



THE INSULT

— WORDS CHANGE EVERYTHING —



THE INSULT

A FILM BY **ZIAD DOUEIRI**

STARRING

ADEL **KARAM** RITA **HAYEK** KAMEL **EL BASHA**
CHRISTINE **CHOUEIRI** CAMILLE **SALAMÉ** DIAMAND BOU ABBOUD

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SYNOPSIS

In today's Beirut, an insult blown out of proportions finds Toni, a Lebanese Christian, and Yasser, a Palestinian refugee, in court. From secret wounds to traumatic revelations, the media circus surrounding the case puts Lebanon through a social explosion, forcing Toni and Yasser to reconsider their lives and prejudices.



INTERVIEW WITH ZIAD DOUEIRI

Are we to assume the premise for *The Insult* springs from an observation about Lebanese society?

No, more prosaically, the premise for the movie was something that actually happened to me several years ago in Beirut. I had had an argument with a plumber, something very banal, but tempers quickly flared, and I said practically the same words as those in the film. The incident might have been trivial, but subconscious feelings are not. When you spout those words, it is because very personal feelings and emotions have been impacted. Joëlle Touma, my co-writer on this film, was present that day. She persuaded me to go apologize to him. But the plumber refused to accept my apology. I wound up going to his boss to present my apology. When his boss used this along with other reasons to fire the

man, I instantly took the man's defense. I then realized that this was good material for a script.

That's quite concrete...

Yes, because I had immediately found all the dynamics for crafting a story built on an event that spirals out of control. I always start my films with a tension, an incident. I try to see the resulting string of events. I always start with my characters, who they are at the outset of the movie and who they become by the end of the movie. In this case, I had not one but two main characters: Toni and Yasser. Both have their faults, their respective pasts are colored by a series of internal obstacles. Plus, they are in a highly charged, electric external environment. The character of Toni has a secret, something he experienced. Nobody wishes to talk about it as it is taboo, and he feels this is a huge injustice.

Yasser also runs into obstacles. Experience has taught him not to trust the justice system.

Thirty years after the end of the civil war, where various forces of Lebanese society are? Do they manage to move beyond the dissensions that motivated them during the civil war's fifteen-year span from 1975 to 1990?

The war in Lebanon ended in 1990 with neither winners nor losers. Everyone was acquitted. General amnesty turned into general amnesia. We swept the dirt under the carpet, so to say. But there can be no national healing unless we address the issues.

Is this how you developed it into a courtroom drama?

Courtroom dramas afford scriptwriters a single place in which to pit two antagonists against each other. You can film their face-to-face confrontation. It's a sort of modern take on the western, but played in a closed setting. This is what I tried to achieve given that this movie describes a sort of duel between Toni and Yasser.

To what degree does a courtroom drama about Lebanon also become a personal film for you?

Our past subconsciously helps us craft a story, there's no escaping that. Justice has always been very important to me. I come from a family of lawyers and judges. My mother is a lawyer and was *The Insult's* legal advisor. In fact, we had many intense conversations during the writing phase of the script! She is very crafty! My mother is amazing! She lobbied hard for the Palestinian to be acquitted in the film. (laughter)

But seriously, Joëlle and I are both well-versed in the history of Lebanon's civil war, the price paid by each of the parties. As a matter of fact, she and I both come from families with deep political convictions, and different religious affiliations. She and I were raised with certain principles. Joëlle comes from a Christian Phalange family, while I'm from a Sunni family that defended the Palestinian cause, in a rather virulent way. Then, as young adults, we both tried, throughout the years, to understand the other's point of view. Each of us took a step





a balance, a form of justice, in this Lebanese story -where nothing is black and white, where it is impossible to say 'here are the good guys and here are the bad guys'.

That makes the storytelling fascinating, doesn't it?

If I had to sum up this film, I would call it a quest for dignity. Both main protagonists have suffered blows to their honor and to their dignity. Both blame the other and make him responsible for his problems. *The Insult* is absolutely optimistic and humanistic. It shows the paths that can be taken to reach peace.

Is this trial also a psychoanalysis of today's Lebanon?

That's for the Lebanese to say.

It's also about a generation gap.

I even view the film from another angle: women's point of view. They have an entirely different approach. Women are more nuanced. They have the intelligence and allow us to achieve balance. This is a film where women take control of the situation in order to moderate,

to work toward moving beyond this situation. Imagine if one day women ran the Arab world.

Do you think this film is comprehensible for non-Lebanese audiences?

Yes, I do because this film has a universal dimension. Yasser and Toni could be any other nationality, from any other nation. Once again, this film is absolutely optimistic and humanistic. It shows an alternative to conflicts by taking the path that recognizes justice and pardon.

