

The New York Times

Julien Greaux The New Martial Arts Action Hero

A few feet away, Julien Greaux, 36, closed his eyes and recited a secret mantra before attacking another set of superheavy seated rows. Greaux was determined to be Jason Statham's replacement in Luc Besson's reboot of the "Transporter" franchise. About a year ago, Greaux went to see Besson speak at a panel in Santa Monica. After the event, Greaux arranged to meet the director, who, according to Greaux, said he'd be willing to give him a job; Besson needed to see him on film, though, first

The problem was that Greaux, who earns his living as a fitness model, has never appeared in a movie. “I decided to take a different route to stardom,” he told me in his French accent . “I wanted to make a name for myself before I began acting.” Instead of slapping together a sizzle reel, Greaux secured a \$20,000 grant from the French government and filmed a 20-minute short called “Parabellum.” In it, he stars as an infamous French bank robber who tries to quit that life and make an honest living as a cabdriver in L.A. It took him a year to make. The film was being edited by a friend in Paris, and Greaux hoped to soon have the finished version to show Besson.

Greaux, meanwhile, was still waiting for a finished version of his movie and seemed to be growing impatient, maybe even desperate, to get it out in the world. It would be too late for Besson, who in mid-February announced that his company was rebooting the “Transporter” franchise with an unknown named Ed Skrein. I broke the news to Greaux the next day. He was confused, shocked and temporarily crestfallen. Then, after taking a moment to regroup, he said: “Everything happens for a reason. I’m not even worried about it. That guy’s got nothing on me.”