

EUROPACORP

PRESENTS

**Guy Pearce    Maggie Grace**

**LOCKOUT**

Directed by **Saint & Mather**

Screenplay by Stephen Saint-Leger, James Mather & Luc Besson

Runtime: 96'

**FRENCH NATIONAL RELEASE: FEBRUARY 22, 2012**

Press kit and photos can be downloaded at [www.europacorp.com](http://www.europacorp.com)

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## Synopsis

MS One is an experimental prison in space where the 500 most dangerous criminals on planet Earth are kept in an artificial sleep. Leading a humanitarian mission, the daughter of the US president, Emilie Warnock (Maggie Grace) arrives on board the station, just as an unprecedentedly violent mutiny breaks out. Emilie and the crew of MS One are taken hostage by the inmates. President Warnock decides to send Agent Snow (Guy Pierce) to MS One with the sole mission of saving Emilie and nobody else...

## Introduction

After discovering Pierre Morel (*Taken*), Alexandre Aja (*Haute Tension*) and Louis Leterrier (*The Transporter*), Luc Besson and EuropaCorp now produce the first futuristic thriller directed by James Mather and Stephen St. Leger, two Irish filmmakers whose sci-fi short *Prey Alone* was an internet sensation bringing the directors acclaim for their mastery of green screen techniques. It's hardly surprising then for EuropaCorp to remain faithful to its tradition and commit to this adventure...

An interview with Guy Pearce

**How early did you get involved in the project?**

I met with Luc Besson at the beginning of 2010 in LA to discuss the film and then met with Stephen St. Leger and James Mather a few months later. I thought the script felt original which is always what I'm looking for. I liked the idea of playing an irreverent character like Snow. I was drawn to him because he's not the typical action hero. He exhibited a lazy and exhausted quality, which I thought was quite funny

**How did you prepare for the shoot?**

Physically it was just about getting back into some old routines of weight training and gaining weight. I've always been fairly active so it wasn't that much of a challenge. The greatest challenge always is just being convincing.

**Is it more complicated for an actor when there are two directors?**

Stephen was mainly dealing with character and James with camera and the visuals so it wasn't so weird. That's not to say they didn't cross over. There were occasional times when they contradicted each other which was odd but that's happened before between directors and DPs too, so it's nothing a bit of discussion couldn't sort out.

**Did the directors leave you any leeway?**

Definitely. Most people learn pretty quickly I need to do things my way if they want a convincing performance. We read through most of the scenes for a week or so beforehand just to iron out a few things, but didn't really rehearse as such.

**Was it a particularly challenging shoot?**

Relatively challenging from a physical point of view and we did long days, but not necessarily difficult. I did manage to injure myself each week somehow or other. Being in Serbia was fascinating. It's always good to see a part of the world that's unfamiliar.

**What was it like working opposite Maggie Grace?**

Maggie was fabulous. She was a lot of fun and we had a great time together. It's always nice to bond with someone during a shoot, and Maggie and I helped each other out a lot

## **An interview with Maggie Grace**

### **What appealed to you in the script?**

When I first read the script, I kept laughing out loud. I loved it immediately. It reminded me of films I loved back when action movies were really funny. It doesn't take itself too seriously, it has a sense of fun and it's irreverent, and it has some great one-liners. I was excited about it. I was like, *When do we shoot it?*

### **How would you describe your character?**

Emilie Warnock is the American president's daughter. She's been raised in a fairly sheltered, regimented sort of vacuum. She has a lot of stepping up to the plate to do in this film. I think it's Snow's irreverence that pushes her buttons. Gradually, we realize that she can't really do anything by the book, and she's following a man for lack of better options, but really from his attitude, he might just as well be one of the escaped psychotic criminals.

I didn't really research real presidents' daughters, but I actually have a lot of admiration for the way Chelsea Clinton or Laura Bush have handled themselves.

