



# COMING IN OUT OF THE DARKO...

One of the poster boys of dark, quirky films, Jake Gyllenhaal is making the leap to blockbuster, with Jerry Bruckheimer's *Prince of Persia*

BY SARA MOHAZZEBI

**B**rooding. Full of angst. Almost always starring in artistic serious films. Until now, 29-year-old Jake Gyllenhaal has been known as the actor who brought us the cult classic *Donnie Darko*, melted in the Iraqi heat as a listless Marine in *Jarhead*, kissed Natalie Portman in *Brothers*, and made cinematic history with Heath Ledger in *Brokeback Mountain*. So it's something of a surprise that he's taken the lead role in action fantasy *Prince of Persia*, based on the popular video game of the same name. Gyllenhaal has put aside his usual drama fare for a chance to save the day and score the Persian princess (played by Bond Girl Gemma Arterton) on the epic battlefields of pre-Islamic Persia. He tells *Esquire* why being an action hero has been on his to-do list and why he just can't get enough of Morocco.

**ESQUIRE:** You're the *Prince of Persia* and you have a British accent in this film...

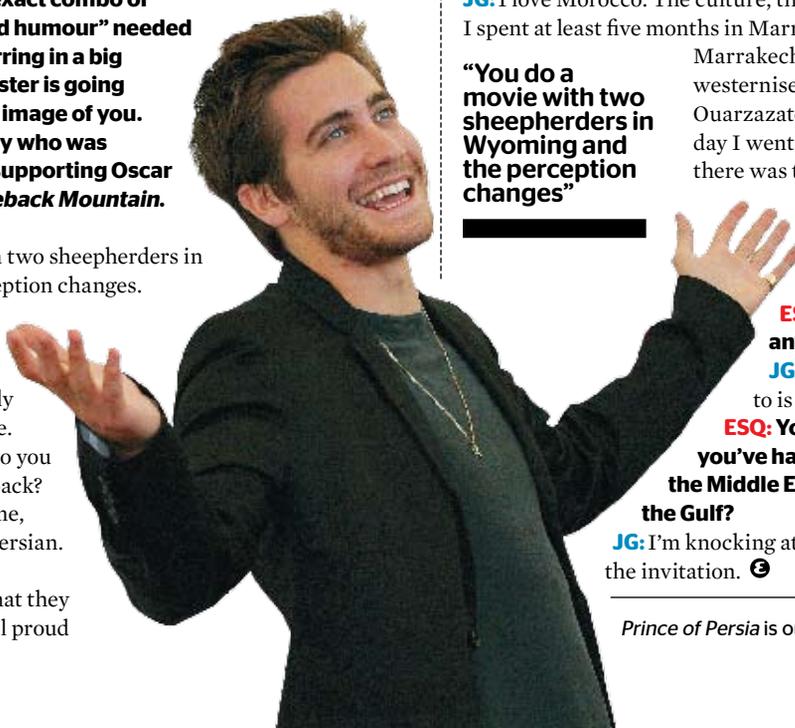
**JAKE GYLLENHAAL:** Oh man, I know where this is going – Persian accent, Persian culture, Persian girl interviewing me... you're totally going to get me on this. I stayed true to the video game and its fans. Producer Jerry Bruckheimer and I had a real talk about it and, ultimately, the British accent encompasses so many cultures and oddly enough, ancient time periods.

**ESQ:** Bruckheimer has said that he wanted you for this role because you had the exact combo of "muscle, romance, and humour" needed to pull this off. But starring in a big Bruckheimer blockbuster is going to change the public's image of you. After all, you're the guy who was nominated for a best supporting Oscar for your work in *Brokeback Mountain*. You ready for this?

**JG:** You do a movie with two shepherders in Wyoming and the perception changes. You do an action movie like *Prince of Persia* and the perception changes. I'm legitimately excited about this movie. Thank God. It's done. Do you think I can still take it back? (laughs) Maybe next time, I can make the accent Persian.

**ESQ:** Too late...

**JG:** People can think what they want but as long as I feel proud



of the story that's being told, that's all I care about. I'm thrilled. I watched *Prince of Persia* like I was a kid again. From the minute I read the opening battle scene, I knew I had to make this movie.

**ESQ:** The battle scenes in this film are pretty intense and massive in scale. But from what I saw, the ostrich race seems scarier than anything that went down on the battlefield.

**JG:** Ostriches are mean motherf\*\*\*ing birds. Really dangerous. And they're big. They, can snap you, kill you with their beak. Trample you. They totally freaked me out.

**ESQ:** You're in serious shape in this role. Best thing about being in killer form?

**JG:** It's not my first time having to get in top shape for a movie. I did it for *Jarhead*. Yeah, you feel great and there's a presence to your physicality but all the same s\*\*\* is underneath. I took a picture of myself after the first big jump in the film where I jumped 35 feet. I was pretty nervous. Maybe one day I'll show you (laughs).

**ESQ:** You filmed this in the blazing Moroccan summer in 120-degree heat. How did you like Morocco?

**JG:** I love Morocco. The culture, the incredible tagines, the people. I spent at least five months in Marrakech, Ouarzazate, and Erfoud.

**"You do a movie with two shepherders in Wyoming and the perception changes"**

Marrakech is beautiful but more westernised, so I loved being out in Ouarzazate and Erfoud. I remember one day I went out to look for a massage and there was this chiropractor who had all these potions and lotions.

At first, I was so sceptical but it was literally the most amazing massage ever.

**ESQ:** So did you get to travel to anywhere else in the region?

**JG:** So far the only place I've been to is Morocco.

**ESQ:** You're the *Prince of Persia*, you've had three movies connected to the Middle East and you've never been to the Gulf?

**JG:** I'm knocking at the door (laughs). I just need the invitation. ☺

*Prince of Persia* is out in cinemas this month