

CALEB LANDRY JONES



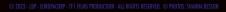


FILM BY LUC BESSON

















PRODUCED BY VIRGINIE BESSON-SILLA

WITH CALEB LANDRY JONES, JOJO T. GIBBS, CHRISTOPHER DENHAM, CLEMENS SCHICK,
JOHN CHARLES AGUILAR, GRACE PALMA, IRIS BRY, MARISA BERENSON, LINCOLN POWELL, ALEXANDER SETTINERI

2023 | FRANCE | ENGLISH | COLOUR | 114 MIN. | SCOPE | 5.1/7.1/ATMOS

INT'L PUBLICIST

PREMIER PR SIMONE DEVLIN | BRODIE WALKER | JAMEY ROWSELL DOGMAN@PREMIERCOMMS.COM | +44 (7808) 640 174 US PUBLICIST
FRANK PUBLICITY
LINA PLATH

ITALIAN PUBLICIST

LUCKY RED

ALESSANDRA TIERI

A.TIERI@LUCKYRED.IT | +39 335 8480787

LINA PLATH
LINA@FRANKPUBLICITY.COM | +1 (917) 860 1706



SYNOPSIS

The incredible story of a child, bruised by life, who will find his salvation through the love of his dogs.

"Wherever there is an unfortunate. God sends a dog."

Alphonse de Lamartine

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The inspiration for this film came, in part, from an article I read about a French family who threw their own child in a cage when he was five. From this, rose the question of what that does to a person mentally. How does someone survive and what do they do with their suffering? I wanted to explore that idea with **Dogman**.

Suffering is something we all have in common, and the only antidote against it is love. Society won't help you, but love can help to heal. It is the love of the community of dogs that Dogman has built that are the healer and the catalyst.

Dogman wouldn't be the film it is without Caleb Landry Jones. This complicated character needed someone who could embody the challenges, the sadness, the desire, the strength, the complexity.

People watch movies to glean some sort of truth from the story, even though they know it's fiction. I wanted to be as honest as I could be with the film. I want you to feel for the protagonist – the actions he takes, and the actions he takes in response to the suffering he's experienced. You want to root for him.

I hope audiences can define in their own minds what Dogman went through, the pain that is really hard to swallow. He suffered more than most people will ever, and yet he still has dignity.

Luc Besson



AN INTERVIEW WITH

CALEB LANDRY JONES

D O U G L A S

What made you want to take part in the film?

I read the script, and from what little I knew about Luc and his films, was that I was certain nothing would be left to chance. There would be nothing too much, and nothing too little.

How would you describe your character?

Douglas is a lost young man... with nothing to lose. Absolutely nothing. His illusions far outstrip his reality, and I think he desperately needs to escape his everyday life as often as possible. At the same time, he's a man of great integrity and honesty.

What was your first encounter with Luc Besson like?

We met in a café. I thought he didn't like me too much, but then he sent me the script and we met up again. Then he said: «So, what do you think? Do you want to do it?» I said, «Yes, but would they be real dogs?» He confirmed that they were. I told him I was up for it. At first, Luc and I would greet each other by saying 'hello'. Now, we hug.

What are the biggest challenges you've faced?

Luc had planned things in such a way that filming followed the character's progress, more or less in real time. The first week, I was nervous about the scene where I return to the refuge. I was very apprehensive, I didn't know how to play it. Especially as Dogman was born during that first week - Douglas became Dogman. The second week, there was the Édith Piaf song, and I was, again, quite apprehensive. The third week, we shot the scenes with El Verdugo and the gang, for which I was pretty confident. In the fifth week, we filmed all the scenes with Evelyn, and those were the ones I was most nervous about. On some films, it's a constant roller-coaster ride. But Luc had planned the shoot in a very intelligent way that kept me on my toes from start to finish.

How did you prepare?

Luc told me to focus on the present: on the first week, the second week, etc., and to take things one day at a time. After the first two weeks, I was able to concentrate as much as possible on the scenes with Evelyn that I dreaded the most. I'd go back to the hotel, prepare these scenes and work with another actor, Tonio, for 4 or 5 hours. It was only thanks to this preparatory work that I was able to memorize everything. When we started shooting these sequences, we were ready, and Luc knew it. Everything we'd already shot had fed into my acting, and we could only be on the same wavelength.

What memories will you have of the shoot?