### **What's Emilie's relationship with Snow?**

Snow is a little bit of an antihero. He's very snide and insincere, ironic and caustic. I like him. The relationship that develops with Emilie Warnock is that kind of tit-for-tat, give-as-good-as-you-get tension, but unexpectedly, they make a good team.

### **How did the physical training go?**

I love masculine energy. Growing up, my best friends were always guys and I like having big brothers around. So I find that combat training is a really good surrounding. I do a little extra combat training so I can show off my bloody knuckles.

### **Does working with two filmmakers affect the way the actors are directed?**

James Mather and Stephen St. Leger have been a team for so long and they have a shorthand that is practically telepathic. You're never getting different direction from two sides. Maybe, if they're ironing something out on the fly, they know each other so well, there's just a kind of look and suddenly they're in a unified party line.

## Production Notes

### Two Dublin boys

James Mather and Stephen St. Leger met at film school in Dublin and started working as a team. In the last twenty years, they have shot numerous commercials and shorts. *Generally, James is behind the camera and I direct*, says Stephen St Leger. Producer Marc Libert explains, *James is responsible for the photography and lighting while Steve takes care of the writing and editing*. The directorial duo soon became experts in use of the green screen, obtaining spectacular results for their short films. It was their 15-minute short, *Prey Alone*, which convinced EuropaCorp. *We were all very impressed*, says Libert. *It shows a fighter plane chasing a car into a tunnel. It's astonishing that they shot it on a shoestring budget of 60,000 euros from the Irish government*. Producer Leila Smith adds, *After we saw it, we showed a DVD to Luc, who insisted on meeting the directors*.

*I'm a fan of lots of Luc's films, such as Le Grand Bleu and Subway*, says St. Leger. *And there are several shots in Prey Alone that are close to The Professional. Maybe Luc was receptive to the themes of our short or the fact that we oversaw all the special effects ourselves*.

The M.S. One adventure could begin.

### A futuristic thriller that refuses to take itself seriously

When Stephen St. Leger and James Mather met Luc Besson, they had already written two features and wanted to direct a wisecracking action movie. The maker of *The Fifth Element* had the perfect project for them: 500 of the world's most dangerous criminals are locked up in a prison in space and maintained in a state of stasis. *Suddenly, the inmates wake up*, recounts Leila Smith. *Rioting breaks out in the prison and a guy is sent up there to restore order*. The two Irish directors enthusiastically accepted EuropaCorp's proposal and met regularly with Luc Besson to work on the script. *The two boys met with Luc for 2-3 hours at a time to put together the structure of the movie with the main narrative blocks and the elements of plot that needed to be integrated*, comments Marc Libert. *Back in Ireland, St. Leger and Mather wrote the dialogue, even taking liberties with the structure to express their style. After the first draft, the second took us another four-five months. Luc's reaction to it was very positive*.

Leila Smith in particular appreciated the close collaboration between EuropaCorp and the two directors, whose willingness to communicate she emphasizes: *There were no great debates between Luc and the guys. Their script meetings functioned a bit like a masterclass. Luc gave them explanations about various scenes and advised them not to develop others because he sensed they'd be cut in editing*. Luc Besson's directorial experience proved crucial. Leila Smith adds, *When the directors disagreed with Luc, he just said to them, Convince me. They defended the choices they had made and the coherence of the development of characters they really cared about. Most often, Luc was happy to be convinced*.

