



— ALLEYES OFF ME

A Film by Hadas Ben Aroya

PRESSKIT



90 MIN

ISRAEL

2021

1:1,85

DOLBY 5.1

HEBREW

A film by
Hadas Ben Aroya

SCREENINGS IN EFM

WED. 3RD

2:00^{PM}

@PANORAMA

THU. 4TH

3:15^{PM}

@VIRTUAL CINEMA 34

— ALLEYES OFF ME

INTERNATIONAL SALES
Best Friend Forever
www.bestfriendforever.be

Martin Gondre – martin@bffsales.eu
Charles Bin – charles@bffsales.eu
Marc Nauleau - sales@bffsales.eu

INTERNATIONAL PRESS
ALIBI COMMUNICATIONS
www.alibicomunications.be

Brigitta Porter: +32 477 98 25 84
brigittaportier@alibicomunications.be



— SYNOPSIS

Tel Aviv, today.

Danny is looking for Max through a party to share that she's pregnant with his child.

But Max just started a new relationship with Avishag and attempts to realize her rough sexual fantasy.

Truth is, Avishag actually has someone else in mind.

— A CONVERSATION WITH HADAS BEN AROYA



What was the origin of All Eyes Off Me?

I started by writing about a wild young girl who falls in love with an older man, formerly religious. My intention was to make a reverse-Lolita. Instead of the older man attracted to a virginal child, a young and sexual girl who is attracted to a virginal man. He is her nymphette. And as the nymph's habitat is out in nature, in forests or in lakes, he lives in a rural home in the suburbs, keeping bees.

But then I felt that in order to explain that feeling, why she is so attracted to him, I would have to show the world of the heroine, Avishag, which is very bold and liberal, but this has a price. The price is that with all that freedom and stimulation it becomes harder to feel anything at all. That is why I went "back" chronologically, to allow a view into where the heroine comes from, what her world looks like, and that's how the film was born.

The film is in three episodes and in each episode we see a generation that seems lost and ask them selves how liberated they really are?

This generation really is free, but this freedom creates a dissociation of sorts. Avishag wants to feel pain during sex, but that isn't the

purpose per se. The purpose is to get hurt, and the hurt is to feel something. I am not passing judgement, I like that freedom, I like the ability to experience without fear or taboos. I like saying "yes" to every adventure. But I also have envy for those people, like Dror, who managed to maintain their innocence about the world. Who can get excited by the much simpler things. I think that it's much harder for us to fall in love. That we're cynical about most things in life. And that everything passes by us, which is not only sad and beats the purpose of what freedom is, but it's also dangerous.

All eyes off me builds up a portrait of Avishag, a young sexual girl seen through the eyes of different persons, can you elaborate on that?

The movie challenges the classic narrative and tells the story of Avishag through other characters in her life. As far as the spectating experience goes, we start off with one character, and then move on to the next. Each story stands on its own. The film creates a mirror room of Avishag's generation, how her relationship is the result of another character's relationship that ended with heartbreak. Avishag's experience and her world become more whole when reflected off of other characters



Besides Avishag all the other characters have the same intimacy and authenticity, there is a serene relationship between them, how did you manage to do that ?How did you find all your characters?

I didn't have any auditions, for any part. Elisheva Weil, who plays Avishag, is a dear friend of mine and she's an actor. When I started writing the film I shared the process with her a great deal, and I told her that I plan on playing Avishag's part myself. In response she said: "No, you're a director. Direct. I am an actor, let me act." It wasn't up for discussion, and I told her, "Okay, you got the part". In fact she cast herself. Later I consulted her about Max's character. She brought up Leib's name, a young actor I hadn't heard of before, but it seemed to me he was a good fit. She didn't know him, and neither did I, but as fate would have it, the three of us met by accident a few days later, and we told him briefly about the movie. A few days after that Leib and Elisheva fell in love, and became a couple, in real life. In fact they're an amazing couple to this day. And so Leib didn't really audition either, and on their first rehearsal I felt as if I'm at the 20th one, and if I'd had to film the movie right in that moment, I could have, since the loving couple had chemistry you can't fake. Many times during

filming I was pondering how great it is that they're a couple, because it is much easier to direct that way, and it also gets me off the hook from the moral perspective. I don't need to keep worrying whether I am hurting somebody, God forbid. In that sense I am very lucky.

Hadar Katz, who plays Danny, is not an actor at all, but rather a good friend of Leib and Elisheva's, who actually works as a nurse. During the time we were doing rehearsals and hanging out together at nighttime, I got to know Hadar too. One day she told me that on the way to my place she saw a dying butterfly on the sidewalk and didn't understand why nobody was taking it to the vet, how come that if it had been a horse then it would have received medical attention, and who decides which animal is more important. I was charmed by her naivety and the clarity with which she sees the world, and I knew I would write Danny's character in her image, and that she will act.