Luc is a very demanding person, and everyone is very keen to help make his vision a reality. After a few weeks, we were all on the same wavelength, on the rhythm of the days, the sequence of scenes and the importance of preparation. By the third or fourth week, there was a real cohesion and efficiency that I'd never seen on a set. Everything was fast and fluid. I think that thanks to Luc's high standards, everyone wanted to give it their all, which, unfortunately, is not the case on every shoot.



DOG5

Long-time collaborator of Luc Besson, Louis Leterrier strongly recommended trainer Mathilde de Cagny to the filmmaker and his producer Virginie Besson-Silla. «Louis had worked with her a few weeks earlier on an American production,» says Virginie. «Once Luc met her and explained what he wanted, she had total freedom of action in choosing her teams and setting up what she felt would be useful for the shoot».

Although she was totally won over by the script, Mathilde de Cagny, who has been working in Hollywood for a long time, was nevertheless a little apprehensive about the scale of the task. «I knew the film would feature a group of dogs, but not that there would be so many, with so many different personalities,» she says. «It was objectively complicated, it involved a lot of training and there wasn't much time, but Luc Besson gave me carte blanche.» She explained to the director that it was essential to work with dogs that already had a solid training base and didn't require intense preparation. «I showed him a couple of dogs that we have in my company, and Luc liked them right away, so they were immediately hired,» she continues. «After that, we had to find a lot more dogs who didn't have to make the trip. So, I went to France to find trainers and dogs that met my criteria.»

Mathilde de Cagny then contacted Muriel Bec, manager of Animal Contact, a company that supplies animals for French TV and film: «As her facilities had everything we needed for training, I asked Muriel to take charge of most of the canine recruitment and of putting together a team of trainers,» adds Mathilde. «Muriel played an essential role in coordinating all the logistics in France, allowing me to concentrate on supervising, training and preparation. In all, some fifteen trainers were hired to find the many dogs needed for the shoot. The hardest part was coordinating everything at once - the dogs, the trainers, the set, the actors - getting up and running as quickly as possible,» she points out. «The dogs had to be trained and know what was expected of them, while remaining natural. For example, when they had to disperse, flee or look frightened, we had to prepare

them, but not over-prepare them, as this would interfere with the fluidity of their movements. On set, Muriel and I worked closely together, directing our teams to set up the often complex shots and define the dogs' performance.» Virginie Besson-Silla adds: «Mathilde concentrated more on the very precise missions carried out by the 'hero dogs' - jumping on a table, fetching an object, passing through bars, etc, whilst Muriel looked after the packs,» she says. «This is what enabled us to have both very free dogs and others, more used to filming, who we could make do more precise things. Mathilde and Muriel were very complementary.»

Sofane Tarefet, a specialist in "bite training", a technique that teaches dogs to control the force of their jaws, explains: "We had to prepare the dogs so they wouldn't be surprised if the actor started talking loudly, singing or gesticulating." Stunt leader, Alain Figlarz, also choreographed "dog releases" where the animals charge towards a character to attack him or describe a course from point A to point B. "I was also there to get bitten instead of the actors, and there's one scene in particular where I'm suspended by a cable and a dog comes to bite me in the throat," he notes. Of course, Mathilde de Cagny also had to familiarize the dogs with the presence of the actors, starting with Caleb Landry Jones. She recounts: "Caleb came for three



WORKING WITH

days to spend time with the dogs and get used to the trainers working, talking and moving. He was curious and extremely eager to get involved.» Caleb confirms this, stating: «One of the things that convinced me was the fact that we were shooting with real dogs.» On set, Sofiane Tarefet was struck by Caleb Landry Jones' availability and his interactions with the dogs: «He was incredibly calm and spontaneously went to the dogs. A commitment that was all the more appreciable given that some sequences were particularly complex to shoot.» Mathilde de Cagny remembers the «little thieves» scene, where the dogs are supposed to run several hundred meters with objects in their mouths. «It was complex because the dogs had to remain motionless, then suddenly escape all together,» notes the trainer.» Luckily, Luc had prepared storyboards well in advance, illustrating the scene in detail, and they were extremely useful.



