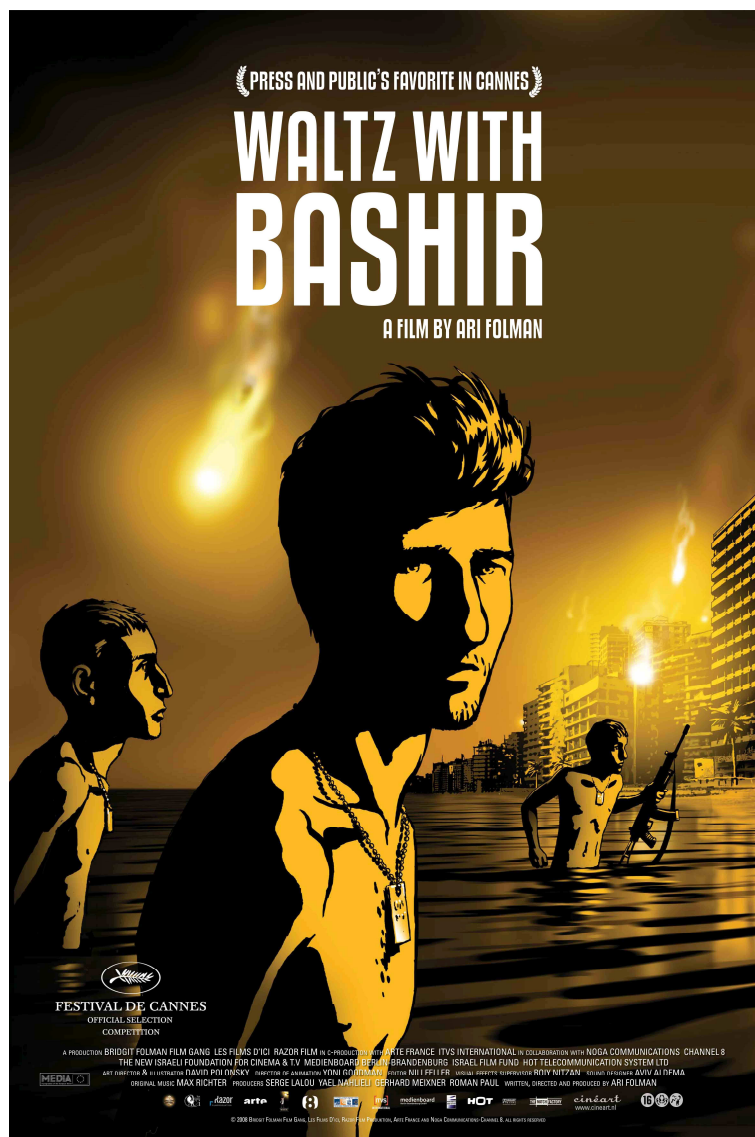


Persmap

WALTZ WITH BASHIR



Waltz with Bashir

Een film van Ari Folman

Israël – 2008 - 35mm - 1:1,85 - Dolby Digital - 87 min – Colour - Original Language Hebrew

Ari, een Israëlische regisseur, heeft midden in de nacht een afspraak met een vriend in een bar. De vriend wordt gekweld door terugkerende nachtmerries waarin hij stelselmatig wordt achtervolgd door een grote groep van 26 honden. Precies het aantal honden dat hij heeft moeten doden tijdens de Libanese oorlog in 1982!

De volgende dag komt voor het eerst een herinnering uit die periode bij Ari naar boven. Een stilzwijgend, kwellend beeld: hijzelf, als jonge soldaat, samen met twee vrienden badend in de buurt van Beiroet. Hij ervaart dan de vitale behoefte om de waarheid te ontdekken over dat specifieke moment in de geschiedenis en over zichzelf. Om daarin te slagen besluit hij zijn vroegere oorlogskameraden verspreid over de wereld op te zoeken en te interviewen.

Hoe dieper Ari in zijn persoonlijke verleden graaft, hoe meer de verdrongen beelden uit zijn geheugen naar boven komen.