Dror is portrayed by Yoav Hait, a well known and tenured actor in Israel, who always plays parts on the spectrum between a bank clerk and a police officer. But I saw something else in him, he is a big man but very fragile, and this is a quality no other actor in Israel possesses, and therefore

it was clear to me he was the only choice for the role and to my delight he agreed. This is his most exposed role in his long career and so he got filled with dread, but despite, or maybe because of his the fear of exposure, he really wanted the role. In the film like in real life, Elisheva is the one who made Yoav feel at ease, the rehearsals were very challenging but in the end they were harmonious.

I think that all the actors trusted me and each other much more due to our personal bond. I suppose the fact that I had already made a successful movie in Israel, managed to quell the fears, and one could imagine what the final result would look like and what the tone would be. For me, after having played an exposed role in People That Are Not Me, I'd understood the complexity the hard way, and I had the ability and sensitivity to direct others, knowing that the key to intimacy on the screen is intimacy between us.

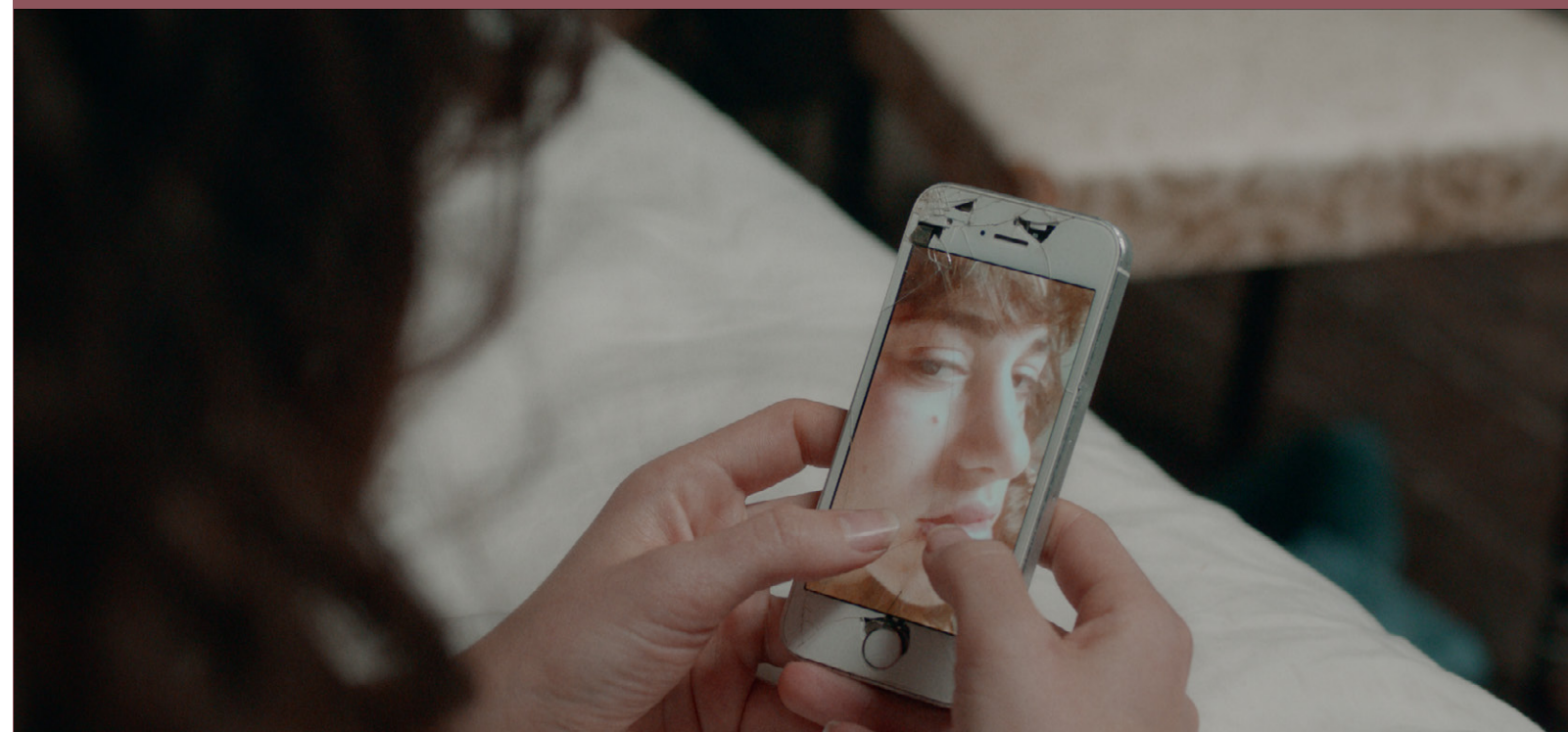
Is this a film about love or desire or a mixture of both or our limits to both ?

