



KISS ME BEFORE IT BLOWS UP

luise
wolfram

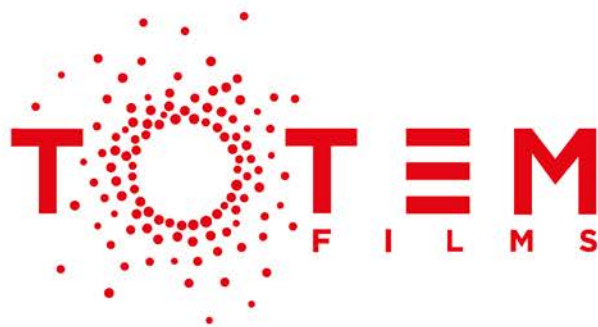
moran
rosenblatt



directed by
shirel peleg

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SYNOPSIS

A subversive love story between clashing cultures and families, **KISS ME BEFORE IT BLOWS UP** is a romantic misadventure crossing all borders. When two generations of Israeli women fall for a German woman and an Palestinian man, chaos follows. What happens with lovers who don't fit but do belong together?



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Shirel Peleg was born in 1985 in Venezuela and raised in Israel.

She graduated 2010 with a BFA in film and television from the Sapir College. During her studies Shirel majored in production and directing. After her graduation she worked as a newsdesk producer at the Israeli news company Channel 2 and as a newsdesk producer for the Israeli newspaper Haaretz. In 2012 Shirel immigrated with her partner to Germany where she learned the language in no time to enroll at the screenwriting program at renowned Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg.

Her latest directing work **WE'RE BACK AGAIN** has been selected for GERMAN FILM's talent showcase, the NEXT GENERATION SHORT TIGER which is presented during the 2018 Cannes Film Festival.



KISS ME BEFORE IT BLOWS UP (2019)

95min // Writer & Director Screwball-Comedy

English/Hebrew/Arabic/German

Development-funding by MFG Filmförderung Baden-Württemberg

WE'RE BACK AGAIN (2017)

7:45min // Writer & Director Comedy // German-Hebrew

<https://vimeo.com/238921106> ---- Password: wswd18

2018 German Films NEXT GENERATION SHORT TIGER

2018 INDY FILM FEST / WORLD CINEMA SHORTS

Official Selection, Indianapolis, IN, USA

2018 18th SHORTS FILMFESTIVAL OFFENBURG

Official Selection, Offenburg, Germany

2018 6th MONSTRONALE INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

Competition, Halle-Saale, Germany

2018 5th FESTIVAL OF NATIONS 2018

Official Selection, Lenzing, Austria

DAILY SNOOT (2015)

3min // Writer & Director Animation-Short

<https://vimeo.com/155801202> Password: Tagesmaul2016

2017 Emden Internationales Filmfest Emden

2017 Ilmenau Kurzfilmnacht Ilmenau

2016 Stuttgart Filmschau Baden-Württemberg

2016 Flensburg Flensburger Kurzfilmtage

2016 Sofia World Festival of Animated Film Varna

2016 Stuttgart ITFS Internationales Trickfilm Festival Stuttgart

BETWEEN THE LINES (2010)

18min // Producer Documentary // Hebrew

SECLUSION No. 10 (2009)

13:50 min' // Drehbuch, Regie & Kamera Documentary // Hebrew

EZRAT NASHIM (2009)

9:15min // Drehbuch & Regie Short // Hebrew

FOUR WOMEN (2007)

8:30min // Drehbuch & Regie Documentary // Hebrew/ Portuguese

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Writer / Director **Shirel Peleg**

When I first started writing the script to *Kiss Me Before It Blows Up*, I placed a little reminder to myself, a pink Post-it I glued to the bottom of my computer's screen reading three big, little words: "Love, Family, Chaos". Simple enough, I thought to myself.

