

Persmap

Lemon Tree



Lemon Tree

Een film van Eran Riklis

35mm · color · 106min. · Dolby Digital · 1:1.85

Sinds de dood van haar man leeft Salma (Hiam Abbas) van de bescheiden opbrengsten van haar citroenbomen. Wanneer de Israëlische minister van defensie (Doron Tavory) en zijn echtgenote (Rona Lipaz-Michael) haar burens worden, eisen de Israëlische geheime diensten dat het groepje citroenbomen om veiligheidsredenen verdwijnt.

Salma weigert echter de schadevergoeding die door de minister wordt voorgesteld en besluit met de hulp van haar advocaat (Ali Suliman) de zaak voor het Israëlische Hooggerechtshof te brengen.

Palestijnse citroenbomen versus een Israëlische minister, dat is dus het tegelijk tragische en absurde vertrekpunt van de film van Eran Riklis, die al eerder van zich liet horen met "The Syrian Bride".

www.lemontreemovie.com

Publieksprijs
Panorma
Filmfestival van Berlijn 2008

Land : Israël
Jaar : 2008
Duur : 106 min.
Formaat : 35mm
Release datum: 31 juli 2008
Distributie: cinéart

Meer informatie:

Publiciteit : MVSP,
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Persmap en foto's staan op: www.cineart.be
Persrubriek inlog: cineart / wachtwoord: film
Cinéart coördinatie Publiciteit & Marketing: Noor Pelser

LEMON TREE

CAST

Hiam Abbass	Salma Zidane
Ali Suliman	Ziad Daud
Rona Lipaz-Michael	Mira Navon
Doron Tavory	Defense Minister Israel Navon
Tarik Copty	Abu Hussam
Amos Lavie	Captain Jacob
Amnon Wolf	Leibowitz
Smadar Yaaron	Tamar Gera
Ayelet Robinson	Shelly
Danny Leshman	Private Quickie
Liron Baranes	Gilad
Loai Nofi	Nasser Zidane
Hili Yalon	Sigi Navon
Makram J Khoury	Abu Camal
Michael Warshaviak	Attorney Braverman



LEMON TREE

CREW

Casting	Yael Aviv
Executive Producers	Moshe Edery, Leon Edery, David Silber
Co-producer	Ira Riklis
Associate Producer	Marcia Riklis
Supervising Line Producer	Ayelet Imberman
Line Producer	Uzi Karin
Sound Recordist	Ashi Milo
Sound Designer	Gil Toren
Sound Mixer	Hervé Buirette
Wardrobe Designer	Rona Doron
Production Designer	Miguel Merkin
Composer	Habib Shehadeh Hanna
Editor	Tova Ascher
Director of Photography	Rainer Klausmann (BVK)
Screenplay	Suha Arraf Eran Riklis
Producers	Bettina Brokemper, Antoine de Clermont-Tonnerre, Michael Eckelt, Eran Riklis
Director	Eran Riklis

Produced by Eran Riklis Productions MACT Productions Riva Film Heimatfilm

In co-production with ARTE France Cinema, ZDF-ARTE, Citrus, Film Investors

United King Films, Metro Communications

With the participation of CANAL+

With the support of Filmstiftung NRW, Israel Film Fund, CNC

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The Middle East is constantly changing although when you really think about it, perhaps it isn't...hope, optimism, pessimism, breakthroughs, new horizons, a new day, the future, the past – all words used on a regular basis to describe the situation in a region that has seen it all. Trees have always been around to witness what mankind has been doing, and although when thinking of this area people tend to think about olive trees, this story is about lemon trees that become a threat to national security, a title that lemon trees are not too used to...

When I made *THE SYRIAN BRIDE*, I thought it pretty much contained my view of the situation around me as I came to know and observe it as a filmmaker and as a citizen of Israel and the world. But the fact is that these issues continue to haunt me in many ways and when I wrote the story *Salma's war*, I couldn't resist it and decided to once again create a film that will go one step ahead with my views of Middle East madness (on all levels) and will possibly be the film to end all films as far as my statement on the matter goes (but never say never...)

