

CAPRI RELEASING

presents

WALK ON WATER

A Film By
EYTAN FOX

PRESS NOTES

Running Time: 104 Minutes

Not Yet Rated

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Synopsis

WALK ON WATER follows Eyal, a fierce Mossad agent (Lior Ashkenazi), on assignment to track down an aging Nazi war criminal, Alfred Himmelman. By posing as a tour guide, Eyal befriends Himmelman's liberal grandchildren in Tel Aviv, but what begins as a deceptive mission crossing from Jerusalem to Berlin dissolves into a contemporary journey through conflicting ideologies and histories, changing Eyal's view of the world forever.

WALK ON WATER has already been celebrated as the Opening Night film in the Panorama at the Berlin Film Festival and has screened to sold out crowds at Outfest, NewFest. The film has been selected for the upcoming Toronto Film Festival in September.

ABOUT THE CREW AND CAST

Eytan Fox– Director

Eytan Fox was born in New York City and moved to Israel as a child. He grew up in Jerusalem and after serving in the army, studied at Tel Aviv University's School of Film and Television.

His first film, *TIME OFF*, a 45-minute drama about sexual identity in the Israeli army won the Movie of the Year Award (1990) at the Israeli Film Institute, First Prize at Munich's International Student Film Festival, and was shown on TV in Europe and in the U.S.

His first feature length film, *SONG OF THE SIREN*, a romantic comedy about life in Tel Aviv during the Gulf War, was Israel's biggest boxoffice success in 1994. It was Fox's first time at the Panorama in Berlinale. Later it was shown on TV worldwide, including Germany's ARD and France's Arte.

Between 1997 and 2000 Fox created and directed *FLORENTINE*, a drama series for Israeli TV that examined the life of young people in Tel Aviv before and after the Rabin assassination. The series won First Prize at the 1997 Jerusalem International Film Festival in the Television category.

His 1998 musical drama, *GOTTA HAVE HEART*, was made for Israel's Channel 2 and was widely shown in film festivals throughout Europe and the U.S. It won the Best Short Prize at the 1999 New York NewFest.

In 2002, Fox directed *YOSSI & JAGGER*. The film became an immediate critical and box office success in Israel, and after premiering at the 2003 Berlinale Film Festival, it went on to become a surprising international hit. It began by opening throughout Italy, becoming especially popular in Milan where Giorgio Armani himself came to watch it on a weekday with ten friends. It then opened in the US, becoming an instant hit in NY and other major cities, and remained on Stephen Holden's "recommended" list in the New York Times for over a month. The movie has since opened successfully in Switzerland, Taiwan and Germany.

Lior Ashkenazi (actor)

Lior Ashkenazi is one of the most popular film, TV and theater stars of his generation in Israel. International audiences will recognize him for his lead role in Dover Kosashvili's *LATE MARRIAGE* (Cannes 2001). For this role he received an Israeli Academy Award and a mention on the "Best Foreign Actor" list of the *Village Voice* and *indieWire* in 2002.

A Conversation with Eytan Fox

For a filmmaker who has been exclusively concerned with contemporary Israeli issues, it's surprising to see you take on the conflict of conscience between Jews and Germans. What led you to it?

I think the past has a very important role in young people's lives everywhere. I made a movie about young people, who just want to live and have fun, and think they are free and different from their parents, but actually they are haunted by the past, and in order to really become free, they have to make peace with it.

Were you inspired by any specific events?

Not specific events, but I am very concerned about the political situation in Israel. I strongly believe that because Israelis are still so obsessed with the Holocaust and their status as victims it makes them blind to the fact they themselves have become aggressors, imposing pain and suffering on the Palestinians. I believe that the first step in helping Israelis understand how cruel they have become lies in making some kind of peace with their own traumatic past. Since I am very interested in masculinity, and Israel is a very masculine society, I decided to tell a story in which a man gets to connect with his inner feelings and he changes through confronting and processing the most frightening event of his past.

How did you cast the film and were there any problems with any of the lead actors?

Israel is quite small, so when Gal (Uchovsky, writer and producer) and I started to work on the script, I knew that of all Israeli actors I wanted Lior (Ashkenazi) for the lead role. I met him and we started talking about the film, and with time he sounded more like the role, and the role sounded more like him. It was a very interesting process.

With the German actors it was a standard audition. I met many young actors and actresses in Berlin, took the cassettes back to Israel, and we all agreed that Knut (Berger) and Carolina (Peters) were our favorites. And now I can say that they were great choices, as they not only acted in the film but also spent time in Israel with us and worked on the script. They made sure that their German characters were accurate.

Did you have to show the script to the Mossad? Did you have any feedback from them? Did they ever interfere with the production?

That's a funny question. Of course we didn't show it to them. Why should we? We did talk to former Mossad agents for research but only on an informal basis. And about their reaction: some people that were once in the Mossad saw the movie and did not like the Mossad parts. They thought we didn't portray it glamorously enough. To them, the Mossad people looked too clumsy, too ordinary, like post office workers, and defiantly not like heroes. I think that's a compliment.

