The prison break-in subgenre goes into orbit in LOCKOUT, the latest production from one-man action factory Luc Besson. For this film, the feature directorial debut of Irish filmmakers James Mather and Stephen St. Leger (who also scripted with Besson), a pair of leads were chosen with plenty of experience in screen survival: Australian actor Guy Pearce and LOST star Maggie Grace, who spoke together to Fango about their LOCKOUT roles.

Pearce, whose long résumé includes L.A. CONFIDENTIAL, MEMENTO, RAVENOUS, THE PROPOSITION, DON’T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK and Ridley Scott’s upcoming PROMETHEUS, plays Snow, a former government agent framed for murder who’s on his way to MS One, a space prison revolving around the Earth where 500 vicious criminals are imprisoned in stasis. When a mutiny breaks out and the thugs take a visiting humanitarian party hostage, including Emilie Warnock (Grace, who has experience with such a situation from the Besson-produced TAKEN), the daughter of the President, Snow is given an offer he can’t refuse: inflitrate the place, rescue Emilie and win his freedom. (Any resemblance to the John Carpenter/Kurt Russell ESCAPE films is, no doubt, a matter of homage.) The ensuing scenario gave Pearce the opportunity to try on the role of cynical antihero, and Grace the chance to take a little more charge and engage in more action than in her previous Besson movie.

FANGORIA: For one of you, this is your first time on a Luc Besson film, and for the other it's kind of a reunion; could you talk about working with Besson on this movie?

GUY PEARCE: Well, funnily enough, I didn't really get to work with Luc, as such. I met him early on, and then he turned up when we were doing a costume fitting, and then I didn't see him again until just the other day in Paris. He was actually directing his own film, THE LADY.

MAGGIE GRACE: In Thailand, so it was quite a trek.

PEARCE: He had some things to say about the design and the look and the character and this, that and the other early on, and then, as I said, he disappeared.

GRACE: He made sure the directors had everything they'd need, and he was definitely available.

PEARCE: And he was probably more present during postproduction, wasn't he? When they were putting the movie together, he was probably there every week.

GRACE: When we started principal photography on this, he had four other films going. So it was a tall order.

FANG: Was it a similar situation to when you did TAKEN?

GRACE: Somewhat. A lot of TAKEN was shot in Paris, and TAKEN 2, which we just finished. So he was certainly a presence and great support for everyone involved.

FANG: How was it working with the two directors? The press notes suggest there was a kind of division of labor between them. Did they both work with you, or did one specialize in the

performance side?

GRACE: They both did a little of everything.

PEARCE: Yeah. James was the cinematographer as well, so he was fairly busy with that stuff. For me, it was more about dealing with Stephen on a moment-to-moment basis with performance and dialogue, etc. Stephen's the one who was more demonstrative when it came to laughing at jokes and the nuance of character relationships. James was quieter, and so I guess, anything he had to say, he'd say it to Stephen, and Stephen would come and talk to us about it.

GRACE: They were like good parents; there was always a united front. There were very few moments when there was dissension.

PEARCE: Yeah, I think I only had one moment, and it was a technical, physical thing, where James came up and told me to do one thing, and then Stephen told me something else. And I was like, "Guys, you need to have a moment…" But that was, as I said, once. And that occurs anyway on a film, when you have a cinematographer saying to you, "I need you to come through the door this way," and the director's going, "But I need you to pick that up first," and you go, "Well, hang on a sec." So it didn't really feel unusual. It wasn't like they were coming at us constantly with differing ideas or anything.

GRACE: "Mommy and Daddy are fighting!" There was none of that. They definitely have a sure hand. Sometimes they'd share a look and then come together and have a united line.

PEARCE: It was an unusual experience anyway, because they're Irish, and since James is the cinematographer, he had an Irish camera team. It was a French production, so we had French heads of department, and we shot it in Serbia, so we had a Serbian crew. Then we had American, Australian, English and some Serbian actors on the film as well.

GRACE: A truly international effort. It was very lonely on Thanksgiving!

FANG: Do you find that's becoming common in your experience, because so many films these days, especially genre films, are international co-productions? Do you find you're working in more far-flung locations or with more multicultural crews?

GRACE: Yeah, quite often. The last four or five jobs I've done have been that way. It's really quite humbling when you come from the American education system where you only speak English.

PEARCE: We were lucky, though. In Serbia, most of the crew spoke English very well, so it was made pretty easy. There were some difficulties, I suppose, where you would see the Irish director say something to the French 1st AD, and then the French 1st AD would walk over to the Serbian grip and say something to him. And you'd think, "Oh, I don't believe that's exactly…"

GRACE: It was like a game of telephone.

PEARCE: And then you'd see the grip walk over to his team and put up the lights or whatever, and you'd go, "No, that's definitely not what the Irish director asked for." [*Laughs*] So I might just put my hand up and go, "No, I don't think that…you might need to…" There was a bit of that going on. I've experienced some multicultural films in the past, but not so varied throughout the team. You might work with American and English people and that's it, whereas with this, having the French element, the Irish element and the Serbian element made it quite unusual.

FANG: LOCKOUT has a pretty expansive look; how many of the sets were greenscreen and how many were actually there, and how did that impact your performances?

PEARCE: Well, most of it was set, wasn't it?

GRACE: Yeah, and they had a really interesting way of recycling the sets as well. We had a couple of stages, and while we were working on one, they'd kind of move the puzzle pieces around and reconfigure another, so they could create this enormous ship. It was pretty interesting. Obviously, with the shots with the wider scope of the main containment area, or, of course, in space, you just had to have a lot of trust in communicating with your directors and that the storyboards were what you were reacting to [*laughs*], so you're not hung out to dry and reacting to something completely different.

PEARCE: That whole bike chase I have at the very beginning, that was greenscreen.

FANG: That almost looks like it was styled after a video game.

PEARCE: Yes. I'll just say yes to that [*laughs*]. It's good that that seems intentional. Really, that and the wire stuff we did when we're flying outside the ship were the two main greenscreen [scenes], really, but the rest of it, we were running around the corridors of a real set.

FANG: You had some pretty intense co-stars, like Vincent Regan and Peter Stormare.

PEARCE: And Joseph Gilgun [right] as well. Joe’s the one I remember the most.

GRACE: He’s very…demonstrative, I guess [*laughs*].

FANG: He definitely has a striking look. What’s his background?

GRACE: He’s had a great career in London. He’s definitely having fun.

PEARCE: He’s popped up in great cameo roles in things, and he’s done a bunch of TV series.

GRACE: He’s been working since he was pretty young. This is kind of his ticket out.

PEARCE: He’s from the middle of the country, Manchester or Birmingham or something like that. He’s a bit of a gypsy, from a traveling family, so he’s got some really interesting stories.

GRACE: Some *really* interesting stories [*laughs*].

PEARCE: And very interesting ways of telling them!

GRACE: Which you can actually follow in his tattoos; he's like the Illustrated Man. There's a lot of tradition around that. So he kept us entertained.

PEARCE: He really did. He was fascinating. And obviously, Peter Stormare is a pretty kooky guy and brings a kooky character to the screen as well. And Vincent Regan, I really didn't have anything to do with him on the set at all, but he's a far more stable character than those other two.

FANG: What can you tell us about TAKEN 2? Does Kim get taken again?

GRACE: No, it's an inversion of the plot of the first one.

PEARCE: Kim takes [*laughs*].

GRACE: Kim's parents are taken; Liam Neeson gets taken.

FANG: So you get to save the day?

PEARCE: Snow comes in, actually; she calls him and says, "Hey, I need your help again!"