

SF Film Production, Knut Ogris Films, Cinephil, Reveal Productions inc. present

Defamation

a Yoav Shamir Film

Director and Cinematographer: Yoav Shamir

Editor: Moritz Habig

Composer: Ylische Kraus Sound Design: Birgit Obkircher

Line Producers: Nyma Marie Selin, Ori Bader, Jay Sides

Producers: Karoline Leth, Knut Ogris, Philippe Koverby, Sarara Jethott

Produced by SF Film Production, Knut Ogris Films, Cinephil, Reveal Productions inc.

With Support from The Austrian Film Institute, ORF Film TV Convention, DR, The Danish Film Institute

YLE, Yleisradio Film TV Fond, Haerby Film Foundation

Zukunftsfonds Republic of Austria, Nationalfonds Republic of Austria, BM f UKK

The Rebinovich Foundation of the Arts, The Second Authority for TV & Radio, VPRO

World Sales: www.cinephil.ca.il

"Defamation's humorous tone, wide range of colourful locations, thorough roster of interviewees and relatively rapid pacing will appeal to festival and TV audiences, as well as perhaps some specialised theatres in international urban centres."

(Howard Feinstein, Screen daily Berlin Feb. 6th, 2009)

DEFAMATION

A film by Yoav Shamir



Produced by
SF FILM PRODUCTION
Knut.Ogris.Films
Cinephil
Reveal Productions

Produced with the support of:

Austrian Film Commission, THE DANISH FILMINSTITUTE, The Rabinovich Foundation for the Arts, NORDISK FILM OG TV FOND, THE SECOND AUTHORITY FOR T.V& RADIO, MINISTRY OF INTEGRATION DENMARK, Hartley Film Foundation, Zukunftsfonds der Republic Österreich evt., Nationalfonds der Republic Austria, BM f UKK.

In Association with:
ORF, DR TV, YLE, VPRO

www.defamation-thefilm.com

What is anti-Semitism today, two generations after the Holocaust? In his continuing exploration of modern Israeli life, director Yoav Shamir (*Checkpoints, Flipping Out*) travels the world in search of the most modern manifestations of the "oldest hatred", and comes up with some startling answers.

In this irreverent quest, he follows American Jewish leaders to the capitals of Europe, as they warn government officials of the growing threat of anti-Semitism, and he tacks on to a class of Israeli high school students on a pilgrimage to Auschwitz.

Opinions often differ and tempers sometimes flare, but in *Defamation* we find that one thing is certain - only by understanding their response to anti-Semitism can we really appreciate how Jews today, and especially modern Israelis, respond to the world around them, in New York and in Moscow, in Gaza and Tel Aviv.



Director's Statement:

I first had the idea to make a film about anti-Semitism when my earlier work *Checkpoint* was released. In one of that film's many reviews, I was called "the Israeli Mel Gibson," not because of my good looks, but because the views I had expressed, critical of Israel's policies toward the Palestinians, indicated that I was anti-Semitic. The author of that review was Jewish himself.

At first I thought it was amusing. Being called an anti-Semite by an American Jewish reporter seemed completely farfetched. How could someone who chooses to live outside of Israel, who did not do military service like me, who did not lose a grandfather in the war like me, have the nerve to call me an anti-Semite?

Until then I had never considered the central role that anti-Semitism plays in our lives. Upon reflection I realized that it is a constant buzz, always in the background, always annoying. After a while, you simply get used to it. How often are we really disturbed by the hum of an electric fixture or the drone of passing cars? Anti-Semitism may follow us like a shadow, but then again, who really notices his shadow on a daily basis?

Once I did start noticing it, I realized that anti-Semitism is actually a very popular topic in the Israeli discourse. Not a day goes by without at least one article in the newspaper mentioning "Nazis," "the Holocaust," or "anti-Semitism." Having never experienced anti-Semitism myself—the closest I came was being compared to Mel Gibson—I decided to learn something about the subject.

This was the beginning of a long journey, culminating in this film. Anti-Semitism is an enormous word with many different connotations. Because of the events of the recent past, it also designates a very sensitive topic. Anti-Semitism is the ultimate "sacred cow" for Jews. While I did not set out to slaughter that cow, even the most sacred of cows needs to be shaken up every once in a while.

