



Luc Besson, born 18 March 1959 is a French film director, writer and producer. He is the creator of EuropaCorp film company. He has been involved with over 50 films, spanning 26 years, as writer, director, and/or producer.

Besson was born in Paris to parents who were both Club Med scuba diving instructors. This had a profound influence on his childhood as Besson planned on becoming a marine biologist. He spent much of his youth traveling with his parents to tourist resorts in Italy, Yugoslavia and Greece. The family returned to France when Besson was 10. His parents promptly divorced and were remarried to other people. "Here there is two families, and I am the only bad souvenir of something that doesn't work", he said in the *International Herald Tribune*. "And if I disappear, then everything is perfect. The rage to exist comes from here. I have to do something! Otherwise I am going to die."

At the age of 17 he had a diving accident which left him temporarily unable to dive.

"I was 17 and I wondered what I was going to do. ... So I took a piece of paper and on the left I put everything I could do, or had skills for, and all the things I couldn't do. The first line was shorter and I could see that I loved writing, I loved images, I was taking a lot of pictures. So I thought maybe movies would be good. But I thought that to really know I should go to a set. And a friend of mine knew a guy whose brother was a third assistant on a short film. It's true", he said in a 2000 interview with *The Guardian*.

"So, I said: 'OK, let's go on the set.' So I went on the set ... The day after I went back to see my mum and told her that I was going to make films and stop school and 'bye. And I did it! Very soon after I made a short film and it was very, very bad. I wanted to prove that I could do something, so I made a short film. That was in fact my main concern, to be able to show that I could do one."

Career

Out of boredom, he started to write stories, including the backdrop to what later became one of his most popular movies, *The Fifth Element*. Besson directed and co-wrote the screenplay of this science fiction thriller with the screenwriter, Robert Mark Kamen. The film is inspired by the French comic books Besson read as a teenager. He also reportedly worked on the first drafts of *Le Grand Bleu* while still in his teens.

At 18, Besson returned to his birthplace of Paris. There he took odd jobs in film to get a feel for the industry. He worked as an assistant to directors including Claude Faraldo and Patrick Grandperret. Besson also directed three short films, a commissioned documentary, and several commercials.

After this, he moved to the United States for three years, but returned to form his own production company which he called "Les Films du Loup". The name was later changed to "Les Films du Dauphin". In the early 1980s, Besson met Éric Serra and asked him to compose the score for his first short film, *L'Avant dernier*.

In recent years, he has written and produced numerous action movies, including the *Taxi* and *The Transporter* series, and the Jet Li films

Kiss of the Dragon

and

Unleashed/Danny the Dog

. Besson was also in charge of the promotional movie for the Paris bid for the 2012 Summer Olympics.

Luc had been nominated for Best Director and Best Picture César Awards for his films *Léon* (a.k.a.

The Professional

) and

The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc

, but won Best Director and Best French Director for his film *The Fifth Element*

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Cinéma du look

Critics cite Besson as being a pivotal figure in the Cinéma du look movement, a specific style of film being made in the 1980s into the early 1990s. *Subway*, *The Big Blue* and *Nikita* are all considered to be of this stylistic school. The term was coined in a 1989 essay, in *La Revue du Cinema*

n° 449, by Raphaël Bassan, in which Besson was lumped with two other directors who shared "le look." These directors were said to favor style over substance, spectacle over narrative.

Most of the filmmakers in the category, including Besson, squirmed uncomfortably at being labeled, particularly in light of their forebears: France's New Wave. "Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut were rebelling against existing cultural values and used cinema as a means of expression simply because it was the most avant-garde medium at the time", said Besson in *The New York Times*

. "Today, the revolution is occurring entirely within the industry and is led by people who want to change the look of movies by making them better, more convincing and pleasurable to watch.

"Because it's becoming increasingly difficult to break into this field, we have developed a psychological armor and are ready to do anything in order to work", he added in this same interview. "I think our ardor alone is going to shake the pillars of the moviemaking establishment."

Besson is working on a film called *Lock Out* which will come out in 2011. He is also involved with a film called *Colombiana*, also out for 2011.

Works

Many of Besson's films have achieved popular, if not critical success. One such film was *Le Grand Bleu*

. "When the film had its premiere on opening night at the 1988 Cannes Film Festival, it was mercilessly drubbed, but no matter; it was a smash", observed the

International Herald Tribune

in a 2007 profile of Besson. "Embraced by young people who kept returning to see it again, the movie sold 10 million tickets and quickly became what the French call a film *générationnel*, a defining moment in the culture."

Besson created the Arthur collection, which comprises *Arthur and the Minimoys*, *Arthur and the Forbidden City*

,
Arthur and the Vengeance of Maltazard

and

Arthur and the War of the Two Worlds

. Besson directed

Arthur and the Invisibles

, an adaptation of the first two books of the collection. A part live-action,

part-computer-generated animated film, it was released in the UK and the USA and starred Freddie Highmore, Madonna, Snoop Dogg, Mia Farrow, Robert De Niro and David Bowie.

Critical evaluation

American film critic Armond White has praised Besson, who he claims is one of the best film producers, for refining and revolutionizing action film, also stating that Besson dramatizes the struggle of his characters "as a conscientious resistance to human degradation", unlike films of torture-porn genre.

Personal life

Besson was married to Anne Parillaud, who starred in *Nikita*, a film he wrote and directed. They have one daughter. He later dated model Maïwenn Le Besco. Their daughter, Shana Besson, was born in 1993. Besson married Milla Jovovich on 14 December 1997, but they divorced in

1999. On 28 August 2004, Besson married Virginie Silla, a film producer.

He has four daughters and one son: Juliette, Shana, Talia, Satine, and Mao, respectively. Mao was born in 2005.