Now this may sound a bit ambitious but it's not really as *Lemon Tree* is a simple story about people who find themselves fighting over matters that could have been resolved quite easily if they would just listen to each other. But simple expectations are a big step as we have seen in so many parts of the world and the heat in this particular region, not to mention the burden of history, blood, religion and other eternal matters do not help make things just a bit easier...

But, with all due respect to the above, this is really a film about solitude as it is reflected in the lives of two women – Salma on the Palestinian side and Mira, the Defense Minister's wife, on the Israeli one, and I guess that is what really drew me to it as well as all the other characters involved who somehow represent so many issues and subjects but all of them suffer from a kind of loneliness which is part of their lives on a personal and national level.

And not unlike my approach in *THE SYRIAN BRIDE* and *CUP FINAL*, I take to the absurd mix of humor and drama, tragedy and comedy (a bit anyway...), and the impossible chaos that comprises the colorful yet very dark story of Israelis and Palestinians.

-Eran Riklis



STORY OUTLINE

Salma Zidane (Hiam Abbass), a 45 years old widow from a small Palestinian village in the West Bank, finds herself at war with the Israeli Minister of Defense (Doron Tavory) who built his house on the green line border between Israel and the Occupied Territories on the edge of Salma's lemon grove. Soon enough the Israeli security forces claim that the grove is a threat to the safety of the minister and issue orders to uproot the lemon trees. Salma, whose son is in America and daughters live far away from her, decides to fight for her trees.

She embarks on a legal journey all the way up to the Israeli Supreme Court. Salma is joined by a young Palestinian lawyer, Ziad Daud (Ali Suliman), who fights against a wall of clever military lawyers who have the backing of the government. Ziad, 34, divorced from a Russian woman he met while attending law school in Moscow, falls in love with Salma. Their love affair is a complicated and dangerous one as Palestinian widows are not free to do whatever they like, certainly not fall in love, certainly not with younger men...

Salma realizes that she has inner strengths that allow her to continue her lonely quest, despite the pressures put on her from both sides – Israeli and Palestinian. Salma is fighting for trees that were planted by her father over 50 years ago, trees that have absorbed blood, sweat and tears like the whole region. She will not let them be cut down just to satisfy absurd security requirements.

On the other side of the grove, Mira Navon (Rona Lipaz-Michael), the Minister's wife, is also undergoing a major change in her life. After fulfilling her duties for so many years, and despite the new house and her husband's new and powerful job, she feels unhappy. The clock is ticking away and there must be more to life than her share so far. The events around her invisible new neighbor gradually raise her awareness to her husband's approach to the whole affair and she finds herself defying what is expected of her. A virtual bond is created between the two women, each of them discovering a new life ahead of them, each in her own territory across the seamless yet deep borders between them.

Lemon Tree is about struggles. Struggles to protect what is yours, struggles over principles, humanity, land, history, years of bad blood and bloodshed, all through one woman's struggle to protect her lemon trees. It is a story about solitude, about the loneliness of all the people and issues involved in this region and beyond



INTERVIEW WITH ERAN RIKLIS

When and how did the idea for Lemon Tree originate?

Following the success of *The Syrian Bride* I felt two things: one was that I want to direct Hiam Abbass again and give her a central role, two that I want to get “closer to home” in dealing with the situation in the Middle East, i.e. move from the relative comfort of the Golan Heights to the explosive situation between Israel and the Palestinians. So I started looking for a story and came across several accounts of Palestinians going to court against the State of Israel. I found this intriguing on several levels. First of all the fact that the Palestinians can go all the way to the Supreme Court says something good about the Israeli justice system. Secondly, despite this system (and disregarding the various court decisions at the end of the process) there is a deep sense of injustice and more so of numbness which is a result of so many years of the occupation. Bad things happen on both sides, there is no black and white but a story about trees becoming a threat to national security just because they happen to be close to the house of the person who is in charge of that security – seemed to me like the perfect set up for what I want to tell. And the fact that thousands of stories like this one happened and will probably happen in the future, made my decision even more poignant. Like one of the characters in the film says: “Lemon Trees...a Defense Minister...a lethal combination....”