Were there any particular problems you encountered making a film in three different countries?

Yes. It was more expensive. It was complicated in a logistical sense, but I think it gives the movie a great scope. You start in the beautiful Istanbul, then you travel around Israel, the Sea of Galilee, the Dead Sea, Jerusalem, and then to Berlin. I think three different climates, different atmospheres, different moods, adds a lot and gives the film a more epic feeling.

Production Notes

It took more than six years to make this movie.

The first thing Director Eytan Fox and Co-producer and Writer Gal Uchovsky did when they decided to make the movie was to take a road trip throughout Germany. They traveled from Heidelberg to Baden–Baden, then north to Nierenberg, Dresden and Berlin. On the way they even spent a night in Rothenberg-ob-der-Tauber, the city of wooden toys.

The original script had many German cities in it, but for financial reasons, they ended up shooting in Berlin. Axel and Pia's parents' villa is located near Lake Wannsee.

It was important to the filmmakers that the movie also represented the local German point of view. Although no German fund or production company invested in this movie, many German friends helped in the writing and shooting of this movie. Among them were German filmmaker Andreas Struck and filmmaker and Panorama director Wieland Speck. Later, actors Knut Berger and Carolina Peters gave their own valuable input to the script.

The first development money for the script of WALK ON WATER came from the Israel Film Fund and the European Media Fund. The Israel Film Fund, together with Hot, the Israeli cable company, went on to become the primary investors in the movie.

Producer Amir Harel of LAMA Productions became involved at an early stage of production, after director Fox met with several Israeli producers and decided that Harel was the one who understood the script and shared his same vision.

Fox, Uchovsky and Harel then began the long journey to find financial backing for the movie in a road that took them all over Germany, as well as to New York, LA and Venice. At one point, after having been rejected by the NRW fund in Cologne, they decided to produce something fast, in the interim, hence the successful YOSSI & JAGGER.

Eytan Fox chose Lior Ashkenazi to play the lead role at a very early stage. There were no auditions, although he met with some other Israeli actors that had heard about the movie and wanted to talk about it. Fox and Ashkenazi have become close friends during the last couple of years.

For Israeli audiences, actor Gideon Shemer, who plays Menachem, the aging Mossad agent, has a special meaning - for many years Shemer played Anne Frank's father in a play produced by The Israeli Theater for Young People, a play seen by every Israeli schoolchild from the 70's through the mid 90's.

All the German actors were chosen in auditions held by Fox in Berlin. Hanns Zichler was the only actor Fox was formerly familiar with, from his work with Wim Wenders.

Knut Berger and Carolina Peters spent a long time preparing and shooting the film in Israel, where they easily became part of the family and part of the Tel Aviv nightlife. Everyone who met them in Israel fell in love with them.

About the Film

The film was shot in Israel in late 2002. It was a very cold winter. The hardest day was shooting at the Dead Sea, where the actors almost froze while taking a shower and swimming in the icy water.

The shoot in Berlin started in January 2003. It was stopped for a month due to Fox's mother's sudden death, and resumed in February. During the 2003 Berlinale, Fox presented YOSSI AND JAGGER and shot WALK ON WATER simultaneously.

The budget for the movie was 1.4 million dollars and was shot in 30 days. In addition to the money from the Israel Film Fund and Hot (the Israeli cable TV), the filmmakers were joined by Israeli distributors and film buffs, United King. Moshe and Leon Ederi and their partners, Miki Rabinovitz and Dodi Zilber, not only bought the distribution rights in Israel, but also invested in the film itself, and became its executive producers.

The movie was then bought by the French -based sales agents Celluloid Dreams, run by Hengameh Panahi. The company was involved in the movie from a very early stage. International sales director Pierre Menachem read the very first draft of the script, and gave the filmmakers a letter of interest that helped them get their initial funding. When the movie was completed, Celluloid watched it and immediately decided to represent it.

About the Music

Music plays a lead role in all of Eytan Fox's movies. In this movie two things were decided at a very early stage: Axel will listen only to female vocalists while Eyal is a Bruce Springsteen fan; and the music of Esther Ofarim will be a main part of the movie.

Fox and Uchovsky are both big fans of Esther Ofarim and believe she is one of the world's best performers. Uchovsky, a music critic, has even tried to convince her to record a new CD! They saw her perform live at an early stage of their relationship and regard that performance as one of the best they have ever seen. They went to the show with a German friend of theirs named Axel who was a big Ofarim fan. Axel later died of AIDS. The character in the movie is named after him.

Israeli pop star Ivri Lider was the natural choice for composer since he is talented, out, and a very dear friend of both Fox and Uchovsky, who had already worked successfully with him in YOSSI & JAGGER. The theme song of that film, "Your Soul," a remake of a classic by Israeli diva Rita, topped the local charts for two months straight.

For the film it was only natural that Lider and Rita would do a remake of "Cinderella Rockefeller." Rita also sang the theme song for Fox's first feature film "Song of the Siren" and has sung in all of Fox's features to date.