Seeking inspiration from the foremothers and forefathers of the romantic comedy, I appreciated the great comfort in the old classics from the 40s as well as ones from the 90s. Both portraying a world with the possibility of a clear good vs. bad and a happy ending which usually meant the guy gets the girl and the girl gets the wedding she had always dreamt of. I vividly recall the young me, craving for these exact same things.

Yet attempting to apply the romantic comedy magic to the nitty-gritty realities of my own story proved to be a challenging task.

How can you squeeze "Love, Family,

Chaos" into the 'traditional' mold of the popular genre when the love you are describing is one of the same sex, and the family is an explosive unit that collides on matters of politics and religion, and the chaos is none other than the Israeli-Palestinian one?

And how the hell is all of that supposed to have the happy ending I just had to have?!

I figured that this 'mold', the one that makes some topics socially acceptable, decent, presentable—or as we define it—mainstream, isn't set in stone. It's not the enemy I have to break or twist for it so succumb.

The genre can in fact include us all. It can even place taboo topics such as religion, politics and even the holocaust in plain sight without having to moralize anyone.

The solution I found to work for me was strikingly simple.

Instead of shying away from what's considered taboo, I just throw every controversial topic I could find into the mix, Instead of avoiding perspectives I personally oppose to, I presented them in plain sight, allowing them to be heard; and instead of pretending the

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birds are chirping while my protagonists fall in love ignoring the backdrop of the eternally explosive middle-east, I let the sirens blow in the background.

I believe the scheme that provided joy and comfort in the romantic comedies of the '40s and '90s isn't obsolete. But the world has changed. Wars aren't fought from opposite sides of the trench; in some countries gays, like me, can enjoy the right to marry, and gender is as fluid as are our melting glaciers.

And yet, even in this changed world, one can still have their happy end. It just means that the way we get there is a teeny-weeny bit broader so that it can include everyone.

CAST



MARIA

Maria is smart. Well, that's what everyone thought about this fetching German scientist till she decided to take on the Jewish mob, aka Shira's Family.



SHIRA

Shira loves.

Loves the good life, loves her family but what this one really loves is the ladies. Especially the ones she knows damn well she should keep her hands off.



RON

The world didn't need one, but there he is, the modern day, Jewish incarnation of Archie Bunker.

ORA

This exemplary Jewish mother's unconditional love comes with quite a few conditions....



IBRAHIM

This Palestinian looker has spent so many years working in Europe he somehow managed to forget how the middle-eastern cookie crumbles, and dares think love might actually prevail.

BERTA

This is one nana you wouldn't find knitting no sweaters.



HANS

All this hopeless hippie who'd rather sell his kidney than deal with conflict can do when meeting the future in-laws in their disharmonized natural habitat, is pretend he's deaf and chant all we need is love.

PETRA

Like a defendant appearing before an especially vindictive tribunal, the only thing this guilt-ridden German wants to do upon contact with the holy land is- run!



NETA

This parking inspector is the only person who uses lack of tact as an opening line.



ELLA

If she could, the only reaction Shira's younger sister would have for anything coming out of her big sister's mouth would be: "shut up" (followed by the obligatory millennial snort-like scoff).

LIAM

The poor guy. No filters. This boy-man can't help it but blurt out whatever happens to cross his mind. Usually, the thing everyone's thinking but no one dares to say out loud.



DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW

September 30th, 2019
With Kathleen McInnis

K: ... Tell me, how do you describe the film?

S: My name is Shirel Peleg, and I'm the director and writer of *Kiss Me Before It Blows Up*.

K: ... Tell me, how do you describe the film?

S: I think *Kiss Me Before It Blow Up* is best described as a film about two generations of women, Grandmother and Granddaughter, who are desperately trying to make room for love in a world that only knows conflict,

K: what kind of conflict are we looking at here in *Kiss Me Before It Blow Up*?

S: Any conflict possible. We basically threw all of them into the mix; we have religion, we have different origins, cultures, politics, it's all there.

K: Tell me a little bit about who stars in the film.

