

Elias Toufexis: “I like playing Adam Jensen so much I hope there are 10 more games with him.”

Interview for www.Lalnercia.com

First, the introductions. Can you tell us a little about yourself?

I'm an actor. I work out of Toronto mostly. I have a hot wife and a beautiful daughter. I like Batman.

We were surprised to find you had a YouTube account and even commented on videos related to your work. Are you active on the Internet? Does it help you with your work in any way?

It does very much. I find communicating with people who like (or dislike!) my work is real cool. It helps me to better understand my job. Also I just appreciate it when people make videos or paintings about me. It's flattering and I like letting them know I think so if I can. Especially on Twitter it's a really helpful tool for promotion but also to keep in touch with people who like my work (www.twitter.com/eliastoufexis).

So... you started acting because you wanted to be a Jedi, isn't it?

When I saw Star Wars as a kid I wanted to be...there... so since I couldn't be a Jedi I figured I'd try to be an actor.

You've played a lot of characters in videogames and cartoons. Is it hard to act with just your voice? Does it give you more freedom or limit you?

I like it a lot and it's as difficult as live action performing, just in different ways. I still try to keep everything I do in the realm of realism. Unless, of course, it's supposed to be over the top or 'cartoony'.

You've done movies, TV, theater, cartoons and videogames. What do you like (and don't like) about them?

The only real difference is the hours put in on the day. For videogames it's much less than film. Film and TV can run you 15 hour days, which gets tiring after three straight weeks! Both possess their own challenges and rewards. I honestly don't have a preference. In terms of theatre, I love the live audience and I long to go back but I haven't been on the stage in a few years. I miss it.

What's your experience with motion-capture?

I've done a lot of motion capture and it's really interesting work. It's happening more and more these days with video games and with films so I'm glad I already have more experience than most actors. The technology is ever growing though. Every time I go in for a motion capture session they've added some new thing to make it better. Lots of fun.

We understand you're quite the hardcore gamer.

I wouldn't use the word 'hardcore'. I play games probably an hour or so a night a few nights a week. I'm not like those guys who put in 40 hours a week on MW3 so they kill me in 10 seconds every time I try to play online.

Tell us about your work in 'Deus Ex: Human Revolution'. How did you prepare the character of Adam Jensen?

Initially it was looking at the references the writers and directors gave me and playing the original game through a few times. Once we found the character it became more about preparing for each individual scene or line...and drinking a lot of water.

Adam Jensen's voice has been compared to Christian Bale's raspy Batman voice. Was it intentional? (I think you added an extra sadness and loneliness that go beyond the typical badass hero, by the way.)

Thanks. I'm glad you think so. I never actually had Bale (a definite role model of mine) in mind when I started playing the character. In fact, until someone brought it up I never even really thought about it. When I speak normally my voice is pretty much Jensen's. Sure we pushed it a bit, but not much... (Maybe sometimes!)

As a professional voice actor and a Batman fan... who do you think is the best Batman voice?

Well, Conroy can't be touched. He is Batman until he retires or dies and I take over. I actually really liked Bruce Greenwood's performance in Under The Red Hood too. Bale's take is a realistic one. Batman is around people who know Bruce Wayne very well. If he didn't disguise his voice he'd be found out pretty quick. I absolutely love the Nolan Batman films.

With so much freedom of action, the player can define Adam and its arc to a great extent. Was it difficult to play so many different versions of the same character? How did you keep him consistent?

That was the toughest part of this particular project for me. I remember reading lines and thinking that Jensen (as I know him) would never do that. (Like asking Megan's mom for money to investigate her daughter's death!) Still, I had to put as much belief into what he was saying or doing and come up with reasons as to why he would say or do it. A lot of work, but I loved it.

You worked in 'Deus Ex: HR' for several years. How did this affect your work?

My voice changes a little bit in the game, you can probably tell. I didn't really find the character until a few weeks in I think. By then most of the animation had been done and we couldn't re-do some of it. It's not a lot, but a few lines really bug me. If there is ever a sequel, I know Jensen so well now that I'd be able to be extremely comfortable no matter how long we recorded it. Just for the record, I don't know anything, but I like Jensen so much I hope there are 10 more games with him.

Did you play the game? How did you play it?

Yeah, finished it twice. Once trying not to kill anybody aside from real bad guys and once killing EVERYBODY. It was so much fun to play it both times because I didn't really remember 90% of what I recorded.

Can you describe a typical recording session for a videogame?

A lot of water. About 4 hours and most of the time with the actor who shares the scene with me.

What can you tell us about Federico in the 'Assassin's Creed' games? How did you work on the Italian accent?

I'm pretty good at basic accents and we had a dialogue coach along for the ride. I loved working on the Assassin's Creed games.

Tells us about 'Killing Jar Jar or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Just Wait in Line for Star Wars'.

Wow. Going back in my history here. That was a play we did in New York Off Broadway right before Star Wars episode two came out. It was loosely based on the true story of when my friends and I slept outside to get tickets for Star Wars Episode One. It was a crazy time. No money, living off of dollar meals and getting depressed until I was on stage. I wouldn't change it at all looking back.

You've played villains in TV shows like 'Supernatural', 'Smallville' or 'Stargate: Atlantis'. Do you like playing that kind of characters?

Villains are a lot more interesting than heroes. It wasn't a direct choice in my career path, it just happened to steer that way. I guess it shows that I like playing bad guys when I audition. One of the things I loved about playing Jensen in Deus Ex was that, while he was a hero, he was a bit of a villain too.

Your character in 'Supernatural' is well beloved by fans of the show. What can you tell us about him?

One of my favorite characters was Webber on Supernatural. He controlled minds and had a whole bunch of fun lines to say. I loved working on that show. Still a top experience for me.

How many times have you died on screen?

I haven't counted...but almost every character I've played dies. Mostly violently.

Is there enough recognition for voice actors?

Definitely not for video game voice actors... but these days it's becoming less about just voice and more about motion capture AND voice. So maybe it'll change.

What are you up to now? What's next?

I just wrapped a character arc on ABC's Rookie Blue and I wrapped a film called Crisis Point with Rhona Mitra...coming out who knows when.

Thanks for your time, Elias. Is there anything you would like to say to your Spanish fans?

Someone produce a movie in Spain and hire me. That's the only time I ever get to go anywhere!