

## THEO JAMES

The *Divergent* star talks AI, letting loose and his move into producing

Words by Steve O'Brien // Photography by Ricardo DeAratanha

**T**heo James is surely the epitome of the “not just a pretty face” cliché. He may be the swoonsome face on a thousand Hugo Boss billboard posters and TV adverts, and the go-to guy when directors want a leading man with F-appeal, yet this 36-year-old Brit has consistently chosen interesting and challenging movie projects, from 2016’s John Michael McDonagh-directed comedy *War On Everyone* to 2018’s arthouse curio *Zoe*, to his latest, *Archive*, in which he plays an obsessive scientist working on creating an android to house the memories of his late wife. Not only that, but last year he set up his own production company, Untapped, with indie producer Andrew D Corkin, and is currently developing a raft of movie and TV projects.

**You’ve appeared in quite a few science fiction films in your career. How did *Archive* compare?**

➔ What I loved about it, from the get-go, was [director] Gavin [Rothery]’s specificity. He had been thinking about this story for so long. In a way, you had so much more detail than any of the future-based films I’ve ever done before, even though it was a fraction of the size. And beyond that, it really spoke to me on a deeper level in terms of some of those more complex questions about humanity: whether you can download a piece of yourself or a piece of humanity, a piece of the soul, into a machine, and then what does that mean for the machine?

**The original plan was for *Archive* to shoot at Pinewood, but you ended up filming in Hungary. That must be hard, being away from home for so long. Or does it help the creative process?**

➔ I think it’s better, generally. The few times that I’ve shot in London or LA, it feels strange, because you finish a heavy day on set, and then you come home and do the normal, mundane shit. That can be a little distracting. Whereas when you’re away, although it can be isolating in some ways you’re able to completely focus on the thing that you’re doing. Also, I’ve always thought, especially with these kinds of indie films where you’re really trying to hustle and use every dime that you have to put it on screen, you need to put in a bit of time with everyone else to have a few drinks in the evening and let loose a bit. It lends itself to more of a team atmosphere where everyone’s in it together.

### BIODATA

From  
**Born in High Wycombe; raised in Askeet, Buckinghamshire.**

Greatest Hits  
**Made his big screen debut in Woody Allen’s *You Will Meet A Tall Dark Stranger* in 2010 and has starred in all three *Divergent* films, plus the last two *Underworld* movies.**

Random Fact  
**In 2011-12, James was the singer in London-based indie-rock band Shere Khan.**

**You set up your own production company, Untapped, last year. What made you want to do that?**

➔ The more you do, the more you have some experience and some taste. About four years ago, I started thinking about developing and producing some projects of my own. Then a friend of mine that I did an indie with a few years ago, we kind of came together, so we started from there. It’s really gratifying, and I’m thinking more and more that I’d like to be behind the camera as opposed to in front of it.

**Do you plan to act in any of Untapped’s films or TV projects, or are you happy to stay behind the scenes?**

➔ I think I’ll act in some of them, yeah, definitely. But not in every single one, you know. I wouldn’t physically be able to do that! I just like the idea of being able to develop stuff for other actors that I think could be really good for the role.

**What about writing or directing? Any plans there?**

➔ It’s something I’ve always fantasised about. I’d love to – you never know until you do it if you’ll be any good.

**It must be satisfying, after spending all these years auditioning for directors that now you’re auditioning directors yourself.**

➔ Yeah, it’s satisfying! Though with some of them, you’re kind of auditioning them and other times you’re trying to procure them.

**How many projects is Untapped working on?**

➔ Lots – you’ve got to have quite a few, because not every one is going to hit a home run. We’ve got a documentary, which is happening next year, and we’ve got two TV shows, one in development, and one that’s pretty close to happening. And we’ve got the features: one with Naomi Watts called *Lakewood* and another which is a really dark but amazing story about gun culture in the US, starring Lucy Liu.

Filmwise, because we’re a pretty small operation – it’s just the two of us – most of our films are \$6 or \$7 million. So, y’know, on the smaller end. But hopefully as we grow we’ll be able to make larger scale movies. But with more money, obviously comes more fingers in the pie, and that can be a tricky concept. As you know, too many fingers in a movie often are the reason why it’s shit! ●

*Archive is available to download now.*

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direct— you  
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