S: So the stars of the film are Moran Rosenblatt, portraying Shira Shalev, and Luise Wolfram portraying Maria Müller and Rivka Michaeli portraying the Grandmother, Berta.

K: Going to back to this question about making room for love in a world that only knows conflict, which is such a great statement both for the emotional and personal, but also for the location. Why did you choose to set the film in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem?

S: I started writing – I chose to set the film in Israel because, I started writing it when still living in Israel. That's where the story happens, that's where the conflict is, and for me it's always, you know, home. And I think it's also very typical for me – it's typical debut also, you know, going home: going to what you know, trying to figure out yourself first, and I think that's where it best happens, and I'm very lucky to have had the chance to bring an entirely – a mixed team to Israel, and a German team.

K: One of the things I love so much about the film is the many ways you look at conflict; the comedic conflict of a family, the romantic conflict between people looking for love; the political conflict in the location, political, religious, all levels of conflict in the film and you adjust them very uniquely. What does how you speak about conflict say about you as a filmmaker?

S: I don't know what the way I speak about

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conflict says about me as a filmmaker, I do know that trying to tackle conflict from many different prisms, is the way – is the only way I see possible when trying to look at a conflict, because the most important thing for me was not to judge, it was just to portray. So I think, putting the contrast, and having the audience feel the way, feel how they – well the conflict basically needs to happen with the audience. The audience is the one that needs to feel the conflict. I'm not trying to put it there in order to judge it, I'm just trying to create this juxtaposition that allows this to actually exist. For you to judge – for you to feel actually, not to judge, just to see. To experience. So basically, I think what defines me as a filmmaker is the fact that I really take point at showing the different ways and the different conflicts, and the different locations, religions, opinions, just letting them all exist. Not judging any of them, just putting them out there for you to, to – behold.

K: Let's go to the cast; can you tell me about the casting process about each of your lead actors in their roles.

S: The casting process was, really, it's a funny story: I prepared myself for a long journey and it ended up being the first two actresses that we saw for the different roles. So Moran was the first one we saw for Shira, and Luise was the first one we saw for Maria, and we both had this moment of 'Oh my God, yes!'. And then, because I wasn't confident enough to just say 'Ok, nailed it', we continued looking... And we never had a second runner up. It was just these two always, no matter what we did. And when we flew Moran into Berlin and put them together in a room, that was magic! Pure

magic. Yah. And I enjoyed that decision every day on set. I think they're a beautiful match and amazing actresses. Very different ones, but it was a joy to work with both of them.

K: I love it. And the rest of the team? Can you talk about them as well?

S: I had really, I think it's something that repeated itself; looking for the rest of the family, I figured out pretty early that I'm not going to make them look alike. There was something very specific that I was looking for in each character. For example, for the father: it was really important for me that it would be a big, chubby man that had zero meanness in him, so that he could actually say all the terrible things that he does in the film, and we're not going to hate him. We are just going to listen. And I had exactly the same feeling like I had with Moran and like I had with Luise, seeing John Carroll Lynch for the first time like, 'Oh, yes, and I don't want to see anyone else for this role, we have to make this happen!'

And looking for the German parents was also a very long process, that's where I think we took more time until we got that mixture together. But also the moment we had them, and I remember having them in the room – we started rehearsing in Germany before because of time issues – and the moment we had them together in a room, I was like, I didn't have to—I didn't direct anything, you know, there was a family and they had these discussions you know – it just all happened. All I had to do was gather the right people in the same space and it just – the rest happened without me. [Laughter] It was a lot of fun.

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K: Specifically, about the Grandma, and her Palestinian lover.

S: So the grandmother was an even shorter process, because for this was the only actress I always had in mind. There was no other option for me, you know. It was clear to me that it has to be Rivka Michaeli, and I did not care to see anyone for the role, and I was lucky enough that I had a producer that thought the same, and that she came onboard. She read the script, she loved it, she said yes, and we are so lucky to have her, and I'm still very, very happy about this decision and that it turned out the way I hoped it would. Yah, she's a diva.