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
Officiële Selectie 2008

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Waltz with Bashir

CAST/ THE INTERVIEWEES

Boaz Rein Buskila	Ari's friend, haunted by the dogs dream
Ori Sivan	Ari's best friend, filmmaker and shrink
Roni Dayg	Tank Loader, aka "The swimmer"
Carmi Cnaa'n	Ari's friend living in Holland
Shmuel Frenkel	The Patchouli lover
Ron Ben Yisahi	TV journalist
Dror Harazi	Tank Commander – Sabra and Shatila zone
Prof. Zahava Solomon	Post Trauma Stress Disorder expert



Waltz with Bashir

CREW

Written, directed & produced by	Ari Folman
Producers	Yael Nahlieli, Bridgit Folman Film Gang, Israel Serge Lalou, Les Films d'Ici, France Gerhard Meixner, Razor Film, Germany Roman Paul, Razor Film, Germany
In co-production with	Arte France – Direction des documentaires Thierry Garrel, Pierrette Ominetti - ITVS International
In collaboration with	Noga Communications – Channel 8, The New Israeli Foundation for Cinema & T.V., Medienboard Berlin- Brandenburg, Israel Film Fund, HOT Telecommunication System Ltd, RTBF, TSR, YLE , SBS
Animation by	Bridgit Folman Film Gang
Director of Animation	Yoni Goodman
Lead Animators	Tal Gadon, Gali Edelbaum
Animators	Neta Holzer, Asenath (Osi) Wald, Sefi Gayego, Orit Shimon, Zohar Shahar, Lilach Sarid, Barak Drori
3D Animation	Asenath (Osi) Wald
Art director	David Polonsky
Artists	Michael Faust, Asaf Hanuka, Tomer Hanuka, Ya'ara Buchman
Visual Effect Supervisor	Roiy Nitzan
Editor	Nili Feller
Sound Designer	Aviv Aldema
Original Music	Max Richter

INTERVIEW WITH ARI FOLMAN

Did you start this project as an animated documentary?

Yes indeed. WALTZ WITH BASHIR was always meant to be an animated documentary. For a few years, I had the basic idea for the film in my mind but I was not happy at all to do it in real life video. How would that have looked like? A middle aged man being interviewed against a black background, telling stories that happened 25 years ago, without any archival footage to support them. That would have been SO BORING! Then I figured out it could be done only in animation with fantastic drawings. War is so surreal, and memory is so tricky that I thought I'd better go all along the memory journey with the help of very fine illustrators.

What came first – the desire to make a documentary or the desire to make an animated film?

It was always my intention to make an animated documentary. Since I had already made many documentaries before it was a real excitement going for an animated one. I made an experiment in my documentary TV series THE MATERIAL THAT LOVE IS MADE OF. Each episode opened with a three-minute animated scene introducing scientists talking about the “science of LOVE”. It was basic Flash animation, but it worked so well that I knew a feature length animated documentary would eventually work.

What can you tell us about the animation process used in the film?

WALTZ WITH BASHIR was made first as a real video based on a 90-page script. It was shot in a sound studio and cut as a 90-minute length video film. It was made into a story board, and then drawn with 2300 illustrations that were turned into animation. The animation format was invented in our studio “Bridgit Folman Film Gang” by the director of animation Yoni Goodman. It's a combination of Flash animation, classic animation and 3D. It's important for me to make clear that by all means this film was not made by rotoscope animation, meaning that we did not illustrate and paint over the real video. We drew it again from scratch with the great talent of art director David Polonsky and his three assistants.

Is the film based on your actual personal experiences?

The story is my very personal experience. It follows what I went through from the moment I realized that there were some major parts in my life completely missing from my memory. I went through a major psychologic upheaval during the four years I worked on WALTZ WITH BASHIR. I discovered a lot of heavy stuff regarding my past and meanwhile, during those years, my wife and I brought three kids into this world. This makes you wonder, maybe I am doing all this for my sons. When they grow up and watch the film, it might help them make the right decisions, meaning not to take part in any war, whatsoever.

Was the making of WALTZ WITH BASHIR therapeutic for you?

