

The French Scene — Jamel Debbouze

Everyone has a soft spot for Jamel Debbouze, the one-man show comedian, actor and activist for human rights (especially for immigrants living in the suburbs). You've probably seen him in the movie *Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* where he played a small role as an employee in a fruit and vegetable shop. His charisma and his suburban way of speaking on stage or on TV have charmed the French people. How did this French-Moroccan invalid young man from a suburban family of six children make it to the top of the French scene?

Jamel Debbouze was born in 1975 in Paris, but his family moved to Morocco in 1976 and returned to France in 1979. The family lived in Trappes, the Parisian suburb where Jamel, the eldest of six children, spent his childhood. When he was fifteen years old, he lost the use of his right arm in a train accident.

Discovered in 1990 by a theatre director, he began stand up comic routines and made it to the finals of the French Junior Championship for theatrical improvisation in 1991. In 1994, he started to write his own shows and performed his very own play in 1995 in Trappes and in a small theatre in Paris.

In 1995, Jamel was noticed by the directors of a radio station (Radio Nova), and he started doing a chronicle called *Le cinéma de Jamel*, followed shortly by his television debut on a cable TV channel before launching the television version of *Le cinéma de Jamel* on Canal + in 1998. He currently performs on the successful Canal + show "H" with other comedians like Eric and Ramzy.

His career on the big screen started in 1992 with *Les Pierres bleues du désert*, but it was really the film, *Le Ciel, les oiseaux... et ta mère* that launched his movie career. It's a story about four teenagers from the suburbs of Paris who go on holiday together in the South-west of France. Then came the famous *Amélie from Montmartre*, a huge success worldwide; he was nominated for a César as best supporting actor. He also played in *She hates me* directed by Spike Lee and in the blockbuster *Astérix & Obélix : Mission Cléopâtre*, where he was one of the main characters along with Gérard Depardieu. He earned a second César nomination for best supporting actor for this movie. His other films include "Angel-A" by Luc Besson and last year's *Indigènes*, a film that he also co-produced, where he won (with the other main actors of the movie) the best acting award at the Cannes Film Festival. This film is about the North African soldiers who fought for France during WWII and the injustice of how they were treated after the war.

His next big movie will be *Astérix aux jeux olympiques*, the most expensive French movie of all time which will be out in January 2008. He will share the lead roles with Gérard Depardieu, Alain Delon, Clovis Cornillac... and some famous guest stars like Zinedine Zidane, Michael Schumacher; David Beckham and Claudia Cardinale.

As a stand up comedian, he has performed for two months in the Bataclan in Paris and did a Tour of France in 2000. After that, he played in the famous *Olympia* in Paris for three weeks. And from November 2003 to December 2004, his tour *Jamel: 100% Debbouze* was a huge success all around France, Belgium, Switzerland, Morocco and Tunisia. The DVDs from this show have had very brisk sales!

In 2006, he became the animator of his own show *Jamel Comedy Club*, the purpose of which is to launch new comedians who do six to eight minutes of stand up.

Jamel's involvement in humanitarian action is as the principal financial sponsor of an association called *L'heure joyeuse*, the purpose of which is to help deprived people in Morocco. After the riots in the French suburbs in November 2005, Jamel and some other personalities, like the football player Lilian Thuram or the singer Joey Starr, went to the suburbs to motivate the young people to register to vote in the upcoming election.

Jamel is now a very important and influential personality on the French culture scene.

His official website: www.jameldebbouze.fr

Vincent Anthonioz

A Selection of DVDs

Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain (Amelie from Montmartre in English) -2001

One woman decides to change the world by changing the lives of the people she knows in this charming and romantic comic fantasy from director Jean-Pierre Jeunet. This movie has been a huge success worldwide. It won the European Film Awards, won four Césars (French movie awards) including Best Film and Best Director, and was nominated for five Academy Awards. The main role is played by Audrey Tautou.

Astérix & Obélix : Mission Cléopâtre - 2002

The Egyptian Queen Cleopatra bets against the Roman Emperor, Julius Caesar (Chabat), that her people are still great, even if the times of the Pharaohs has long passed. She vows (against all logic) to build a new palace for Caesar in three months. Since all her architects are either busy otherwise or too conservative in style, this ambivalent honour falls to Edifis.

A movie adaptation from the famous French comic books that take place in Roman times. Directed by Alain Chabat, with Gérard Depardieu, Monica Belluci... Jamel Debbouze plays Numerobis, a small and somewhat failed architect.

Indigènes (Days of glory) - 2006

A large number of "Indigènes" (Algerians, Tunisians and Moroccan) were enrolled in the French First Army of the Free French Forces, formed to liberate France after the Nazi

occupation in World War II. The film portrays the recruitment of these soldiers and their participation in the campaigns in Italy and southern France.

Directed by Rachid Bouchareb, with Sami Bouajila, Jamel Debbouze, Samy Naceri, Roschdy Zem and Bernard Blancan, this movie was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

Where to buy or rent DVDs?

Buying

You can buy DVDs in the large stores such as Carrefour, Leclerc, Auchan, etc; or in music stores such as Fnac, Virgin, etc.

There are also a lot of online stores such as:

www.fnac.com

www.amazon.fr

www.virginmega.fr

www.dvdpascher.net

www.priceminister.com/video-dvd-vhs

Renting

You can always take out a subscription in a video rental store close to your home. Another way of renting is to find one of the automated video distributors that are conveniently located in many cities; (like the “24 self video”). You just need your credit card to rent your DVDs. The choice can be somewhat limited in both of these outlets, however.