While LOCKOUT is first and foremost a futuristic thriller, the film has its comic moments. It's a difficult balance to achieve, as Stephen St. Leger explains, because comedy is a very subjective genre, *Everybody has their own conception of humor. A scene that's meant to be funny has a good chance of falling flat on its face. For me, the master is Billy Wilder—deadpan humor that never becomes heavy-handed or a gag for the sake of a gag. You sense that he's never trying to be funny at all costs. We tried to take a leaf out of his book.* Similarly, the director is happy to accept the movie's 1980s dimension: *I love the Die Hard series or Romancing The Stone and it shows in the humor in this film.*

For the two directors, the characters were a central preoccupation. They didn't make things easy for themselves by making the hero so cynical and dispassionate that he can be hard to like at first. But he is very funny with a great line in deadpan humor. *He reminds me of the characters played by William Holden in Billy Wilder's movies,* agrees Stephen St. Leger. *A sarcastic guy with a scathing sense of humor. The relationship between Emily and Snow brings to mind Bogart and Hepburn in African Queen. In other words, two polar opposites who are forced to get along.*

At first, Emilie seems like a naïve, privileged young woman who may be concerned about other people but has actually had to stand up for them. The directors ensured that she evolved in the course of the movie. *"Gradually, she becomes her own woman and shows real strength of character,* comments Stephen St. Leger. Leila Smith adds, *Being around Snow changes her, even physically. Her way of speaking changes, she loses her prejudices and becomes spunkier.* The directors also made sure Snow's appreciation of her developed. *While Snow thinks that most people are weak and can't defend themselves,* explains Stephen St. Leger, *he realizes that Emilie is not like them when she fights back and refuses to cut him loose.*

### The advantages of "previsualization"

Once the script was finalized, the directors suggested to Luc Besson that they "previsualize" the whole movie in the form of a storyboard and animated modeling of the sets, including M.S. One, of course, and costumes. Luc Besson immediately agreed. Even though the directors later deviated from the previsualization, it captures the desired visual atmosphere and testifies to the humor in the film. *With a very precise idea of the end result to hand,* notes Stephen St. Leger, *we were able to strike the right balance between thriller and comedy because it would be very easy for the film to fall into parody or, on the other hand, take itself too seriously.*

Previsualization also offered a tool for the heads of department to picture the most complex action scenes and stunts to respond to the directors' wishes. It was especially useful considering that the technicians were of diverse origins (British, Irish, French, Serbian). The power of the images transcended the language barrier. In all, around fifteen people, including the directors, four storyboarders and 3D graphic artists, worked on the previsualization for four months before the actors added their dialogue. *As a result,* says Leila Smith, *we had a kind of animated model of the final movie with all the key scenes, such as the freefall to earth and the motorbike chase.*

### An optimized budget

Although the film was initiated and produced by EuropaCorp in France, it was shot in Serbia with English-speaking actors, while benefitting from Ireland's tax incentives. Although the two directors are from Dublin, it was difficult to envision hiring sound stages there. *Dublin's studios are excellent facilities but very expensive and we needed at least 1,000-1,500 square meters. We had a decent budget, but it's the directors' debut feature and we constantly had to make trade-offs.* Eventually, it was decided that the shoot would take place in brand new studios in Belgrade, Serbia. Even so, in view of the many visual effects, EuropaCorp decided to entrust post-production to a specialized company in Dublin. This also enabled the movie to claim Ireland's tax credit.

### Recyclable sets

Several sets combined physical constructions and green screen, such as the clover-shaped LOPD with space and the Earth in the background, and the expressway where the motorcycle chase takes place. *For that scene, which involved a circular tracking shot, recounts Leila Smith, we resorted to using a system of hydraulic pistons to be able to move in every possible direction.* The sets aboard M.S. One included the secure area where Snow sticks a syringe into Emilie's eye, the infirmary where they find several corpses and the general population area of the prison. The parts of the sets that the actors touched, such as the pillars in general population, were built and installed in front of a green screen in order to complete the picture in post-production.