Is *Lemon Tree* a political film?

I don't believe in the term and find it outdated. Everything is political in this day and age and whatever you say, do or think has some kind of political impact or feedback. Decisions taken by distant policy makers have an immediate effect on people everywhere, in particular when you live in a “danger zone” like the Middle East – but also if you live in New York, Paris or Berlin for that matter. So *Lemon Tree* is not political – it is about people trapped in a political deadlock. The Defense Minister, his wife, Salma, her lawyer – they are all trapped within their own life, within their own personal and public situation and frame of mind. It is not political because it does not try to impose any view on you – it tells a story, it shows emotions, it glides through a complex, delicate situation in an explosive setting. And I emphasize the word story as above all I wanted to tell a moving story that would be accessible to a wide audience around the world.

Tell us a bit about working with the actors and crew.

I want to start with Rainer Klausmann, a great DOP and a great guy. It was our first collaboration and quite quickly we understood that we are making an honest, eye level film and are not judging anyone. *Lemon Tree* is a very much a result of this view that we shared. Rainer is Swiss, he brought with him three German crew members who joined an all Israeli crew, my co-producers - Bettina, Michael and Antoine - are German and French (second collaboration between us after *The Syrian Bride*), my co-writer Suha is Israeli-Palestinian, my actors are Israeli, Israeli-Palestinian, Palestinian – and they are all people who shared one wish – to make this story work. Now about my actors: Hiam is like a part of me and I hope I was a part of her, I'm sure I was. Actors and directors have to be one to reach the level of intensity, vulnerability and frankness needed to convey a believable and moving situation. And this applies to all the others too – Rona, Ali, Doron, Tarik and all the rest of the wonderful cast which allowed me to share with them being at once a Minister, a lawyer, a peasant or a lonely soldier in a watchtower overlooking the lemon grove.

To conclude – will *Lemon Tree* change the world?

For sure, can't you feel it? But like the song says – lemons are pretty but they are also impossible to eat....and so I guess I will be satisfied with just adding my modest contribution to the way people view things, possibly breaking some stereotypes and giving some food for thought....

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Eran Riklis

Director, Writer, producer



Eran Riklis is one of Israel's leading film makers. His films include *The Syrian Bride* (2004), winner of 18 international awards, released world wide, *Cup Final* (1992, presented in Venice and Berlin and in numerous other festivals), *Zohar* (1993, the biggest Israeli box-office success of the '90s), *Temptation* (2002, based on an Israeli bestseller), the nostalgic, rock & roll film *Vulcan Junction* (2000) and his first film *On a Clear Day You Can See Damascus* (1984).

Riklis directed and produced many TV films, major series and documentaries, including *Room Service*, *The Truck*, *Cause of Death: Murder, Me and My Family*, *Lucky*, *Lethal Money*, *The Poetics of the Masses*, *Borders* and more. He also produced films such as *Three Mothers*, *Burning Mooki*, *Until Tomorrow Comes* and more. Born in Jerusalem, raised in the USA, Canada and Brazil, Riklis graduated from The National Film School, Beaconsfield, England in 1982.

Married to Dina (a filmmaker too), father of Tammy (a committed journalist) and Jonathan (a jazz pianist), lives in Tel Aviv and works with the world.