A journey trying to figure out a traumatic memory from the past is a commitment to long term therapy. My therapy lasted as long as the production of WALTZ WITH BASHIR: four years. There was a shift from dark depression as a result of things discovered to being in euphoria over the film finally being in production with complicated animation being done by the team at a pace better than expected. If I was the type of guy who believes in the cult of psychotherapy, I'd swear the film had done miracles to my personality. But due to previous experience, I'd say the filmmaking part was good, but the therapy aspect sucked.

Are all the interviewees the actual people portraying themselves?

Seven out of the nine interviewees in the film are the actual people. They were interviewed and filmed in a sound studio. For personal reasons, Boaz (my friend who had the dream about the dogs) and Carmi (my friend living in the Netherlands) did not want to appear on camera, so they were played by actors. But their testimonies are real.

Are there others like you who have had similar experiences?

Of course. I am not alone out there. I believe that there are thousands of Israeli ex-soldiers that kept their war memories deeply repressed. They might live the rest of their lives like that, without anything ever happening. But it could always burst out one day, causing who knows what to happen to them. That's what Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is all about.

What are your feelings about the Sabra and Shatila massacre today?

The same as I've always felt: it's the worst thing that humankind can do to each other. One thing for sure is that the Christian Phalangist militiamen were fully responsible for the massacre. The Israeli soldiers had nothing to do with it. As for the Israeli government, only they know the extent of their responsibility. Only they know if they were informed or not in advance about the oncoming violent revenge.

And your feelings about war?

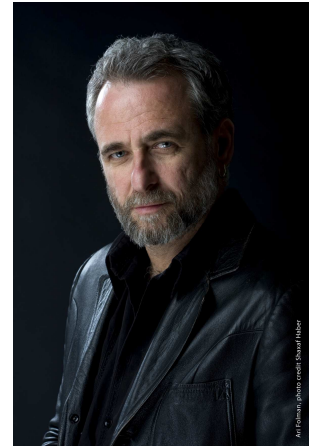
Having made WALTZ WITH BASHIR from the point of view of a common soldier, I've come to one conclusion: war is so useless that it's unbelievable. It's nothing like you've seen in American movies. No glam, no glory. Just very young men going nowhere, shooting at no one they know, getting shot by no one they know, then going home and trying to forget. Sometimes they can. Most of the time they cannot.



ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Ari Folman

Director, Writer, producer



In the mid 1980s, after completing his military service, Ari Folman ventured out on his dream trip to circle the world with a backpack. Just two weeks and two countries into the trip, Ari realized traveling was not for him, so he settled into small guesthouses in Southeast Asia and wrote letters to his friends at home, letters in which he totally fabricated the perfect trip. One whole year of being in one place and writing down the fruits of his fantastical imagination convinced him to return home and study cinema.

His graduate film, COMFORTABLY NUMB (1991) documented Ari's close friends taking cover on the verge of anxiety attacks during the first Gulf war while Iraqi missiles landed all over Tel Aviv. The result was comical and absurd and the film won the Israeli Academy award for Best Documentary.

Between 1991–1996 Ari directed documentary specials for TV, mainly in the occupied territories. In 1996 he wrote and directed SAINT CLARA, a feature film based on a novel by Czech author Pavel Kohout. The film won seven Israeli Academy awards, including Best Director and Best Film. SAINT CLARA opened the Berlin Film Festival's Panorama and won the People's Choice Award. The film was screened throughout America and Europe to critical acclaim. Ari continued directing successful documentary series and took time off for his second feature in 2001. MADE IN ISRAEL is a futuristic fantasy that centers upon the pursuit of the world's only remaining Nazi.

Ari has written for several successful Israeli TV series, including the award-winning IN TREATMENT ("Be Tipul"), which was the basis for the new HBO series of the same name.

Ari made his initial attempt at animation in his series THE MATERIAL THAT LOVE IS MADE OF – each episode opens with five minutes of documentary animation which depicts scientists presenting their theories on the evolution of love. This successful attempt at documentary animation propelled Ari to develop the unique format of WALTZ WITH BASHIR. Based on a true story, the film is a quest into the director's memory for the missing pieces from the days of the Lebanon War in the mid 80s. As far as Ari was concerned, it was only natural to transform the quest into animation, full of imagination and fantasy.