At times I found the subject daunting. No other phenomenon in Jewish history had so much written about it by academics that spent their whole lives studying it. Who the hell was I to think that I might have anything meaningful to add? I was walking on some very thin ice.

Nevertheless, I decided to follow my instincts. Any question is relevant if I believe it is; I should never be afraid to ask or challenge even the most hallowed assumptions. The result is a personal journey that reflects things as I saw them. It, it is not intended as an academic essay.

I had embarked on a fascinating quest that meandered between the way young Israelis are raised in the cumbersome shadow of the Holocaust (making this film, in some ways, the last part of a trilogy made in the wrong order: *Checkpoint*, about Israeli soldiers; *Flipping Out*, about what happens to these soldiers after they leave the army; and *Defamation*, which examines Israeli youth before they begin their military service), the Anti-Defamation League, which is the largest organization in the world to combat anti-Semitism, and those who oppose the ADL, including Professor Norman Finkelstein, and John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, the authors of *The Israeli Lobby*.

My journey took me around the world: from Israel to the US; from Moscow to Rome to Poland. Mostly, however, it was a journey into the human soul, into the way that people think, and in my particular case, how my people, the Jewish people, choose to deal with the past.

I hope that everyone watching this film will find it as thought-provoking as I found my quest, and will honestly question their own assumptions about the issues it raises.



From the press:

"End result is at once intelligent, wry and - there's no way around it - quintessentially Jewish, in the best sense." (LESLIE FELPERIN, Variety daily Berlin Feb. 5th, 2009)

<http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=festivals&jump=review&id=2478&reviewid=VE1117939586&cs=1>

"An incredibly bold and brave film" (Michael Moore, film director. Founder of Traverse City Film Festival)

"Shamir is not just some Jewish Michael Moore firing off conspiracy theories that anti-Semitism is one giant myth fostered by leaders like Foxman to perpetuate their own power—his point is much more nuanced and prickly. Defamation is a chilling, psychological portrait of a people who are unwittingly traumatized by the past in ways that they are not aware." (**Joshua Neuman, Heeb Magazine**)

<http://www.screendaily.com/ScreenDailyArticle.aspx?intStoryID=43007>

http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/content_display/news/e3i4922a47daed814db5a2dcb2118b01973



Awards received

Best Documentary – Asia Pacific Screen Awards
Best Film – Festival dei Popoli
The BFI's Grierson Award for Best Documentary – London Film Festival
CAMERA AT THE READY AWARD - RENCONTRES INTERNATIONALES DU DOCUMENTAIRE DE MONTRÉAL
Special Mention – Tribeca Film Festival
Audience Award – Documenta Madrid
Best Research Award – Doc Aviv Film Festival
The Stanley Kubrick Award for Bold and Innovative Filmmaking - Traverse City Film Festival
Special Mention -Kosovo International Documentary Film Festival
Audience Award - Warsaw International Film Festival
Nominated for Best Documentary – European Academy Awards
Best International Director - Documentary Edge Film Festival NZ

Festival Screenings:

Berlin International Film Festival 09 (World Premiere - Forum for New Cinema)
Tribeca Film Festival (International Documentary Competition)
Documenta Madrid (International Competition)
Thessaloniki Documentary Film Festival
Cinema du Reel (International Competition)
OSLO 09 EURODOK
BUENOS AIRES 09
HAMBURG 09 DOC
DOK Munich
Doc Aviv (Israeli Competition)
Hot docs (International Competition)
Silverdocs (International Competition)
SEATTLE 09 IFF
Encounters South Africa
MELBOURNE 09 IFF
VANCOUVER 09 IFF
Traverse City Film Festival (Documentary Competition)
Kosovo International Documentary Film Festival (International Competition)
Reykjavik International Film Festival
Zurich Film Festival (International Competition)
IDFA
Zagreb DOX
DOC NZ
Istanbul International Film Festival

Commercial releases:

Theatrical US release October 2009

Austria January 2010

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