Filmography

2008 Lemon Tree
2008 Burning Muki (producer)
2006 Three Mothers (producer)
2004 The Syrian Bride
2003 The Truck (series)
2002 Temptation
2000 Vulcan Junction
1999 Borders (documentary)
1998 Cause of Death: Murder (series)
1997 The Poetics of the Masses (series)
1996 Lucky (TV film)
1993 Zohar
1992 Cup Final
1984 On a clear day you can see Damascus

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Hiam Abbass

in the role of Salma Zidane



Following their successful collaboration in *The Syrian Bride*, Riklis chose Hiam for the leading role of Salma Zidane in *Lemon Tree*. Born in Nazareth, Hiam started out in various theatre roles in Israel until she moved to London in 1988 and then to Paris where her cinema acting career started. Among her films are: *The Syrian Bride*, *Satin Rouge*, *La Porte du Soleil*, *Munich*, *Disengagement*, *Free Zone*, *Paradise Now*, *The Nativity Story*, *Dialogue avec mon Jardinier*, *Un Roman Policier*, *La fabrique des Sentiments*, *The Visitor* and more.

Hiam lives in Paris with her husband and two daughters.

Rona Lipaz-Michael

in the role of Mira Navon

Graduated in 1998 from the Yoram Lewinstien Acting Studio in Tel Aviv. Appeared in various theatre plays at the Habima National Theatre and The Beer Sheva Theatre.

Rona had a leading role in the successful TV series "The Bourgeois"

Ali Suliman

in the role of attorney Ziad Daud

Born in Nazareth. Graduated from the Yoram Lewinstien Acting Studio in 2000. Ali appeared in various stage productions in Israel and Europe. Among his film roles are: *The Syrian Bride*, *Paradise Now*, *Mahraja*, *The Kingdom*, *Body of Lies* and many more.

Doron Tavory

in the role of Defense Minister Israel Navon

Born in Haifa, 1952. Over 50 leading parts on most of Israel's theatre repertory stages, remarkably: *Hamlet* (director Steven Berkoff), *Blood Knot* (Fugard), *Saved* (Bond), *Caretaker* (Pinter), *Soul of a Jew and Ghetto* by Sobol (original Haifa Productions, as Weininger and Kittel, Edinburgh, Chicago, Theatertreffen Berlin), an all male *Twelfth Night*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Le Tartuffe*, *Bent* (Sherman), *Moliere* (Bulgakov), *Ghosts* (Ibsen), *The Orestes trilogy* as a one man show, *The Changeling* (Middleton) and *Jud Suess* (Kornfeld, both with director Robert Woodruff), *The Maske tetralogy* (*Die Hose*, *Der Snob*, 1913, *Das Fossil* by Carl Sternheim and many more. Doron is currently the artistic and managing director of the Inter-disciplinary Arena in Jerusalem.

Tarik Kopty

in the role of Abu Hussam

63 year old Tarik was born in Nazareth (the third in our cast to be born there....) where he also gained his first acting roles in the local theatre. Over the years Tarik appeared in many films including *The Band's Visit*, *It's Now or never*, *The Smile of the Lamb* and more.

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Suha Arraf

Writer

A Palestinian-Israeli, Suha also co-wrote *The Syrian Bride* with Riklis. A graduate of the Tel Aviv Screenwriting Academy she also has degrees from the Jerusalem and Haifa Universities. Suha wrote and directed several documentaries, worked as a journalist and researcher for many years and is planning to direct a film of her own in the near future.