Like a giant Lego pieces, the sets were systematically recycled. As a result, the shooting schedule worked around the availability of the sets. *Every day, recalls Leila Smith, the production designer checked with the directors, first assistant and us to be sure that any given scene was in the can, so that within a few days the set could be dismantled. While they were building another set, we switched to another studio.*

The film benefitted from the creativity of production designer Romek Delimata, who often found ingenious and unexpected solutions. Various locations in Belgrade, such as subway corridors and the dark alley reminiscent of *Blade Runner*, came into play. The scene in the Oval Office of the White House was shot in an Amstel brewery in the suburbs of Belgrade. Marc Libert says, *Romek is a geek, heavily influenced by Star Wars, who spent his time scribbling on photos of locations to sketch out the changes that needed to be made. That way, out of almost nothing, he obtained spectacular results.*

### A high-octane shoot

The amazing understanding between the directors was particularly useful in the sophisticated action scenes that combined stunts, combats, wire-work and complicated lighting. *The great thing with James is that we've known each other and worked together so long that we have a kind of sixth sense, says Stephen St. Leger. We hardly need to talk to each other on set, especially because we have everything planned and mapped out, and we both love getting involved in every aspect of filmmaking, not just writing and directing. James is incredible. He's always thinking four or five scenes ahead.*

Their method proved its worth in the spectacular magnetic field scene. Marc Libert explains, *Part of the set had been built and looked like a climbing wall. The duct that takes Snow to the edge of the precipice was quite simply the inside of an old helicopter that the production designer had spotted in an aircraft graveyard. The rest of the set, including the giant rotor blade was green screen that was reworked in post.* The actors were hanging by wires while James Mather found himself in a cherry picker bucket filming the fight between Guy Pearce and an inmate. *The scene was supervised by Patrick Cauderlier, the king of wires, adds Marc Libert. He controlled their movements with extreme precision using his special machine, the hydrowinch. The challenge was to use visual effects to lend a realistic aspect and block out the wires.*

The previsualization enabled James Mather to work out his lighting plans for each set well in advance. He insisted on using authentic light sources, which offer more freedom when shooting. *It's also what confers an authentic atmosphere on the movie, adds Stephen St. Leger. If you use only green screen, there's a sterile aspect that clashes with the visual style.* For the combat scenes, the directors absolutely didn't want to take their inspiration from Asian martial arts movies, but looked to the more realistic approach of films such as *Taken*. The producers called on chief stuntman Patrick Cauderlier and fight choreographer Hugo Bariller. *Patrick was the right man for the job because a lot of scenes required wires, and he's an absolute specialist, says Leila Smith. Among the scenes where his expertise was required are the fight in mid-air, the freefall down to Earth and the motorbike stopping just in front of the subway train.*

#### Made-to-measure visual effects

While picture editing and grading took place in France, the visual effects were produced in Ireland by Windmillane. *We set up a mini visual effects studio with them, hired machines and a big warehouse in an industrial park in Dublin, recounts Leila Smith. Then we bought software and recruited freelance technicians.* Marc Libert adds, *We were very pleased to work with them because back in the day it was U2's recording studio. The boss is still the same guy, even though the company has grown considerably, moving into film production and post-production. Actually, Steve St. Leger was a camera operator on some of U2's videos. In Dublin, everybody knows everybody else.*

In all, there are roughly five hundred shots that required visual effects, which took some time for reasons of visual coherence. The visual effects supervisor wanted to work with a small crew better suited to his way of working. *The production times were long, comments Marc Libert, but as there were four or five standout scenes to be done, it was better that the same person supervised the modeling, compositing and rendering from beginning to end, rather than dividing the work up.*

#### A very committed cast

*We took some time over the choice of the actor to play Snow, recalls Marc Libert, until the directors and Luc met with Guy Pearce, who was shooting Mildred Pierce and was very slim. James and Steve were worried because Snow is such a physical character. Guy told us that he*



*had been an Australian bodybuilding champ at the age of 16 and that his body would be in prime condition when we started shooting.* The actor kept the producers informed of his progress as he bulked up and he arrived on set looking very muscular compared to the lithe characters he is best known for. *In 2-3 months, he put on fifty pounds,* comments Marc Libert.

