

mec film presents

LIKE TWENTY IMPOSSIBLES

Ka'inana Ashrun Mustachil

by Annemarie Jacir
Palestine 2003

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mec film

Contact: Irit Neidhardt

Boxhagener Str. 18, 10245 Berlin, Germany

Tel: +49-30-66766700, Fax: +49-30-66766699

Mail: info@mecfilm.de , www.mecfilm.de

[images for download www.mecfilm.de](http://www.mecfilm.de)

Like Twenty Impossibles by Annemarie Jacir

Synopsis

Occupied Palestine: A serene landscape now pockmarked by military checkpoints. When a Palestinian film crew decides to avert a closed checkpoint by taking a remote side road, the political landscape unravels, and the passengers are slowly taken apart by the mundane brutality of military occupation. Both a visual poem and a narrative about the fragmentation of a people, "like twenty impossibles" questions the politics of filmmaking and the opportunism of artists.

Biography

Palestinian filmmaker and writer Annemarie Jacir lived in Saudi Arabia until the age of sixteen and then received her formal education in the United States. She worked in the film industry in Los Angeles before returning to school to obtain a Masters degree in Film in New York. She has written, directed and produced a number of films. Her most recent film, **like twenty impossibles**, premiered at Cannes, was a finalist for the Student Academy Awards and has won numerous awards at International festivals. Jacir was listed in Filmmaker magazine as one of the 25 New Faces of Independent Cinema. She lives in Palestine and is in development on a feature length film.

Awards

Best Film (second prize) - Lenolofilmfestival Italy

- Best Screenwriting - Lenolofilmfestival Italy
- Best Short Film - International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg
- World Premiere, Cannes Film Festival, Official Selection, Cinéfondation
- Student Academy Awards - National Finalist Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences
- Best Short Screenplay - Nantucket Film Festival
- Best Short Film - Palm Springs International Short Film Festival
- Best Short Film (Emerging Narrative) - IFP/New York
- Silver Plaque - Chicago International Film Festival
- Best Short Film - Institute Du Monde Arabe Biennale
- Audience Choice Award - Polo Ralph Lauren Columbia University Festival
- Special Jury Prize - Ramallah International Film Festival
- Best Films of the Year list - 2003 Film Comment Magazine
- 25 New Faces of Independent Cinema, 2004 - Filmmaker Magazine

Festivals (selection)

Cannes Film Festival, Official Selection - World Premiere

- New York Film Festival, Official Selection
- Locarno Film Festival, Official Selection
- Telluride Film Festival, Official Selection
- Chicago International Film Festival
- New York Film Festival
- Edinburgh International Film Festival, Official Selection

- Palm Springs International Short Film Festival, Official Selection
- Karlovy Vary Film Festival, Czech Republic
- Hamptons International Film Festival
- IFP Market - New York
- Carthage Film Festival (JournÉes CinÉmatographiques de Carthage) Tunis
- International Short Film Festival in Drama
- Ismailia International Film Festival
- Rio de Janeiro International Short Film Festival
- Sao Paulo International Short Film Festival
- International Filmfestival Mannheim-Heidelberg
- Festival Tous Courts, Aix-en-Provence
- Cinéma Tout Ecran, Festival International du Film et de la Télévision
- Aspen Shortsfest
- Nashville Film Festival
- Fajr International Film Festival
- Huesca Film Festival, Spain
- Nantucket Film Festival
- Paris Cinéma
- The Norwegian Short Film Festival
- ARCIPELAGO International Festival of Short Films and New Images
- Human Rights Watch Film Festival - London & New York
- SNIFF 2003 Slovenian Festival
- La Cittadella del Corto International Short Film Festival
- Sarajevo Film Festival
- Institute du Monde Arabe (June 26 – July 4th, 2004)
- Melbourne International Film Festival
- Florida Film Festival
- Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival
- Ramallah International Film Festival
- Brisbane International Film Festival
- Sydney International Film Festival
- Ayam Beirut Al Cinema'iya
- Brazilian Student Film Festival
- Chicago Palestine Film Festival
- Palestine Film Festival - Dreams of a Nation
- Abu Dhabi International Film Festival
- Arabian Sights, Washington DC
- NYU International Film Festival
- Queens Museum of Art, Greek Cultural Center Showcase
- Third Eye Festival, New York
- Columbia University Film Festival
- ADC National Convention
- Moscow Palestine Film Festival
- Rooftop Film Series
- Canada Palestine Film Festival
- International Film Festival of Human Rights Barcelona & Madrid
- United Nations, NY for Arab Club
- The Arab Film Festival, SF
- Jacob Burns Film Center