Bettina Brokemper

co-producer

In May 2003, producer Bettina Brokemper, of Cologne, and commercial production company Embassy of Dreams, Munich, joined forces to form Heimatfilm, a production company for film and TV in Cologne, Germany. Managing shareholder Bettina Brokemper has previously been establishing the Cologne branch of Hamburg's Neue Impuls Film, as well as leading Zentropa's German offspring Pain Unlimited. Her Credits as a producer/ co-producer include: Counterparts, Island of Lost Souls, WWW What a wonderful world, Sweet mud, Low Profile, Manderlay, Dear Wendy, The Syrian Bride, Dogville and more

Antoine de Clermont-Tonnerre

co-producer

After serving as an adviser to French Prime Minister Raymond BARRE, Antoine de Clermont-Tonnerre was nominated, in January 1979, as Chairman of Société Française de Production (SFP), a company managing all the studios and facilities of French public television. In 1981 he became Chairman of Editions Mondiales, one of the largest magazine publishers in France. There he diversified the company's activities into the field of film and television, creating REVCOM in 1984 and acquiring FILMS ARIANE in 1986. In January of 1992, he and his wife, Martine de Clermont-Tonnerre, created their own production company, MACT Productions. Among his many credits as producer or co-producer are: The Return of Martin Guerre, Reunion, Cinema Paradiso, La Familia, Ginger and Fred, Central Station, The Syrian Bride, Pornografia, The Sun and many more.

Michael Eckelt

co-producer

Producer Michael Eckelt, as Managing Director, founded Riva Filmproduktion GmbH in Hamburg beginning of 2006. Michael Eckelt is the former Managing Director of Neue Impuls Film Produktionsgesellschaft mbH, which he founded as successor of Hanover-based Impuls Film in 1996. In the past Michael Eckelt and his team successfully combined decades of film industry experience with new talent, establishing durable and fruitful relationships with business and creative partners worldwide. Apart from German feature and television productions, Riva Film has a strong focus on international co-productions of high quality feature films for the Arthouse market. Current and previous films include: Ganz nah Bei Dir, Jemin – it's hard to be nice, Beautiful Bitch, The Syrian Bride, Obaba, the Oysters of Nam Kee, Falling into Paradise and more.

Rainer Klausmann (BVK)

director of Photography

Rainer is one of Europe's leading cinematographers and among his award winning films are: Head On, The Downfall, The Invasion, The Edge of Heaven, Solino, The Experiment and many more. Rainer lives in Zurich.

Habib Shehadeh Hanna

composer

A graduate of the Jerusalem Music Academy, Habib wrote music for many plays and gained world wide recognition with "The Band's Visit" for which he received an Israeli Academy Award in 2007. He is also a well known Oud and Buzuk player and performed with various ensembles around the world.

Tova Ascher

editor

One of Israel's leading editors, Tova has been editing feature films, TV series and documentaries since 1975. Her credits include: Behind the Walls, One of Us, Noa is 17, The Syrian Bride, Three Mothers, Basic training, My First Sony and many more.

Miguel Merkin

production designer

Miguel worked on many productions in Israel including: Beaufort, Free Zone, Promised Land, Year Zero, Campfire, Alila, Kippur, Kadosh and more.

LEMONS

Scientific classification

Kingdom: Plantae

Division: Magnoliophyta

Class: Magnoliopsida

Subclass: Rosidae

Species: *C. × lemon*

Binomial name: *Citrus × lemon*



The name *lemon* was originated from [Arabic](#) *līmūn* ليمون and Persian *limun* through Old Italian and Old French *limone*.

The exact origin of the lemon has remained a mystery. In the Far East, it was known for its antiseptic properties and it was used as antidote for various poisons. The lemon was later introduced to Iraq and Egypt around 700 A.D and was considered sacred by Muslim countries. The popular drink lemonade may have originated in medieval Egypt. It was distributed widely throughout the Arabs world and the Mediterranean region between 1000 A.D. to 1150 A.D. At this time, the lemon was first recorded in literatures to a tenth century Arabic treatise on farming and was used as an ornamental plant in early Islamic gardens.

Lemons entered Europe (near southern Italy) as early as 200 A.D. during the time of Ancient Rome. The first real lemon cultivation in Europe began in Genoa in the middle of the fifteenth century. It was later introduced to the Americas in 1493 when Christopher Columbus brought lemon seeds to Hispaniola along his voyages. Spanish conquest throughout the New World helped spread lemon seeds. It was mainly used as ornament and medicine. In 1700s and late 1800s, lemons were increasingly planted in Florida and California when lemons began to be used in cooking and flavoring.