THE CAST AND CREW

From the outset, Luc Besson's professional relationship with producer Virginie Besson-Silla was such that it enriched the project and contributed greatly to the success of the filmmaker's initial vision, «First of all, I have to understand what he has in mind, and then it's my job to push him to ask himself all the questions related to the subject he wants to tackle, and to make sure we don't get sidetracked along the way," explains Virginie Besson-Silla. **Dogman** marks a new stage in the collaboration between the director and his producer. «We've been through a lot over the last few years, which has strengthened us,» she says. «They've also enabled us to work together even more strongly than usual. She adds that the film's subject and central character lent themselves particularly well to this. I assume my role as producer much more. I encouraged Luc to step out of his comfort zone and partly renew his technical team. Similarly, during editing, we engage in a real game of ping-pong, and he's willing to guestion himself. What's more, Luc constantly listens to the advice of his entire team and follows his own path by taking into account their opinions.»

For Luc Besson, the essential challenge with *Dogman* was to make an extraordinary story credible. «Even if you know that a film is a work of fiction, you come to it looking for the truth,» he says. «So, my role was to make the viewer believe in the existence of my characters. That's the only way you can become attached to Douglas, the protagonist, and wish him well, even if he's totally out of the ordinary. Without verisimilitude, there's no emotion». Luc Besson and Virginie Besson-Silla didn't hesitate long before entrusting the role to Caleb Landry Jones. «I'd found him extraordinary in *Get Out*, then in *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* and *The Florida Project*.» says the producer.

To achieve optimum credibility, the director put in place an intense period of preparation so that nothing was left to chance on the set. Starting with the relationship between the director and his lead actor. «I wanted to spend a year with Caleb [Landry

Jones] to make sure we were comfortable with each other and appreciated each other as human beings,» says Luc Besson. «Very early on, when he put on the wig for the first time and looked at himself in the mirror to see how he could slip into the skin of the character, I understood that he had begun the work.»

It was equally important to outline the characters and let the actors make them their own. With Douglas, Luc Besson initially wanted to confuse the spectator. «We discover him cross-dressed as a woman, nailed to a wheelchair, with blood everywhere, so much so that we wonder if he isn't a serial killer.» explains the director. «I had to portray him, at first glance, as a monstrous character so that we would wonder about his background, his past, and gradually learn to look beyond appearances.» He adds: «Douglas is not resentful of the ordeals he's been through. He tends to see the glass as half full and reaches out to those who have helped him». Caleb Landry Jones adds: «Despite the horrors and tragedies that punctuated his childhood, he has great integrity and honesty. Against all odds, he decides to set himself up as a vigilante.»



THE CAST AND CREW

Evelyn, the psychiatrist who interviews Douglas in prison, gives viewers a better understanding of the protagonist, as Luc Besson explains: «Evelyn is the other side of Douglas's character. She may have social status, a job and a child, but she's not doing well. Through helping Douglas, she helps herself.» Jojo T. Gibbs, who plays Evelyn, notes that she is extremely different from her character: «She has to be a good listener, whereas I'm more of a talker. She has to resign herself to doing a job where she doesn't feel valued, which is not the case with me. Above all, her calm impresses me. I think that psychiatrists who work in prisons are called in when an inmate gets a bit out of hand. You need someone who can channel that kind of energy, and I couldn't do it. I only recognized myself in Evelyn's great lucidity: she knows what her goal in life is.» Virginie Besson-Silla was particularly impressed by the chemistry between Caleb Landry Jones and Joio T. Gibbs: «What's great is that you see Douglas's character through Evelyn's eyes,» she notes. «We had to feel that this woman has suffered and not be too rigid.»

The supporting cast was just as finely honed. Clemens Schick, who plays Mike, the protagonist's father, defines his character as "a clueless, violent, brutal, jealous and narcissistic guy." He worked on the character's "East Coast" accent with a coach and prepared extensively beforehand. Alexander Settineri plays Richie, Douglas's brother, and talks about the evolution of his character who, after going through the ordeal of prison: "He is no longer as hysterical and crazy as when he was young". For the actor, portraying a brutal, aggressive man "who hurts other people" required an unprecedented amount of work to "find that anger in myself and express that whole range of emotions", he says.