K: I want to ask this question now that you're on the other side; do you have any moments that really stand out as the ones that are, not your favourite, but just closest to your heart? Are there any moments in the production where you're like 'that was the best'?

S: I am very fortunate to have a variety of moments to pick from because the production for me, it was – I spoke to you about it before, that I'm a bit ashamed to say sometimes that, I enjoyed all of it! I had fun, I really had fun. Of course, there were moments that I wanted to cry a little but I didn't, because I had to laugh immediately, so it was fun the entire time. But the moment that I had this like, 'Oh my God' moment, 'I cannot believe this is actually happening', is the moment I had the Shalev family together, all around one table. I really had to take a deep breath and stop myself from crying – thinking about it now I really want to start crying again – because, I saw this family, and it was alive. We were there with the camera, yeh, but it was alive, and it was a family, and it has something so special about it, and I felt

like also I found a way to portray the essence of, yah, my own family, in a way – it was very different from my family in a way because they were quiet when you asked them to... [laughter] But yeh, there was something there that I cannot describe in words, and I hope that also happens to whoever watches the film. But it felt like a real dinner table, with a real family, and that was a joyous moment for me.

K: Can you talk about why this film is a German production?

S: I think the process of making the film happen in Germany, it's the first time I had the time to – not only to think, but to reflect – and this is something that being in Germany allowed me to do. And I also felt freedom of actually saying what I want, and I think that's I think the big difference from doing something from within the place, and within the system that you work within. And having the privilege of taking a step back, looking from the outside at something that you know best, and going back there differently. I think this project never would have been funded in Israel – there are very little, almost no comedies made – and if, no one dares to talk politics, religion, then you know, you put the lesbians in the mix, who wants that? [laughter] But I think I was very fortunate to have found partners that would allow me to take a story that happens entirely in Israel, tell it the way it is, and do it in Israel but with German funding. And I do think it's a German story as well, it doesn't make it less German because it's not physically in Germany – I think the topic is very German, I think it also does well to the German cast and characters in the film to not be in Germany when actually tackling these issues, it changes everything. They too become more

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open, more exposed, so... Altogether I'm very pleased that it turned out this way.

K: The multinational feeling of the film, the multinational feeling of you as an artist to me speaks to a global voice; do you feel like you are one of the new voices of a more global audience, for a more global audience?

S: I do believe that once you go deep into a topic, you end up reaching a core, and this core is global. That's my goal, to search for a certain core, a certain truth that hopefully speaks to a lot of people. Because I think in our core as human beings, it doesn't really matter what's on the outside, what kind of passport we hold and what's the language we are speaking: we all know love, we all know family, we all know conflict. So I think that's the center of it.

K: Beautiful. So, the elephant in the room is the Nazis.

S: Well, the Nazis are always the elephant in the room [laughter]. Why are they the elephant in the room, actually?

K: Well it's funny that I even would say this, because some people would say 'Oh lesbians are the elephant, or Palestinian/Israeli love is the elephant in the room - Nazis, perhaps because we live in a world where we have this idea that maybe the ideals of Nazism are coming back - talking about Nazis in the way that we talk about them used to be- we don't see this a lot, we don't see this look at the questions that you raise in the film. So maybe they're not the elephant in the room, maybe everybody's an elephant in the room actually, in Kiss Me Before It Blows Up.

S: If you actually want to address topics

honestly, and without hiding behind anything, you need to have this kind of abundance of conflicts.