Lemons are used to make [lemonade](#), and as a [garnish](#) for drinks. [Iced tea](#), [soft drinks](#) and water are often served with a wedge or slice of lemon in the glass or on the rim. The average lemon contains approximately 3 tablespoons of juice. Allowing lemons to come to room temperature before squeezing (or heating briefly in a [microwave](#)) makes the juice easier to extract. Lemons left unrefrigerated for long periods of time are susceptible to [mold](#).

Fish are marinated in lemon juice to neutralize the odor. The acid neutralizes the [amines](#) in fish by converting them into nonvolatile [ammonium](#) salts.

Lemon juice, alone or in combination with other ingredients, is used to marinate meat before cooking: the acid provided by the juice partially [hydrolyzes](#) the tough collagen fibers in the meat ([tenderizing](#) the meat), though the juice does not have any [antibiotic](#) effects.

Lemons, alone or with [oranges](#), are used to make [marmalade](#). The grated rind of the lemon, called lemon zest, is used to add flavor to baked goods, puddings, rice and other dishes. [Spicy pickled lemons](#) are a [Moroccan](#) Jewish delicacy. A liqueur called [limoncello](#) is made from lemons.

When lemon juice is sprinkled on certain foods that tend to oxidize and turn brown after being sliced, such as apples, bananas and avocados, the acid acts as a short-term preservative by denaturing the enzymes that cause browning and degradation.

THE WALL....

The separation wall between Israel and the West bank, is a barrier being constructed by [Israel](#) for security purposes consisting of a network of fences with vehicle-barrier trenches surrounded by an on average 60 meters wide exclusion area and up to 8 meters high concrete walls. It is located mainly within the [West Bank](#), partly along the [1949 Armistice line](#), or "[Green Line](#)" between Israel and [Jordan](#) which now demarcates the West Bank. As of April 2006 the length of the barrier as approved by the Israeli government is 703 kilometers (436 miles) long. Approximately 58.04% has been constructed, 8.96% is under construction, and construction has not yet begun on 33% of the barrier. The [Jerusalem Post](#) reported in [July, 2007](#) that the barrier may not be fully constructed until [2010](#), seven [years](#) after it was originally supposed to be completed.

The barrier is a highly controversial project. Supporters argue that the barrier is a necessary tool protecting Israeli civilians from Palestinian terrorism, including suicide bombing attacks, that increased significantly during the [al-Aqsa Intifada](#); it has helped to significantly reduce incidents of terrorism from 2002 to 2005; its supporters assert that the onus is on the Palestinian Authority to fight terrorism.

Opponents argue that the barrier is an illegal attempt to annex Palestinian land under the guise of security, violates international law, has the intent or effect to pre-empt final status negotiations, and severely restricts Palestinians who live nearby, particularly their ability to travel freely within the West Bank and to access work in Israel, thereby undermining their economy.

Pro-settler opponents claim that the barrier is a sly attempt to artificially create a border that excludes the settlers, creating "facts on the ground" that justify the mass dismantlement of hundreds of settlements and displacement of over 100,000 Jews from the land they claim as their biblical homeland.

www.wikipedia.com

RECIPE

PICKLED LEMONS

A big jar, Lemons, Water, Salt

Directions:

Very easy... cut the lemons, sprinkle them with salt, stuff them in the jar and cover them completely with cold water.

Put the jar in a cool, dark place for 3 weeks.

Do other things in the meantime – go to work, go on holiday, whatever – come back and drain the jar, fill it up again with water and salt.

Put the jar somewhere in the house for another 3 weeks. Again, drain the jar, clean the lemons and voilà - your pickled lemons are ready to eat. Enjoy!



www.lemontreemovie.com

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