An additional convenient and comfortable way to rent DVDs is to rent them online. There is a vastly greater selection of good films, depending on the site, and you have the choice of either paying for a monthly subscription with an exchange system (you get 1, 2 or more DVDs at a time depending on your choice and once you send them back, you get 1, 2 or more etc.). You can also choose not to subscribe monthly but just pay up front for a certain number of DVDs. You receive your movies in the mail along with a pre-paid envelop to send them back in.

Here are some online DVD rental sites:

www.dvdfly.com

www.locafilm.com

www.cinehome.com

www.glowria.fr

La chanson du mois : Rien à te mettre, Benoît Dorémus

*J'ai du mal à admettre
Que t'aies plus rien à te mettre
Je crois que c'est qu'une excuse
Pour traîner
En petite culotte
Et vérifier ta cote
Je connais cette ruse
Je te connais*

*Tu voudrais me faire croire
Que t'ignores tes pouvoirs
Mais tu l'as bien compris
Ils sont grands
Me faire entrouvrir la bouche
Voir ma tête quand je louche
Ce doit être ça qui
T'amuse tant*

*Sur le lit, tu fais un tas
Des fringues que tu veux pas
De tout ce que tu aimais
Hier
Comme je suis encore au pieu
Je me retrouve au milieu
Je n'ose plus bouger, je fais
Pas le fier*

*Mais tu fredonnes enfin
Une chanson que t'aimes bien
Une que j'avais écrite
Pour toi
D'accord pour que tu chasses
Ce qui n'a plus sa place
S'il en reste une petite
Pour moi*

*La marque de tes dentelles
Les marques de tes bretelles
Il faut être moi pour
Les voir
T'examines une chemise
Longtemps que tu l'as pas mise
Je te le dis juste pour
Mémoire*

*Oh, tu peux toujours renoncer
A cette robe un peu osée
C'est une précaution*

*Inutile
T'es une fleur maléfique
Déjà trop magnifique
Dans tes hésitations
Textiles*

*Tu sais que si tu veux
Je te prête un jean bleu
Et un t-shirt qui sera
Trop grand
Le risque c'est qu'avec
On te prenne pour ton mec
Vu que d'habitude c'est moi
Dedans*

*Alors je te propose un truc
Depuis le temps que je te reluque
Je t'enlève tes derniers
Pétales
Et je t'offre ma peau
Je suis un vêtement chaud
Je suis sûr de t'aller
Pas mal*

*Je t'offre ma peau
Je suis un vêtement chaud
Je suis sûr de t'aller
Pas mal.*

(reprise des deux derniers couplets)

*Paroles et musique :
Benoît Dorémus*

Rien à te mettre means nothing to put on (to wear). French women use it a lot when they look in their wardrobe closet and say: “*Je n’ai rien à me mettre*” (“I have nothing to wear”) or “*Je n’ai plus rien à me mettre*” (“I have nothing at all to wear”).

This song is about a girl looking for something to wear but she can’t find anything and her boy friend is saying: “*J’ai du mal à admettre que t’aies plus rien à te mettre...*” (“I have hard time admitting that you have nothing to wear”...) You can download the entire song for free on the official website:

www.benoitdoremus.com

Click on “mp3 en téléchargement”.

You can also buy this album directly in the website.

Benoit Dorémus is a young new talent on the French scene who was born in 1980. After first publishing a novel, he realised that his real passion was for music, songs and lyrics and that

those outlets would allow him to express his emotions, angers and desires. His songs are about his love of singing, everyday life stories, relationships...

His first album (*Pas en parler*) was issued in 2005. After that, he met the French singer Renaud who, after listening to his cd, said: "It's the biggest shock I had had in 20 years with respect to writing, songs...". Renaud then offered to produce his next album.

Vincent Anthonioz

Drôles de fruits

Une orange pressée
Doit-elle vraiment se dépêcher ?
Un citron givré
Risque-t-il de s'enrhumer?
Les fruits déguisés
Portent-ils un masque
sur le nez?
Les bananes flambées
Ont-elles besoin de pompiers?
Et la pêche, la cueille-t-on
Avec une ligne et un hameçon?
Ces fruits ne sont-ils pas cinglés?

Choisi et lu par Alexandra

Extrait de: "*Comptines pour avoir bonne mine*", par Corinne Albaut, illustrées par Serge Ceccarelli. Editions Actes Sud Junior, Coll. *Les petits bonheurs*.

The poem for children above would be impossible to translate and retain the several cute and amusing plays on words (just imagine the problem of dealing with the word *pêche* in a translation), but a few explanations might help to understand how a child views the often ambiguous world of idiomatic expressions.

Une orange pressée = fresh squeezed orange juice, but the adjective *pressé* also means to be in a hurry.

Un citron givré = a dessert with a hollowed out lemon filled with lemon ice cream, but the word *givré* also means to be frozen, or crazy.

Les fruits déguisés = another French dessert, but the reference to disguises makes one naturally think of wearing a mask.

Les bananes flambées = a dessert where the bananas are actually flamed, thus the reference to *pompiers*.

La pêche means both a peach and fishing, which makes it normal to wonder if one harvests peaches with a line and a hook.

These fruits certainly are ***cinglés*** = these fruits are nuts!