Salma is the polar opposite of Douglas's family. A bubbly, exuberant young girl, as Grace Palma points out, she's *«bursting with life and energy»*. She adds, *«She's the most positive, generous and loving person I know.»* To get hold of this theatre enthusiast who manages to convey her enthusiasm to Douglas,

Grace Palma «read a lot of Shakespeare. I immersed myself in his world and really developed a passion for Shakespeare». The actors emphasize the filmmaker's great preparation. Jojo T. Gibbs remarks: «He's the hardest-working director I've ever worked with. Every morning, at breakfast, we'd take the time to prepare the day's scenes and make sure we were on the same wavelength, which made the shoot go much more smoothly». Alexander Settineri chimes in: «Luc knows exactly what he wants. He lets you explore avenues, but you know where you're going,» he says. Clemens Schick agrees: «Luc tells you exactly what he expects of you as a performer. He understands the language of actors, which is very valuable.» Finally, Grace Palma adds: «Luc has a vision, he knows what he wants, and you have to try to adhere to his vision if you want to embody it.

THE DIRECTOR AND THE PRODUCTION

Luc concludes: «I've been working with Virginie for over twenty years now. Too often, producers focus solely on the issue of financing and the cost of the film. That's only part of the job. The other part is to support the director in his artistic vision. He has to be a point of reference, a fulcrum, and a guarantor of a certain homogeneity. The director can lose himself in a scene, even for pleasure or happiness. The producer must keep an eye on the compass, constantly reminding him of his initial intentions, the path to follow. She is the lighthouse, the stationmaster."



THE MUSIC

Composer Éric Serra has been working with Luc Besson since his first short films. In other words, he has forged a real artistic complicity with the director, for whom he has signed almost all the original soundtracks of his films. At a very early stage, he reads the script and begins to think about the overall atmosphere, as if, he says, "I was planting a seed in my head." During this gestation phase, he asks himself a number of questions - will he use ethnic elements? Will it be symphonic or more synthetic? - and notes down ideas for musical themes. "It's a bit like an actor getting into the skin of a character before shooting, without actually learning the dialogue," he explains.

But of course, it's from the images, once the film has been shot, that Eric Serra begins to work concretely on the score. He explains: «With Luc, we watch the film scene by scene, and he gives me his indications as we go along, knowing that he has a very clear idea of the emotional role the music should play in each sequence.» He acknowledges that Dogman was a singular project, «Even though every film is different, I've never ended up in tears after a working screening," he confides. «Usually, at this stage. I always spot a scene or two that doesn't quite work, and which could usefully benefit from music. This is the first time I haven't done that, because there isn't a single shot where Caleb [Landry Jones] isn't perfect! I never thought I'd have to help him with the music!» Luc Besson confirms that this film had a specific character. «Caleb's situations and dialogue are so rich that there wasn't much room for music,» he says. «It was no doubt less gratifying for Eric to leave the score in the background, but he deserves all the more credit for having signed a very beautiful and fluid score.»

The singularity of the project prompted Éric Serra to use unusual sounds and create original textures. «I used dog whines, just as I would have used violins, which produce a rather strange sound and evoke a palpable emotion,» he recalls. Contrary to his usual practice, the composer made very little use of synthetic instruments. "I created a whole range of sound textures by

rubbing a bow against unlikely surfaces: an aluminium rail along a bay window or my bathroom sink, which made an interesting sound!» Luc Besson hails the musician's invention: «I needed an artist capable of creating another form of dialogue,» he says. «For example, when Douglas asks the dog to bring him sugar, Éric suggested some thirty different sounds to make the result both funny and touching. Thanks to the sounds he created, we came up with the equivalent of words for the dogs».

Éric Serra recorded most of the score in his own studio. «Apart from the symphonic parts, which I recorded in Budapest with an orchestra, all the organic music was recorded in my studio,» he concludes. A hand-crafted, «made-to-measure» approach, as the composer describes it, which corresponded to a resolutely out-of-the-ordinary project.



ARTISTIC LIST

| Douglas |
|--------------------------------|
| Evelyn |
| Ackerman |
| SalmaGrace PALMA |
| MikeClemens SCHICK |
| El VerdugoJohn Charles AGUILAR |
| Douglas' Mother |
| The Aristocrat Lady |
| Young DouglasLincoln POWELL |
| RichieAlexander SETTINERI |

TECHNICAL LIST

| Director |
|---|
| Produced byVirginie BESSON-SILLA |
| Producer Steve RABINEAU |
| Original Music by |
| Written by |
| Photography |
| Editor |
| Sound |
| Stéphane THIÉBAUT et Victor PRAUD |
| Animal Training |
| Casting |
| 1 st ADs |
| Production Design |
| Costume Designer |
| Hair & MakeupJulia FLOCH CARBONEL, Nicolas LE SCOUR |
| Line Producer |
| Production Manager |
| Post-Production Supervisor |
| On-Set PhotographerShanna BESSON |
| |
| ProductionLBP |
| In Co-Production with |
| VFX |
| International Sales |

SOUNDTRACK

ULTRAFOX

Composed par Django Reinhardt et Stephane Grappelli

Performed by Django Reinhardt

© EMI Music Publishing France Label Parlophone © 1935 Warner Music France Courtesy of Warner Music France.