- Screenings with Sakakini Center at Amari and Kalandia refugee camps
- Doc Films, University of Chicago
- Le Festival Du Monde Arabe, Montreal
- Aqoolakum Western Mass. Palestine Film Festival
- Minnesota Arab Film Festival
- Women's Film Festival, Milano
- Solothurn Festival, Switzerland
- if!stabil, Turkey (screenings also in Diyarbakir and Kars)
- FEST, Portugal
- Theatre Festival Amman
- Lenolafilmfestival Italy
- European Shortfilmbiennale Ludwigsburg
- Best of Short Films Festival France
- Locarno International Film Festival

Credits

Starring	Reem Abu-Sbaih, Ismail Dabbagh, Raja'i Khateeb, Rami Mussalem, Shadi Zumorrood, Ashraf Abu Moch
Director of Photography	Phillipe Bellaiche
Musical Score	Kamran Rastegar
Sound Design	Bill Toles
Editing	Annemarie Jacir
Screenplay	Annemarie Jacir and Kamran Rastegar
Written, Directed, Produced by	Annemarie Jacir

Technical Specs

35mm color · 17:00 · Dolby SR · 1:1.85
 in Arabic, English, & Hebrew w/English or French subtitles

Director's Note

What inspired *like twenty impossibles* is the continued fragmentation of us as Palestinians – how through the imposition of endless checkpoints and military barriers throughout our own land we have been separated from each other and also criminalized for the mere act of attempting freedom of movement – the right to travel from one place to another. Aside from the creation of arbitrary borders, this fragmentation has also been imposed through the identity cards that Palestinians carry. These ID cards further separate Palestinians from each other by labeling them as a “West Banker”, “Jerusalemite”, “Israeli citizen” or “American citizen”, “Gazan”, rather than allowing us our collective identity as Palestinians. I was also interested in exploring that fact that these various “labels” also give each individual different rights and privileges depending on what their ID is. In *like twenty impossibles*, a group of Palestinian filmmakers begin

their journey by making a film together and working as any ordinary film crew would – with a director, an actor, cinematographer, soundperson, etc. By the end of the film, because of these realities, a totally different situation exists.

I wanted to explore the reality of life under Israeli occupation and at the same time to question what it means to be an artist and filmmaker under these harsh realities where filmmaking is a privilege and where simple movement is a privilege. The fact that it's a film about a film is not only meant to critique the filmmaking process itself but also to show how memory and nostalgia (of the character of “Anne-Marie”) play a part in all this. I also wanted to comment on, or rather poke fun, at the tendency of filmmakers to appear in their own films, and somehow becoming the heroes of their own story.

In addition to exploring what it means to be an artist from an occupied country, I also wanted to ask questions about the very act of filmmaking itself. It seemed quite natural that just as the elements of film cannot work when separated from each other (sound, picture, the actor etc), so does the breakdown of communication and of unity amongst the crew of Palestinians themselves once they are separated from each other.

By the end of the film, the entire thing falls apart; with sound separated from image, the actor arrested, and the director leaving. I found that cinema was a perfect metaphor for what is happening in Palestine today and has been happening for the last 57 years. By the end of the film, because all the elements are torn from each other – there is no film. There *cannot* be a film.

In the story, the film crew's first hints of their disunion come when they hit the first checkpoint. As the film continues, there is a complete breakdown of communication. “Anne-Marie” as director is no longer able to communicate with her crew, or with her actor. She then takes decisions on her own and her way of resistance is to “continue” despite the soldiers – however she does not necessarily do what is the best for the rest of the crew, nor is she necessarily aware of her different position vis-à-vis the Israeli soldiers.