(English translation: David W. Cox)



BIO & FILMOGRAPHY ZIAD DOUEIRI

Born in Beirut on October 7th, Ziad Doueiri grows up during the civil war and leaves Lebanon at 20, to study in the United States. He graduates from San Diego State University with a film degree and works as an assistant and camera operator in Los Angeles. In 1998, he writes and directs his first feature film *West Beirut*, internationally awarded. Since then, his films are selected and awarded from all over the world: *Lila says*, *The Attack* and his new feature, *The Insult*, selected in Official Competition at Venice international film festival 2017 (World Premiere). He also directed *Sleeper Cell* for Showtime Network in 2006 and *Baron Noir* (2016) for Canal+. He's currently shooting season 2 of *Baron Noir*.

2017 THE INSULT

Produced by Ezekiel Films, Tessalit Productions, Rouge International, Cohen Media Group, Scope Pictures - International Sales : Indie Sales – French Distributor : Diaphana

2017 BARON NOIR – Season 2

for Canal+, produced by Kwai Films, producers: Thomas Bourgignon.

2016 BARON NOIR – Season 1

Directed 8 episodes for Canal+, produced by KWAI FILMS, producers: Thomas Bourgignon with Kad Merad and Niels Arestrup

2012 THE ATTACK

Produced by 3B Productions, Scope Pictures, Canal+
International Sales: Wild Bunch - US Distributor: Cohen Media Group
FESTIVALS:

- Toronto Film Festival 2012 - *Official Competition Special Presentation*.
- 60^e Festival Internacional de cine de San Sebastián 2012 - *Special Jury Prize*.
- Tve Another Look Award: *Special Jury Prize*.
- Telluride Film Festival 2012.
- Marrakech International Film Festival 2012 - *Best Film (Golden Star)*.
- The Istanbul International Film Festival 2013 - *Cineuropa.Org Award*.
- Colcoa Film Festival 2013 - *Audience Award, Coming Soon Award, Critics Award*.

2005 SLEEPER'S CELL

TV Show for SHOWTIME USA. Produced by Ethan Reiff and Cyrus Voris

2004 LILA SAYS

Produced by 81/2 Productions, UK Film Council, France 2 Cinema, Flash Pyramide International, Canal+ - Theatrical release: January 25th 2005
FESTIVALS:

Sundance Film Festival, Toronto Film Festival, Ottawa International Film Festival, Marrakech International Film Festival, Miami Film Festival, Mons International Love Film Festival - Audience Award.

1998 WEST BEYROUTH

Produced by 3B Productions and La Sept ARTE Unité Fiction.
Theatrical release: December the 16th 1998
FESTIVALS:

- Festival De Cannes 1998 - Director's Fortnight - *François Chalais Award, ArabCriticsPrize*
- 4th Arabic Cinema In Paris - *Grand Prize*.
- Toronto Film Festival 1998 - *International Critics Award*
- Taipei Film Festival 1998 - *Jury Grand Prize*, Carthage.
- Film Festival 1998 - *Best First Film* Coe Award.
- Brussel Film Festival 1998 - *Public Award*.
- Valladolid International Film Festival 1998 - *Youth Award*.
- New York Film Festival 1999 *New Directors/ New Films Selection*.
- Fribourg International Film Festival 1999 - *Best Script*.
- The Narrowsburg International Independent Film Festival 1999 - *Best Feature Film*
- Golden Globes 1999 Official Lebanese *Entry*
- Oscars 1999 Official Lebanese *Entry*.

And Festivals of Beirut, Goteborg, Rotterdam, Hong Kong, Singapoure, Sydney, Melbourne, Wellington, Institut Franco-japonais de Tokyo, Berlin, Varsovie, View into the World, Tetouan, Sao Paulo, Helsinki, Rialto, Seventh Heaven Film Fest, Haifa...

CAST

Adel Karam	Toni (Caramel, Where Do We Go Now ?)
Rita Hayek	Shirine
Kamel El Basha	Yasser
Christine Choueiri	Manal
Camille Salamé	Wajdi Wehbe
Diamand Bou Abboud	Nadine

CREW

Director	Ziad Doueiri
Writers	Ziad Doueiri & Joëlle Touma
DOP	Tommaso Fiorilli
Editor	Dominique Marcombe
Artistic Director	Hussein Baydoun
Production Design	Johan Knudsen
Casting	Abla Khoury
Sound	Guihem Donzel, Olivier Walczak, Bruno Mercère
Music	Eric Neveux
Producers	Antoun Sehnaoui, Jean Bréhat, Rachib Bouchareb, Julie Gayet, Nadia Turincev
Associate Producers	Frédéric Domont, Muriel Merlin
Co-Producers	Charles S. Cohen, Geneviève Lemal
Production Companies	Ezekiel Films, Rouge International, Tessalit Productions
Coproduction Companies	Cohen Media Group, Scope Pictures, Douri Films

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