HIAM ABBASS
DIAMAND ABOU ABBOUD
JULIETTE NAVIS

«INSYRIATED»
A FILM BY PHILIPPE VAN LEEUW

MUSIQUE ORIGINALE
JEAN-LUC FAFCHAMPS

IMAGE
VIRGINIE SURDEJ

DECORS
KATHY LEBRUN

MONTAGE
GLADYS JOUJOU

SON
CHADI ROUKOZ, PAUL HEYMANS, ALEK GOOSSE

ASSISTANT-REALISATEUR
JEAN-FRANCOIS RAVAGNAN

DIRECTION DE PRODUCTION
SOPHIE CASSE, MARIANNE KATRA

COPRODUIT PAR
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PRODUCTEURS ASSOCIÉS
PHILIPPE LOGIE, JACQUES-HENRI ET OLIVIER BRONCKART

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DU GOUVERNEMENT FÉDÉRAL BELGE INVER TAX SHELTER

VENTES INTERNATIONALES
FILMS BOUTIQUE
INSYRIATED

A film by PHILIPPE VAN LEEUW

War in Damascus. Trapped inside their home, should a family sacrifice one of its members to protect the others?

85 minutes • HD • Color • Arabic
© Altitude100 - Liaison Cinématographique - Minds Meet - Né à Beyrouth Films

SCREENINGS AT THE BERLINALE

Official screening
Saturday 11/02 - 20:00 - CinemaxX 7 (all accreditations)

Additional screenings
Sunday 12/02 - 22:45 - CineStar 3
Monday 13/02 - 14:00 - International
Friday 17/02 - 20:00 - CinemaxX 7
Sunday 19/02 - 22:30 - Cubix 7+8
SYNOPSIS

Trapped inside her house in a city under siege, Oum Yazan, mother of three, turned her flat into a safe harbor for her family and neighbors, trying to protect them from the war outside. When bombs threaten to destroy the building, when snipers turn the courtyards into deadly zones, and burglars break in to claim their dreadful bounties, maintaining the thin balance of routine inside the walls becomes a matter of life and death.
CAST

Oum Yazan                Hiam ABBASS
Halima                   Diamand ABOU ABBOUHD
Delhani                  Juliette NAVIS
Abou Monzer              Mohsen ABBAS
Samir                    Moustapha AL KAR
Yazan                    Mohammad JIHAD SLEIK
Yara                     Alissar KAGHADOU
Aliya                    Ninar HALABI
Karim                    Elias KHATTER

CREW

Director - Screenplay    Philippe VAN LEEUW
                        Jean-Luc FAFCHAMPS
Original score          Virginie SURDEJ
Cinematography          Kathy LEBRUN
Set design              Chadi ROUKOZ
Sound recording         Claire DUBIEN
Costumes                Muriëlle VERCRUYSE
Make-up                 Jean-François RAVAGNON
Assistant director      Gladys JOUJOU
Editing                  Paul HEYMANS
Sound editing           Alek GOOSSE
Mix                      Guillaume MALANDRIN & Serge ZEITOUN
Producers               Altitude100 Production & Liaison
                       Cinématographique
                       Minds Meet, Versus Production,
                       VOO et Be tv
                       Né à Beyrouth Films
                       Films Boutique
                       KMBO
                       O’Brother Distribution

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With the help of the Tax Shelter of the Federal Government of Belgium, d’Inver Tax Shelter
PHILIPPE VAN LEEUW

Born in Brussels, Philippe Van Leeuw studied at INSAS before moving to Los Angeles, where he studied cinematography at the American Film Institute. Among his teachers were legendary cinematographers Sven Nykvist and Conrad Hall.

Upon his return to Europe, he took on the role as director of photography for feature documentaries, institutional films as well as in advertising. It was during these collaborations that he came to meet director Bruno Dumont, who would direct “La vie de Jésus”, Philippe Van Leeuw's feature film debut as cinematographer. From here on he dedicated his career to fiction, lensing several films, television features and short films. Among his contributions are two features films by Laurent Achard, “Plus Qu'Hier, Moins Que Demain” and “Le Dernier des Fous”, “Les Bureaux de Dieu” by Claire Simon and recently “Stable, Unstable” by Mahmoud Hojeij.

Meanwhile, Van Leeuw also finds time for his interest in writing and photography. His dedication to social and poetic films has lead him to his directorial debut, THE DAY GOD WALKED AWAY (2009). INSYRITEAD is his second feature film as director.

DIRECTOR’S NOTE

One day, in December 2012, a Syrian friend from Damascus told me that for the past three weeks, her father had been blocked inside his apartment in Aleppo, with no telephone or any means of communication because of the bombings and the war devastating the city. I pictured this lonely man, a prisoner in his own home, and I imagined others like him, trying to survive one day at a time.

This is the story of a family trapped inside its own home because of the war raging outside.

This project was driven by a sense of emergency. In an effort to react quickly, I decided from the beginning that there would be only one location, the apartment, and a time span of 24 hours so as to try to understand what animates ordinary people propelled into extraordinary circumstances - no heroes, but people simply reacting to the situation they are going through.

What I seek to communicate is the frailty and the force we are all capable of in a situation of distress. The instinct that gives us the strength to fight for survival and the drive for self-preservation at the expense of the needs of others stem from the same vital impulses and moral failings.

Yet there are no judgments or moral stances imposed, only facts laid to expose a bare reality.