I was fortunate enough to go twice to film school; once in Israel and once in Germany, once in the beginning of my 20's, the second time at the beginning of my 30's. And, I always felt a bit boxed in, in this dichotomy of, you're either doing a drama, and it's supposed to be - I'm exaggerating of course - but you're doing a drama and it's supposed to be depressing, or you're doing a comedy and it's supposed to be stupid. And I kept on looking for a way to deal with things that are - and you know it's just not life, life is not either-or. Life is somewhere in between, sometimes a lot of this and a lot of that. And I think that's why we keep on calling it screwball, is because this abundance of topics, saying 'Ok I', not going to go for one conflict in order to actually go deep, in order to actually talk about something, I need to open the hearts and I need to do it with comedy. And this comedy, the way we decided to go about it is just like by throwing all the conflict into the mix. And I think that serves a bigger point that for me is always the motivation, keeps on being the motivation also, is to try to take things that usually belong in the fringes, sometimes are also called taboo topics, and just push them a little to the center, where we all can enjoy discussing them, basically. Because that's what I'm trying to do, I am not trying to say this is right and this is wrong, I'm just trying to show that life is a bit more complicated, usually no one is right and no one is wrong, we're just all stuck together trying to figure it out. So I think that's what we are doing in the film, just like, putting them all together, looking at how



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beautiful this chaos actually is when you let it happen... And, yeh, basking at that, actually.

K: ... Beautiful. We've gotten all the bits, all the sound bites we want – is there anything in particular that you want to make sure we get out into the world that I haven't asked about?...

S: I think the one important thing that we didn't talk about is the issue of – and I think that was, well one of the most important things for me, starting this project, I remember really vividly remember sitting and writing the first pages, thinking to myself 'how great would it be to have just a film where people are lesbians and no one cares that they are, they can be, even in a romantic comedy; which is for me you know, the... there is no more mainstream than that. And I think that's what got the ball starting for me. Like, 'how great would it be to have people like me just be there – without no one talking about the fact that they're lesbians, and no one making a big deal out of it, and just like, characters! You know? You don't have to explain when it a he and a she wanting to be together, so we don't explain that it's a she and a she. And no one cares about it, and you forget about it after 30 seconds into the film – you don't care. And for me, these are the moments that really make me happy, and that's the one thing that I say 'yay, nailed it': it's a romantic comedy, and people laugh, and there are two women, and no one cares! So that's cool...

The other one is that if we're trying to shorthand anything, the film is about family love and conflict,

You know that's the little post-it I had on my computer: Family, love and conflict.

S: Things that were just a given in our world is the fact that we are talking about like, two women that are together, and the fact that, over 50% (is that right?) of our team is female, and it's something that we never sat and said 'ok, let's crunch the numbers and see how many we've collected by now', that it just happened, and at one point we were like "hmm, we should start looking for a few dudes!" (laughter). I remember meeting Edo – he was the first one, we were like 'Oh finally, a man!'. We were so relieved!

K: This idea that it just happened because of who you are, that as you went out to fill all the teams that happen to be over 50% women, this is an important idea because we are also talking about getting, about seeing ourselves up on screen, and seeing ourselves practically in the making of the film, do you want to speak about that? This idea that because you are a woman, because you are a lesbian woman, because that's who you are, you made a film from your world, from your perspective.

S: Exactly, so the same way that we made a film about two women who want to be together and no one cares that they're two women who want to be together, and it just happened and it's not even something that you know, during the development that we tried to explain in any form or way; it has never been a discussion, not even once actually. And, um, I'm really lucky! I'm figuring this out now as we speak. That's the one of the things that I think also influenced the fact that when we were gathering the team, when we assembled the team, in Israel and Germany as well, we just picked the people we wanted to work with, people who are talented in what they do, and somehow we ended up

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having a mainly female team, to the point that we just figured that we have to start actually going and looking for some men to put there too, because it started being a bit... weird... [no good, I have to think about it again]



S: I think that in the process of gathering the team, it was really important for us to – we went out to look for the best people we could get in order to tell the story that we were trying to tell, and we found ourselves meeting, indeed a lot of amazing women we brought onboard. Until we actually realized that we don't have enough men in the team, and as diversity is really, really important, we went looking for them! [laughter] Sounds weird [laughter] but it's nice, because usually men are the one's sitting and saying 'Yah we look for diversity, so..'.. [I want to do this way cooler! - Laughter]