Cast

Eyal	Lior Ashkenazi
Axel Himmelman	Knut Berger
Pia Himmelman	Carolina Peters
Menachem	Gidon Shemer
Axel's mother	Carola Regnier
Axel's father	Hanns Zischler
Alfred Himmelman	Ernest Lenart
Jello	Eyal Rozales
Rafik	Yousef (Joe) Sweid
Rafik's uncle	Imad Jabarin
Weapons instructor	Sivan Sasson
Iris	Nataly Szyzman
Kibbutz director	Hugo Yarden
Kibbutz singers	Joshua Simon
	Tom Rahav
Helga	Imke Barnstedt
Guy with cell phone	Yuval Semo
Mossad agent	Adi Eisenman
Arab father	Mahir Tuocu
Arab mother	Nesrin Cevadzade
Arab child	Ahmet Saydam
TLV bartender	Shay Rokach
Berlin bartender	Sascha Remkuf
Drag queens	Hubertus Regout
	Biggi van Blond
	Paysley Dalton
Eyal and Pia's baby	Itamar Ziv

Crew

Production Company	Lama Films
Producers	Amir Harel Gal Uchovsky
Director	Eytan Fox
Screenplay	Gal Uchovsky
Director of Photography	Tobias Hochstein
Editor	Yosef Grunfeld
Music	Ivri Lider
Sound Designer	Gil Toren
Art Directors	Avi Fahima – Israel Christoph Merg - Berlin
Costume Designers	Rona Doron – Israel Peter Pohl - Berlin
Gaffers	Lior Perri – Israel Bjorn Yves Susen - Berlin
Production Mixers	Itay Elohev - Israel Christoph Merg – Berlin
Casting	Yael Aviv – Israel Chun Mei Tan - Berlin

Israeli Crew

Line Producer	Amir Feingold
1 st assistant director	Tamar Ichilov
2 nd assistant director	Li-At Heller
Additional assistant director	Irit Kosover
Assistant to Mr. Fox and Script supervisor	Sharona Berger
Gaffer	Lior Perri
Key grip	Golan Kabayet
2 nd grip	Ronen Yahalomi
Production mixer	Itay Elohav
Boom operator	Alon Shapira
Set decorator	Dafna Noyman-Sargoty
Props	Oren Kalifa
Make-up dept. head	Galia Azoulay
Make-up artist	Limor Markazi
Choreographer	Niv Shaynfeld
Production manager	Hanan (Dino) Yunger
Pre-production coordinator	Adi Levi
Production coordinator	Gil Rozenfeld
Location manager	Guy Cohen
1 st Camera assistant	Oren Arad
Additional camera assistant	Dudi Namir
Loader	Asher Cohen
Best boy	Adi Borkin
Lighting assistants	Yuval Landsberg Ram Cizling Amir Lybman
Assistant editor	Yaniv Raiz
Wardrobe supervisor	Hadas Cnaani

Additional costume design

Oren Dar

German Crew

Line producer

Sigi Fischer

Production manager
and associate producer

Tatjana Jakovleski

1st assistant director

Michael Johnson

2nd assistant director

Sven Fehrensen

Location managers

Daniel Schwarz

Christoph Renger

Production coordinator

Esther Reincke

Production mixer

Andreas Muecke- Niesytka

Boom operator

Martin Ehlers

Gaffer

Björn -Yves Susen

Key grip

Paul Freuer

Best Boy

Alexander Jung

2nd camera assistant

Helen Sabatzki

Electrician

Florian Renz

Additional electrician

Sascha Vogel

Hair and make-up

Pamela Grujic

Make-up assistants

Pascale -Sophia

Sonia Salazar-Zivoder

Philipp Henning

Set dressers

Daniel Drobný

Sven Posniak

Thomas Krause

Stand-by props

Claudia Kiefer

Wardrobe assistants

Saskia Gierke

Jule Brauer

Location scout

Nick Hertwig

Stunt coordinator

Rainer Werner

Stunt performers

Steve Thiede

Tom Jester

Sascha Girndt

Moritz Prochnow

Matthias Bark

Set runners

Wiebke Scherenberger

Tony Gruber

Props driver

Arndt Stepper

Production driver

Claudia Drenda

Still photographer

Stephan Rabold

Turkish Crew

Production manager

Hüseyin Karabey

Production assistants

Banu Öztürk

Perihan Taş

2nd camera assistant

Cenk Tatarer

Key grip

Kenan Kolla

Production mixer

Fesyh Alpogu

Gaffer

Güngör Aydın

Make-up

Býrgen Yildirim

Drivers

Alý Demýr

Ömer Mümýn Balci

Ýsmaýl Karabey

Additional Photography - Israel

Gaffer

Loader

Production mixer

Key grip

Set dresser

Make-up

Graphic Design & Titles

Rami Levi

Ohad Milstein

Amos Zipori

Ronen Yahalomi

Dafi Noyman-Sorgati

Shani Hirsch

Lahav Halevy, BigEyes Design