



TF1 ON THE QUEST FOR THE GRAIL

SHOW. *La légende du Roi Arthur*, one of the most eagerly awaited productions of the year, has been playing in France since September 2015. This musical comedy is co-produced by TF1 Spectacle, a specialist in extraordinary entertainment. A look behind the scenes at a unique achievement.

— A crew member and an actor rehearsing *La légende du Roi Arthur* at the Palais des Congrès in Paris.




— Fabien Incardona (Méléagant) saluting the audience.

“**T**here’s something magic between you and me...” One of the most memorable songs from *La légende du Roi Arthur* lingers in the air as the spectators reluctantly file out of the auditorium of the Palais des Congrès in Paris on this Saturday in early October. Over the past two hours, the cast of this splendid musical comedy hailed by the critics has given its all to enthrall the audience. To understand what has made it such a success, we need to go back a couple of years.

Mutual trust

Following the success of *1789, les amants de la Bastille*, Dove

Attia, the producer of a string of musical comedies that include *Les Dix commandements* and *Le Roi Soleil*, took on a new challenge: to bring to life one of the most popular legends, that of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. “I naturally turned to the teams at TF1. They’re really good and I know I can rely on them,” explains Attia, adding, “we’ve worked together for a long time and trust each other. They’re like family!” *Le Roi Arthur* is indeed his third collaboration with TF1 Spectacle, after *Mozart* and *1789*. TF1 Spectacle, a subsidiary of TF1 Entreprises, is one of the show’s co-producers and an equal partner with Dove Attia and Décibels

Productions (the Warner group). “When Dove Attia comes to us with a project, we listen,” says Yann Geneste, director of TF1 Spectacle and TF1 Musique. “He is, without a doubt, the greatest producer of musical comedies in France. And once again, he wowed us with his project.” To the point that *Le Roi Arthur*, whose total budget is over €5 million, became TF1 Spectacle’s biggest financial investment to date. As a result, all the TF1 group’s entities have been involved – broadcasting, the online units, everybody. “Yes, we’re definitely giving this show a lot of promotion,” says Sarah Louis, head of marketing for *Le Roi Arthur* at TF1 Spectacle. 



There are 50 performers and 400 costumes in the show.

“Visually, it’s the most beautiful show I’ve ever done”

Dove Attia, producer of *La légende du Roi Arthur*



Thomas Ronzeau and Camille Lou, who play Gauvain and Guenièvre, in the makeup room.

▶ “There have never been so many trailers aired on the channel. Cast members are appearing in programs like *The Voice* and the *NRJ Music Awards*. Stories are worked into newscasts and programs like *Sept à Huit* and *50mn Inside*. The show is also spotlighted on MYTF1 and our wat.tv and YouTube channels.”

Broad appeal: the DNA of TF1

September 8 at the Palais des Congrès, nine days before the premiere. The cast and crew have been working hard to see that everything goes perfectly on opening night. While some rehearse their dance steps

and lines in the hallways, Giuliano Pepparini goes over his stage directions in the empty auditorium. The renowned Italian director is working with Dove Attia for the second time. “TF1 is a fantastic machine for backing unorthodox creators,” notes Yann Geneste. It is a win-win strategy: with the TF1 brand comes promotional clout and a prestigious image for a show. “It fits the DNA of TF1: to offer entertainment in the form of exceptional events to the broadest possible audience,” says Geneste. “If people see only one show this year, it should be *La légende du Roi Arthur*.” To put

TF1 Spectacle, a player on the way up

Some of the most popular events of recent months were produced by the subsidiary headed by Yann Geneste. They include the Harry Potter and Star Wars exhibitions and Comic-Con Paris, the big pop culture festival featuring films, comics, video games and all the rest. “TF1 Spectacle has really grown in the past two years,” says Sarah Louis, head of marketing for *Le Roi Arthur*. “One of the TF1 group’s priorities is

to be a player that counts in the world of theatrical entertainment.” The opening of the Cité Musicale in the Paris suburb of Boulogne-Billancourt could get it to that goal more quickly. Built by Bouygues Construction and managed by TF1 Entreprises and Sodexo, this music complex will be a first-class venue for popular entertainment starting in spring 2017.



— Yann Geneste, director of TF1 Spectacle and TF1 Musique, and Dove Attia, the show's producer.



— Giuliano Pepparini, the show's director, in the control booth.



— After closing at the Palais des Congrès, the show will tour all over France in 2016.

on the promised extravaganza, Attia and his teams pulled out all the stops, with a lineup of some 50 performers, 400 costumes, 20 scenes, magic, and much more. As for the music, the producer called on established artists who are hot at the moment, like the rapper Orelsan and the singer Zaho (she also plays the fairy Morgane), who also contributed songs. The headliners are Camille Lou (1789) and Florent Mothe (*Mozart*), along with Charlie Boisseau, who was spotted on the TF1 program *The Voice*. "Performing in this show is a dream come true," says the man who plays Lancelot, before going

on stage. "I think it's the finest show playing in Paris right now."

Tops at the box-office

Backstage again after the show. The audience has left the auditorium, and cast members have just a few hours to recover before returning for another performance. Meanwhile, Attia is busy in his basement office at the Palais des Congrès. Between two interviews, he tweaks his show here and there and swaps impressions with Geneste. "Visually, it's the most beautiful show I've ever done," he says with satisfaction. "It is the first time I've put on a show with such family appeal, and the word-of-mouth publicity is really

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Yann Geneste, director of TF1 Spectacle and TF1 Musique

good. I haven't seen enthusiasm like this for a long time." Geneste agrees: "It's only the start of the adventure, but everything looks positive. We're proud to be backing this lavish, moving, and ambitious production. For two hours, time stops." The public feels the magic, too. *La légende du Roi Arthur* has been number one in box-office sales since it opened.

Thomas Vity