Rami, for example, is in a different situation than all the others due to the fact of his West Bank ID. At Kalandia, when it is closed, the crew all agree to take a side road --- all except him. He does not say a word at that moment and, for the first time in the film; a decision has been made without the communication between all. And why is he quiet? He has the most to lose if they are caught – after all, Anne-Marie has her American passport, Mohammed has his Israeli passport, and the driver has a Jerusalem ID. Yet he is finally doing what he loves – acting – and he doesn't want to spoil this moment. He says, “I'll be in front of the camera and do something I love”. This is what he wants (though not what he gets).

This film is about the politics of filmmaking itself - the role of the director, her naivety in ‘playing herself’, becoming the hero and because of her ‘vision’, leading this crew of people into a place where she has no control and when things get bad, she may not necessarily be the one to pay the price for that.

This film is entirely fiction. It is totally scripted and acted from beginning to end. However I am not concerned with what is fiction and what is documentary. I am only concerned

with what is true, or rather what is true to me. I cannot stage a checkpoint like the one that exists at Kalandia - what happens there is much worse in real life and I have found that any film that tries to portray this reality ultimately fails.

The one small part of the film that is "documentary" in a traditional sense – is the montage inserted into the film near the beginning – at Kalandia. It grounds everything for me. It interrupts the flow of the narrative, of everything fictive about the film, and suggests the reality of the checkpoints. Narratively and technically, it's too long. Narratively and technically it makes no sense, and it shouldn't be there. Which is exactly how I feel about those checkpoints.

For the past 30 years, since the first time I crossed the border into Palestine, the humiliation and violence of crossing has only increased. Thirty years of strip searches, interrogations and being made to feel like a criminal just for being born into a certain group has affected me. There is no necessary violence in standing naked with ones family as a child at a border crossing for hours – but the pain and humiliation of that has deeply affected me and continues to as an adult. This is exactly the kind of mundane, every day violence I wanted to explore in the film: violence in a less-traditional sense.

As I was writing the script (in 2001), there were regular Israeli invasions into Ramallah and Bethlehem (the two cities I moved between). These attacks came in many forms but one of these ways was from the sky through shelling via F-16s. When the attacks would start, I would hide on the bathroom floor or in whatever room had the least amount of windows and wait for it to end --- and this kind of violence is so obviously unacceptable. Who can defend military attacks on entire civilian populations as happens in Palestinian cities, in Gaza, in Nablus, Jenin, etc? It's a question I am not in the least bit interested in. However what I am interested in exploring is another kind of violence, the mundane violence of military occupation and the 'nothingness' that happens. That is where the film came from.

Press

"like twenty impossibles is grippingly suspenseful while also satirizing the power imbalances inherent in political filmmaking" - FILMMAKER

"Succint and powerful" - FILM COMMENT

"Blurs the line between truth and fiction to tell a story of art bowed but not defeated by the routine violence of Israeli occupation" - SAN FRANCISCO BAY GUARDIAN

"Like the politics it discusses, it is resolutely, and brilliantly, inconclusive" - TIME OUT

"Compared in some quarters to Pontecorvo's also pseudo-documentary *The Battle of Algiers*, this is obviously more compact and yet, in its necessary absence of character development and visual brutality, equally devastating in condemnation - BLUE JAI ARTS

"A Palestinian film crew attempting to pass a military checkpoint into Jerusalem encounters firsthand the insidious nature of oppression in the lyrical and unnerving faux

documentary *like twenty impossibles* - NASHVILLE NEWS

"In Jacir's Kiarostamian like twenty impossibles, we are left with unnerving silence" -
THE VILLAGE VOICE

It is a thousand times easier for you
To pass an elephant through the needle's eye.
To catch fried fish in the Milky Way...
A thousand times easier
Than smoldering with your oppression
The spark of an idea.
Like twenty impossibles
We shall remain.
-Tawfiq Zayyad, 1965