FILMOGRAPHY

2008 WALTZ WITH BASHIR (feature, animated documentary)

Writer, Director, Producer

2006 IN TREATMENT (TV, dramatic series)

Writer

Israeli Academy Award Winner – Best Screenplay for Dramatic Series

2005 CHAPTER OF THE WEEK (TV, dramatic series)

Writer

2004 THE MATERIAL THAT LOVE IS MADE OF (TV, documentary series)

Writer, Director, Producer

Israeli Academy Award Winner – Best Documentary Series

2001 THE THIRD EYE (TV, documentary series)

Writer, Director

2001 MADE IN ISRAEL (feature)

Writer, Director

Israeli Academy Award Winner – Best Cinematography, Best Music

2000–2004 SATURDAYS & HOLIDAYS (TV, dramatic series)

Screenwriter Israeli Academy Award Winner – Best Dramatic Series 2003

1996 SAINT CLARA (feature)

Writer, Co-Director Israeli Academy Award Winner – Seven, including Best Film and Best Director

1991 COMFORTABLY NUMB (feature documentary)

Writer, Co-Director Israeli Academy Award Winner – Best Documentary

BASHIR GEMAYEL, ARIEL SHARON & THE SABRA AND SHATILA MASSACRE

In June 1982, the Israeli army invaded South Lebanon after Israel's northern towns had been bombarded for years from the Lebanese territory. The Israeli government's original plan was to occupy a 40 km security zone in Lebanon in order to "cleanse" the missile range used by the Palestinians against Israel's northern towns. The Israeli Minister of Defense at the time, Ariel Sharon, developed a fantastical and ultra-imaginative plan: to occupy Lebanon as far as Beirut, including Beirut, and to appoint his Christian ally, Bashir Gemayel, to the post of President of Lebanon. The goal was to eradicate the threat to the State of Israel from the north and to expand the front against Syria. Sharon and senior military leaders were actually the only ones who knew about the plan. While the Israeli government approved a 40 km range operation only, the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) thrust full speed ahead all the way to Beirut.

In August 1982, the IDF was still waiting on the outskirts of Beirut for the command to penetrate the city. Meanwhile, a treaty was signed which would allow all Palestinian combat fighters to be evacuated from Beirut on ships to Tunisia. In return, the IDF would remove the threat of penetrating the city. That same week, Bashir Gemayel, senior commander of the "Phalangists" Christian militia, was elected President of Lebanon. Gemayel was considered extraordinarily charismatic, a fashionable young man, handsome and infinitely admired by all Christian militia soldiers and their families, as well as the Israeli leadership.

While giving a speech at the Phalangist headquarters in East Beirut, Bashir Gemayel was killed by a massive explosive charge. To this day it is unknown who was responsible for the murder. That afternoon, Israeli troops penetrated a region in West Beirut that was mostly populated in those days by Palestinian refugees, and they surrounded the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. Towards evening, large Phalangist forces made their way to the area, driven by a profound sense of revenge after the killing of their revered Bashir Gemayel. At nightfall, Phalangist forces entered the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps aided by the IDF's illumination rounds. The declared objective of the Christian forces was to purge the camps of Palestinian combat fighters. However, there were virtually no Palestinian combat fighters left in the refugee camps since they had been evacuated on ships to Tunisia two weeks earlier. For two whole days the sound of gunfire and battles could be heard from the camps but it was only on the third day, September 16th, when panic-stricken women swarmed the Israeli troops outside the camps, that the picture became clear: For three days the Christian forces massacred all refugee camp occupants. Men, women, the elderly and children, were all killed with horrific cruelty. To this day the exact number of victims is unknown but they are estimated at 3000.

News of the massacre shocked the entire world and a spontaneous protest of hundreds of thousands of Israelis forced the Israeli government to create an official inquiry committee to investigate the liability of Israeli political and military authorities. Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon was found guilty by the committee for not having done enough to stop the horror once he became aware of the massacre. He was dismissed of his duties and prohibited from serving as Minister of Defense for another term. This did not stop him from being appointed Prime Minister of Israel twenty years later.

www.waltzwithbashir.com