Everybody agrees on Guy Pearce's discipline and organization. *He arrived on set with a file,* continues Libert. *He'd been working on his character's curve, had underlined particular scenes in the script and had even studied the development of the characters Snow interacts with.* Leila Smith adds, *Jokingly, we told him that he could have saved us the salary of the script supervisor because he was on top of absolutely every detail.* In fact, before he became an actor, Guy Pearce worked in continuity. *Guy was very committed, but with the aim of improving scenes, not stealing them,* comments Marc Libert.

As for Maggie Grace, Leila Smith says, *She's a wonderful actress to work with. Her attitude is very professional and she is very open to suggestions.* Marc Libert adds, *She sometimes needs to withdraw into her own world with her iPod for a few minutes to focus, but when she's in front of the camera, she is fully committed from the very first take.* Leila Smith points out, *She didn't complain when we asked her to fly in three weeks before the shoot started to practice on the wires and rehearse certain scenes. Maggie and Guy were there as soon as their previous commitments had been fulfilled.*

All that remained was to find an actor for one of the hardest parts to cast: Hydell. A real loose canon, Hydell is frustrated at taking orders from his big brother all the time. With his dead eye that didn't survive the reversal of the cryogenic process, he cuts a terrifying figure. Leila Smith says, *Joe Gilgun, who plays Hydell, comes from one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Manchester. He's had a crazy life and got into a lot of trouble when he was a kid. He's suffered and developed an amazing artistic sensitivity.* Stephen St. Leger remarks, *I asked Joe to adopt a Scottish accent because I find it imbued with humor whereas the Manchester accent is a trademark of the Gallagher brothers!*

When Gilgun met Vincent Regan, who plays his brother Alex, the two actors discussed their characters and developed aspects that were subliminal in the script only to emerge in the movie. *The relationship between the two brothers really took shape,* says Marc Libert. *They explored the question and met up regularly off set to take their characters forward.* Leila Smith notes, *Like most British actors, Vincent immediately knew where to stand in relation to the light. With one glance at the set-up as he came in, he knew where he had to be for the camera.*

*This film literally comes from out of space,* concludes Leila Smith, *not the Hollywood mainstream. Personally, I enjoy working on debut features because the constraints generate wonderful energy. The budget meant we had to make the most judicious choices possible. Innovation and creativity were at a premium. There was no time for fighting because everybody rolled up their sleeves to help the directors.*

## CAST

SNOW  
EMILIE WARNOCK  
ALEX  
HYDELL  
SHAW  
LANGRAL  
HOCK  
MACE  
BARNES  
KATHRYN

GUY PEARCE  
MAGGIE GRACE  
VINCENT REGAN  
JOSEPH GILGUN  
LENNIE JAMES  
PETER STORMARE  
JACKY IDO  
TIM PLESTER  
MARK TANKERSLEY  
ANNE SOLENNE HATTE

## CREW

DIRECTED BY

STEPHEN SAINT LEGER & JAMES  
MATHER

PRODUCED BY

EUROPACORP  
MARC LIBERT & LEILA SMITH

LINE PRODUCER  
PRODUCER IRELAND

ANDJELKA VLAISAVLJEVIC  
JAMES MORRIS

SCREENPLAY

STEPHEN SAINT LEGER, JAMES  
MATHER & LUC BESSON  
LUC BESSON

FROM AN ORIGINAL IDEA BY

ORIGINAL SCORE

ALEXANDRE AZARIA

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

JAMES MATHER

PRODUCTION MANAGER

ANDJELKA VLAISAVLJEVIC

PRODUCTION DESIGNER  
ART DIRECTOR

ROMEK DELIMATA  
FRANK WALSH

FILM EDITORS

EAMONN POWER  
CAMILLE DELAMARRE

SOUND

STÉPHANE BUCHER  
PAUL DAVIES  
DIDIER LOZAHIC

VISUAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR

RICHARD BAIN

VISUAL EFFECTS PRODUCER

SONA PAK