UNA COLOMBIANA

(Lyrics & Music Samir El Hammami)

Performed by 38^{ème} Donne

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LA GRANGE

(Frank Lee Beard; Billy Gibbons ; Joe Michael Hill)

Performed by ZZ Top

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THE SHOOP SHOOP SONG (IT'S IN HIS KISS)

(Lyrics and music: Rudy Clark)

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LA FOULE

French adaptation Michel Rivgauche From the original works « QUE NADIE SEPA MI SUFRIR » Lyrics: Enrique Dizeo / Music: Angel Amato Performed by Edith Piaf

© Warner Chappell Music Argentina Label Parlophone ® 1957 Warner Music France Courtesy of Warner Chappell Music France & Warner Music France.

OUE RESTE-T-IL DE NOS AMOURS ?

(Charles Trenet)

Performed by Charles Trenet

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MONEY MONEY

(Benny Andersson, Bioern Ulyaeus)

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NO REGRETS

(Michel Vaucaire / Charles Dumont) English Adaptation by Hal David

Performed by Edith Piaf

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Label Parlophone ® 1963 Warner Music France

Courtesv of Warner Music France & S.E.M.I. Paris (France)

COMPTINE EVELYNE

(Lyrics & Music Julien Rev)

Performed by 38^{ème} Donne

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SPEAK SOFTLY LOVE

(Written by Lawrence Kusik, Composed by Nino Rota)

Performed by Yao Si Ting

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MEDLEY THEATRE DOUG

(Music Julien Rev)

Performed by 38^{ème} Donne

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SWEET DREAMS (ARE MADE OF THIS)

(Annie Lennox, David Stewart)

Performed by Eurythmics, Annie Lennox, Dave Stewart

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& Sony Music Entertainment France

SO WHAT

(Written by Miles Davis)

Performed par Miles Davis feat. John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley & Bill Evans

Published by Downtown Music Services
Originally released 1959. All rights reserved by Columbia Records,
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Courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment France.

LILI MARLEEN

(Lyrics: Hans Leipe / Music: Norbert Schultzer)
Performed by Marlene Dietrich

I WANNA BE LOVED BY YOU

(Lyrics: Bert Kalmar / Music: Harry Ruby et Herbert Stothart)

Performed by Marilyn Monroe

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AUTUMN STAR

(Lyrics: SATEEN / Music: Adrien Arnaud)
Performed by SATEEN

© 2023 Maltazard publishing ® Luc Besson Productions
Mixed by Didier Lozahic in Ekosound Studios
Executive production: Mirror Productions
Piano and keyboards: Adrien Arnaud
Bass & guitars: Patrick Dethorey; Drums: Hugo Sarton
Recorded by Pierre Dobey in studios La Caisse Claire
Violin: Juliette Kadjar; Cello: Corentin Dalgarno
Recorded by Guillaume Desmet.

KINOLOGY AND EUROPACORP PICTURES PRESENT A LBP EUROPACORP AND TFI FILMS PRODUCTION CO-PRODUCTION SOCIATION WITH KINOLOGY CALEB LANDRY JONES JOJO T. GIBBS CHRISTOPHER DENHAM GRACE PALMA "DOGMAN

CASTING DEA VISE AND SWAN PHAM A.D.A. PHINTERING COLIN WANDERSMAN PRODUCTION HUGUES TISSANDIER HUGUES DEVITAS CONTINUES CORINNE BRUAND A.F.C.C.A. PRODUCES STEVE RABINEAU HIT HUGUES TISSANDIER HUGUES TISSANDIER

EUROPA COLD SUMMIT LIC BESSON AMILIC BESSON PRODUCTO VIRGINE BESSON-SILLA LEP MAN AMILIC BESSON PRODUCTO VIRGINE BESSON PRODUCTO VIRGINA PRODUCTO VIRGINE BESSON P

