

A Saint Barth Native On The Road To Hollywood

Julien Gréaux lives in California, where he dreams of becoming a star in action films. He recently self-produced a short film titled Parabellum, which he hopes will serve as the key to help open the doors of Hollywood studios.

A bodybuilder, his torso and limbs sculpted from years of working out at the gym, Julien Gréaux flexes his muscles on the cover of Fitness RX. This is the ninth time he has been on the cover of an American magazine, but for this most recent issue, he asked for a favor from the publisher: that his name be seen on the cover, as these champions with perfect washboard abs frequently appear anonymously. The cover line reads, "Julien Gréaux: The next action hero."

At the age of 37, Julien Frognet-Gréaux (his full name) dreams about Hollywood, and following in the footsteps of Jason Statham or Jean-Claude Van Damme, as the next hero in Hollywood action films. And amazingly enough, he is not too far from that dream. Geographically, in any case: For the past 10 years, Gréaux has lived in Culver City, CA, close to Venice Beach, one of the sunny beachfront towns close to LA. The famous Hollywood sign hovers a few miles away, a symbol of the Mecca of filmmaking.

Gréaux recently completed a short film in which he plays his first role. Titled Parabellum, it has all the elements to please fans of action films: fights, gunshots, car chases (the short will be seen at the St Barth Film Festival, in April 2014). And Gréaux wrote the scenario himself, telling the story of a



Frenchman who gets out of prison and decides to try his luck in Los Angeles. But he gets involved with a corrupt cop who forces him into his schemes, and the hero finds himself with the police and crooks after him. In other words, he has his fare share of difficulties, but then again, the life of an action hero is not made of evenings spent in front of the television.

On a visit to Saint Barth last summer, Gréaux indicated that he entrusted the film to two young French directors with experience in video clips, Mike Feenix and Pasquale Pagano. "They are also doing this film to prove themselves as filmmakers," Gréaux explains. They all hope that this 20-minute short will be the key to help them open the doors to the studios. Gréaux's friends helped out as well, some are actors who lent their services, others put money on the table to help pay for the film. The film was self-produced by Gréaux, with a grant from the Collectivity of Saint Barth to cover some of the costs. But this is just the beginning of a

story that Gréaux promises to finish. On the condition he can find professional producers next time. Over the past 10 years, he has already knocked at their doors a few times, most recently that of Luc Besson, director of La Femme Nikita or The Big Blue among many others, and head of Europa-Corp film company, a major player in Hollywood. He also created the series, Transporteur, with Jason Statham in the title role. What if the British actor didn't want to appear in the fourth opus? Could we see Julien Gréaux in the cast of Transporteur 4? The actor from Saint Barth believes in his future, be it in one film or another. And just how far can someone go, if he believes in his dreams?

Ever since he was a child, Gréaux has studied martial arts, first judo, then karate, and Thai boxing. Plus weight lifting, which he started when his mother, Jeanne-Marie, ran a small gym in Saint Barth where he worked as a gardener. "One day I was working in Patrick Demarchelier's villa (the famous fashion photographer)," he recalls. "I said to myself, 'if you want to



have the same kind of villa, it's not working as a gardener that you will have one." In 2002, he left that life behind. And flew to Los Angeles with two gym bags, and \$400 in his pocket.

For the past 10 years, Gréaux has split his time working as a trainer at the celebrated Gold's Gym in Venice Beach, and odd jobs, such as security for parties and special events, often in Hollywood. In both cases, either at the gym or at

work, Gréaux met some of his role models from the world of action films. A certain Jean-Claude Van Damme, for example. "Van Damme? I have known him for 10 years," confirms Gréaux. "And that makes 10 years that he says he can see me in his next film," Gréaux says with a laugh.

One can easily see that Gréaux has the physique for the job, with the steel blue eyes of many Saint Barth natives, and a winning smile. And of course, that musculature, which has put him on the cover of 50 fitness magazines to date. "I considered that as a stepping stone," he explains. "First I had to build my physique, create an image. Then try my luck. I know that I am not an actor, but as far as I know Arnold Schwarzenegger wasn't either," he says confidently. Yet he says there

are people who don't believe he can make it. "They tell me I am too short or I have a Saint Barth accent. But Van Damme isn't too tall and he made it with a Belgian accent. Schwarzenegger has an Austrian accent," he adds.

"Van Damme told me it would take at least 10 years to make my debut," Gréaux notes, "So I still have time I have to believe in myself, that is indispensable in California. In LA everyone wants to be an actor. The waiter, the cashier, the guy who sweeps the floor. Even the police.

The other day I was talking to a policeman in uniform. On the seat of his car, I saw his headshots. He explained that he goes to auditions on his days off."

To increase his notoriety during his recent visit to Saint Barthélemy, Gréaux had his picture taken on the beach in Flamands by a friend who is a paparazzo, who then sent the photos to his agency Los Angeles. As Gréaux says with a very white West Coast smile: "As they say in California, you have to fake it, until you make it."

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