

THE MIRACLE OF MONT EGLENY

Israel

Ra'anan Alexandrowicz

Born in Jerusalem, 1969, he was educated at the Sam Spiegel School for Cinema and Television in Jerusalem. The short *Self Confidence Ltd* that he directed during that time, screened in Rotterdam in 1997. His documentaries *Martin* (1999) and *Inner Tour* (2001) were selected in the Forum of the Berlinale, IDFA, Sundance, Edinburgh, Hot Docs, Sarajevo and Seattle. He made his feature film debut in 2003 with *James' Journey to Jerusalem*, selected at the Quinzaine des Réaliateurs 2003, Toronto and London International Film Festival.

Filmography

James' Journey to Jerusalem (2003): Quinzaine des Réaliateurs, Toronto, London, New Delhi (Silver Peacock), Pusan, Jerusalem (Best Actor), Valencia (Golden palm), Oslo (Fipresci award for best director), Sao Paulo, Mar del Plata, San Francisco.

The Inner Tour (2001): Berlin (forum), Idfa, Edinburgh, Vancouver (Special Mention), Sundance, New Directors New Films, San Francisco, Sarajevo, Los Angeles, Seattle: Hot Docs, Rio De Janeiro.

Martin (1999): Berlin (Forum), New Directors New Films, Jerusalem (Winner Wolgin, Doc.), Docaviv (Winner international competition, Special Mention Israeli competition), Montreal, Sao Paulo.

Production Company :	Lama Films (Israel)	Shooting format:	35mm
Category:	Fiction	Locations:	France
Length:	90'		
Language:	Hebrew, Arabic, English, French		
Shooting dates:	Mid 2006		

Synopsis

The Miracle of Mont Egleny is a Middle Eastern immigration comedy, which is played out against the heart of the sleepy and somewhat self-centred contemporary European culture. It is a story of two families: The Abutbul family, and the Abu-Dahab family.

There are many fundamental differences between these two families. But at the heart of their situation is a common ground. It is the fact that both families have given up on any hope that the situation in their homeland will ever get any better in the near future. They have both decided to use any possible means to emigrate away from the troubled Holy land in the Middle East, in search for a peaceful and quiet new life.

As the Abu-Dahabs, a middle class Muslim Palestinian family from Ram'alla leave Palestine, and the Abutbuls a middle class Jewish Israeli family from Jerusalem leave Israel, each with their own fears and hopes for a better future, they don't realize that the hand of fate has played a dirty trick on them. It has led the routes of both families to the same remote place, Mont Egleny - a sleepy town of around 1000 inhabitants not far from Paris. And not only has this hand of fate led them to the same town, but it actually led them, unknowingly, to dwell in adjacent apartments in the very same house, with a small garden they must now share.

As they discover their fate of being neighbours, both families cannot believe this nightmare is actually happening to them, and in the first days, the atmosphere in the small picturesque house which the two enemies now share is extremely tense.

So it is no surprise that before many days pass we find the two families confronted with each other in their shared garden. The wives and children try to convince their husbands to stop, and the un-welcoming, somewhat xenophobic neighbours watch curiously from their windows at the strange sight of foreigners quarrelling. But as the two men continue to circle, each awaiting the other's move, they see for the first time in each others eyes how similar they are, how tired of fighting they are, and how afraid they are - of their past becoming their future. And this is perhaps why Abutbul and Abu Dahab lower their fists at that moment, and an un-spoken treaty of ceasefire is made. The families try to ignore each other's existence and concentrate on their lives as newcomers in Europe. The similar hardships and isolation of immigrant life gradually warm up the cold relations between the families. They suspect and resent each other, but also study and discover the "other" culture. The men try to keep their proud distance from each other. They maintain their rhetoric and forbid contact between their family members, but when they are not around, their wives and their children let the practical issues of life lead the way for hopeful, if informal, co-existence.

But this "peaceful" existence does not last long. When the people, and especially the ambitious mayor of Mont Egleny, most of whom have never seen an Israeli or Palestinian except for the images of violence on Television, start to be aware of the phenomenon of the two "rival" families that seem to be living together in peace in their town, the families become a local attraction. The town people name the phenomenon "The Miracle".

