message of this film.

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CAST

EDOUARD	Jamel Debbouze
LUCY	Designed by Wang Luo Dan , performed by Mélissa Theuriau
IAN	Designed by Claudio Bisio , performed by Arié Elmaleh
VLADIMIR	Created from the character of Louis de Funès , performed by Patrice Thibaud , voice transformed by l'IRCAM
SIMEON	Performed by Christian Hecq of the Comédie Française
VANIA	Designed by Alexandro Gassman , Performed by Diouc Koma , voice Adrien Antoine
LA SORCIÈRE	Performed by Georgette Kala-Lobé , voice Nathalie Homs
MARCEL	Designed by Emilio Solfrizzi , Performed by Youssef Hadji
SERGEY	Designed by Papaleo , performed by Patrice Thibaud
GUDULE	Johanna Hilaire
MYRTILLE	Dorothée Pousséo
FLEURA	Charlotte Des Georges
DIEGO	Enzo Ratsito
HUBERT	Cyril Casmèze
VICTOIRE	Charlotte Des Georges
MAMACITA	Dominique Magloire
LE PORTUGAIS PRÉHISTORIQUE	D'Jal

CREW

Director
Producers
Executive Producer
Screenplay
Based on the original screenplay by
Adaptation

Dialogue

Original Score
Based on the book
Associate Producers

Jamel Debbouze
Frédéric Fougéa and Romain Le Grand
Marc Miance
Jamel Debbouze and Frédéric Fougéa
Jean-Luc Fromental and Frédéric Fougéa
Jamel Debbouze
Frédéric Fougéa
Ahmed Hamidi
Victor Mayence
Pierre Ponce
John Smith
Rob Sprackling
Jamel Debbouze
Frédéric Fougéa
Ahmed Hamidi
Victor Mayence
Pierre Ponce
Laurent Perez Del Mar
***The Evolution Man* by Roy Lewis**
Florian Genetet-Morel
Didier Bruner
Qin Hong

Co-producers

Riccardo Tozzi,
Giovanni Stabilini,
Marco Chimenz
Adrian Politowski
Gilles Waterkey
Sylvain Goldberg
Serge De Poucques
Dorian Rigal-Ansous
Jean Goudier, Jean-Paul Hurier, Johann Nallet
Frédéric Vanderberghe
Jérôme Grillon
Jola Kudela
Hugo Barbier
Let'so Ya !
Pathé
Boréales – Kiss Films – M6 Films
Cattleya - Ufilms
Canal + Ciné + M6 - W9
Stellar Mega Films and U Fund
Tax Shelter du gouvernement fédéral de
Belgique and des investisseurs Tax Shelter
CNC (Nouvelles technologies en production)

Editor

Sound

Animation Director

First Assistant Director

Visuals Supervisor

Stereographer

Executive Production

Production

In coproduction with

With the participation of

In association

With the support of

With the support of