To ensure the authenticity of the script I had written, I sought the advice of Syrians in exile, particularly those of fellow filmmakers Hala Mohammad and Meyar Al Roomy, and I relied on my own knowledge of the region. I have stayed and worked regularly in Lebanon for the past few years. The two nations share a common culture and customs, as they now unfortunately share the experience of civil war. The film is intended as an immersive experience. The apartment feels like a bubble about to explode, the
shadows are ominous, the outside world seems unreachable, forbidden. It is as if the characters are sitting on a volcano, short-tempered, jumpy, selfish, and yet trying to show empathy and compassion for their companions. Panic Room by David Fincher is a good reference in terms of tension, but here there are no tricks, no special effects, it is just a plain look at the drama of the situation.

As in my previous film, The Day God Walked Away, I feel strongly about avoiding any hint of indulgence or voyeurism in the way I approach violence. Like Jacques Tourneur, I believe that the less one sees, the better. I think that one is more susceptible to a sense of realism and emotion when, instead of looking away, one tries to see but doesn’t see anything or so little that one must make up the missing images mentally. Only then can any kind of emotion including terror truly be experienced from the screen. Also, the sound has its own ability to evoke images, often stronger and more vibrant than images themselves. The violent actions described in the film are thus more acoustic than visual.

Still, I always try to express a notion visually instead of using dialogues to convey it. To me, faces and body language should tell it all.

Except for Hiam Abbass (the mother) and Diamand Bou Abboud (Halima), the actors are all Syrian refugees. As Juliette Navis (Delhani) doesn’t speak Arabic, she was coached to produce her dialogues phonetically.

The uprising of the Syrian people started six years ago, and the war has been raging for well over five years now while the rest of the world has done nothing to stop it. The Syrians seeking refuge in Europe right now have had no choice but to abandon their homes and country. They all come from places and situations for which we lack images.

Beyond the Syrian disaster today and others, past and present, I want to shine a light on the dignity of civilian populations that are ever more implicated in modern conflicts.
Hiam Abbass was acclaimed for her performance opposite Academy Award nominee Richard Jenkins in Thomas McCarthy’s The Visitor. She was born in Nazareth, but it was after moving to Paris that she began her acting career in movies. Her feature films have since included Raja Amari’s Satin rouge; Hany Abu-Assad’s Academy Award-nominated Paradise Now, Steven Spielberg’s Munich, Amos Gitai’s Free Zone and Disengagement, Eran Riklis’ The Syrian Bride and Lemon Tree. For the latter Ms. Abbass won a European Film Award nomination, an Israeli Film Academy Award and the APSA award for best actress.

Abbass has written and directed three short films, Le pain (in which she also starred), La Danse éternelle, and Les Donne della Vucciria and signed her first feature Inheritance in 2012 where she plays one of the roles.

She also acted in Cherien Dabis’ Amreeka, and May in The Summer, Dima Elhorr’s Every Day Is A Holiday, Jim Jarmush’s The Limits Of Control, Patrice Chereau’s Persecutions, Julian Schnabel’s Miral, starring in the role of real-life heroine Hind Husseini, also in I Am Slave by Gabriel Range, The Source des Femmes by Radu Mihileanu, Une Bouteille à la Mer by Thierry Binisti, Rock the Casbah by Laila Marrakchi, Exodus by Ridley Scott, Degradee by Arab and Tarzan Nasser, A Mon Age Je Me Cache Encore Pour Fumer by Rayhana, Blade Runner 2049 by Denis Villeneuve and Succession (HBO Show) by Adam Mckay.
Diamand Abou Abboud has a Masters degree in acting and directing from the Lebanese University, Fine Arts Institute, Theatre and Cinema department where she’s been teaching for 2 years. She wrote and directed her short film “Point Virgule” which has won the special jury award at the European film festival in Beirut. She also wrote and directed the play “The Zeros” and she co-wrote the feature film “Void”. She featured in around 13 theatre plays, 6 feature films and several TV series as well as short films in and outside of Lebanon.

In Theatre: Mouaakoun; 7 contre Thèbes; l’Ile Des chevres; Ayyam Roubaayiat Al Khayyam; Harad; Aal Dora; Aal Makaad Wara; Retours; Sar Lezim Nehke; Shi Gharib ; Reasons To Be Pretty; Ekht Rjeil; and now she is in a tour in France in a French play, an adaptation of “Le Quatrième Mur” de “Sorj Chalandon”.

In Cinema: Beirut Open City; Here Comes the Rain; Stable Unstable; Void; Insyriated; The Insult.

Diamand also received on her work Lebanese and International Awards:
- Murex d’Or for Best Actress in cinema for her roles in “Void” and “Stable Unstable”
- Best Actress for her role in “Void” from the Lebanese Movie Guide Awards
- Best Actress for her role in “Void” from “Al Dakhla Film Festival” Morocco
- Best Script for “Void” from “Malmo Arab film Festival” Sweden
- Murex d’Or for Best Supporting Actress for her role in “Sajina”
- Special Jury Award from the “European Film Festival” for her short film “Point Virgule”
JULIETTE NAVIS DELHANI

Juliette Navis is an actress and theatre director based in Paris. She graduated from the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique de Paris where she met Arpad Schilling with whom she has worked regularly since 2006 in France and in Hungary, namely in Apology of an Escapologist, Père Courage, Laborotel, and The Party.

She is a founding member of the theatre collective La Vie Brève with whom she played in Robert Plankett at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, Nous Brûlons as well as Le Gout du Faux, all directed by Jeanne Candel. Building upon Arpad Schilling’s methodology where a dramaturgy is born of a series of exchanges between the propositions of the actors-as-authors and the framework decided by the director, she develops projects of collective creation of theatre and cinematic forms.

For the cinema, she has held roles in films by Cédric Klapisch (Paris and Ma part du gâteau), Etienne Chatiliez (Agathe Cléry), Thomas Lilti (Hippocrate) and Eric Baudelaire (The Ugly One, Letters to Max).
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