Mont Egleny is a provincial small town, with more of a past than a future to its credit. Local interests quickly begin to form around "The Miracle" and the delicate symbiosis between the two immigrant families is soon disrupted. Abu Dahab and Abutbul might have left the Middle East, but unfortunately the Middle East has not left them. No matter how strong our hero's parallel wish for some "peace and quiet" in life might be, to everyone who gets involved in their story - the community of the provincial French town; the European tourists who begin to arrive in it; the rival Jewish and Arab communities in France who take interest in the neighbours' feud; to the whole world actually - Abutbul and Abu Dahab are still Israelis and Palestinians, and must act as such. They realize that if they want to survive, they will need to find some mutual way to outrun their absurd war. A war which they have escaped from in their homeland, and is now waiting for them in their backyard. Now will they?

Director's statement:

Looking at Israelis and Palestinians against the European backdrop does not necessarily mean seeing how different we are from each other, but rather how similar we are, and how absurd the things we are fighting about might seem to us from a distance.

Though *The Miracle of Mont Egleny* will be an allegoric, not completely realistic, and hopefully funny tale, I am hoping to ask through it some direct questions about the nature of the war between the Israelis and Palestinians, which is becoming more and more "The war between the Jews and the Arabs", as well as questions about the place of the European politics that is manoeuvring between present interests, guilt feelings towards the past with the Jews and growing weariness of the future with the Arabs.

The film will mock the conflict we live in rather than judge the situation. Without undermining the need for films which tell the separate stories of each side of the conflict, and deal with the crimes of our occupation and the reality it has created as such, I feel, or rather hope, that the future lies in being able to create a new perspective, a joined perspective, which is based first of all on the perspective of simple people who need to come together and to shake away these national structures that weight down on all of our lives.

Of course there is a potential for a realistic dramatic film within the basic materials of this story, but hopefully using these materials to tell a non-realistic story will enable to pack the film with political punch rather than with political correctness.

Somewhere between the memories of the Jewish Holocaust and the Palestinian Catastrophe is the place where we all try to live our lives here. And perhaps if we learn to speak in one voice, and to laugh at the same jokes, we might in the end have also a future, and not only a past.

Production company:	Lama Films (Israel)
Budget:	3 million euros
Partner attached:	Razor Film (Germany)

Company Profile

In Pre Production:

Jellyfish, Dir. Etgar Karet – Shira Geffen

The Way to the Cats, Dir. Jorge Gurevitch

Looking for Mr. Godik, documentary, Dir. Arik Davidowicz

The Stefan Brown Show, documentary, Dir. Itamar Alkalay

In Post Production:

Joy, 90 min. (2005), Dir. Julie Shles

Completed:

Paradise Now, 90 min. (2005), Dir. Hany Abu-Assad: Berlin – Official Competition

Walk On Water, 100 min. (2004) , Dir. Eytan Fox: Opening film – Panorama, Berlin 2004

James' Journey to Jerusalem, 87 min. (2003) , Dir. Ra'anan Alexandrowicz: Quinzaine des Realisateurs, Cannes, Best film / Fipresci prize – Oslo, Best film – Valencia, Most promising director

Yossi & Jagger, 65 min. (2002) , Dir. Eytan Fox: Panorama, Berlinale, Audience Prize, Tribeca Film Festival – Best Actor, Israeli Academy – Best Drama, Best Actor, Best Score

Desperado Square, 97 min. (2001), Dir. Benny Torati: 5 Israeli Academy Awards – incl. Best Director, Best Script

The Komediant, 86 min. (1999) , Documentary , Dir. Arnon Goldfinger: First prize – Haifa Film Festival 1999, Israeli Academy Award – Best Documentary 1999

Goals at Paris Project : Finding co-producers, pre-sales, sales agent, Funds

People attending Paris Project: Amir Harel (producer), Ra'anan Alexandrowicz (director)

Lama Films

17 Bar Ilan St., Tel Aviv 65271, Israel

Tel: +972 3 6850430

Fax: +972 3 6869793

Mail: lama@barak.net.il, lior@lamafilms.com