This is a movie about intimacy. Intimacy is not when people are naked, having sex, or expose their dark secrets. Intimacy comes when you manage to be vulnerable in front of another person. That's it. It is only when you are vulnerable that you can truly feel. That's the absurd, the

film's heroes want to feel something so much, but can't show vulnerability. Can't reach intimacy. In my opinion that is the essence of the rat race of my generation.

Avishag has an ambivalent relation to her phone, at the same time dependent on it for entertainment, but distant when it is about answering to other people. How did you manage to include the phone in the image, a screen within the screen, and why was it important?

Avishag's iPhone is like an additional character in the film. It's present a lot, and really serves a lot of functions. In one scene, for example, Avishag watches an "X Factor" audition and gets excited, truly, to tears. This is absurd as she's a character of substantial emotional barriers, but the reality show she watches through her cracked iPhone screen manages to stir up her soul. It was important for me to attach this device to her, which is her escape and her entertainment, but ultimately, when Max calls her incessantly after she runs away from him, it is used as a reminder for the heartache she had been trying to forget. I found it interesting that this device is a receptacle to so many feelings and functions, that she grows dependent on it. Aren't we all?



The music plays a major role in the film, it sometimes speaks for it when words cannot express it enough in people's mind although sometimes the dominating silence is very strong too which makes it all being the right balance. How did you manage that and how did you choose the songs.

I like it when the music informs you of the subtext, I am not worried about that even though it's considered "cheap". It's fun when the words spell out the emotion.

The movie split into three parts is like a a funnel, that moves from noise to silence, both symbolically and literally. In the first part Danny passes through the labyrinth of a house party and the sound experience is cacophonous, you hear three tracks at the same time, lots of dialogues on top of one another, the experience is three dimensional and full of layers of techno music coming out of old speakers in an old apartment in southern Tel Aviv.

In the second part, Max dedicates the song "Message Personnel" to Avishag. It's a song about unrequited love that I really like, and it prophesies that which could happen to the two.

In the final part of the movie, there's "Somebody Will Love Somebody", a song by Leah Goldberg, a respected Israeli poet, that the heroine hears on the turntable after having learned how to do that on YouTube. It's an existential song, about loneliness and disconnection. "And if there is no sea, then there is also no ship. Another week, another month, another year".

The movie's ending is silence. Avishag learns to be silent, to be present. To be vulnerable.

What is your aim with all eyes off me and do you already think of a third film?

I want to inspire discussion and put a mirror in front of my generation. What I am most interested in is the question of what intimacy is in our age, the great exposure as opposed to our inability to be vulnerable alarms and fascinates me, since it's a futile chase after intimacy, which is actually the desire to feel anything in this world that no longer has limits. This is not criticism, and there is no didactic message whatsoever, it's a reflection of me and my friends' life.

My next movie takes place in Berlin in its entirety, it's a memoir of sex and pharmacology of a young woman with a lust for life, who falls in love with a poet and embarks on a radical journey with him that glorifies the present and the experience. In its essence, my third movie deals with Israeli identity, and the detachment that my friends and I feel in such a politically volatile time.



— BIOGRAPHY

HADAS BEN AROYA

Born in 1988 in Israel, Hadas Ben Aroya, a graduate of the Steve Tisch School of Film and Television, is the recipient of the “Discovery of the Year” Award granted by the Forum of Israeli Film Critics, and the Israeli Academy awards winner for Best supporting actress. Her debut feature film “*People That Are Not Me*” (2016) was written, produced, directed by and featuring Ben Aroya in the lead role. The film premiered at the Locarno International Film Festival and won the Grand Prix at the Mar Del Plata Film Festival. It was screened at dozens of global festivals, won 12 awards and was sold for a worldwide distribution. Ben Aroya participated in the Berlinale Talents 2017. “*Nymphie*”, her third feature film project, developed in the the Sundance screenwriters lab, and currently in pre-production. “*All Eyes Off Me*” is her second feature film.



— FILMOGRAPHY

HADAS BEN AROYA



FEATURE

2021	All Eyes Off Me
2016	People That Are Not Me

CAST

Avishag	Elisheva WEIL
Max	Leib LEV LEVIN
Dror	Yoav HAIT
Danny	Hadar KATZ



CREW

Director:	Hadas Ben Aroya
Director of Photography:	Meidan Arama
Editor:	Or Lee-Tal
Sound Design :	Neal Gibbs
Sound :	Eran Ben-Issac
Art Director :	Alena Ploski
Costumes :	Shachaf Marcus
Make-up :	Or Sapir
Assistant Director :	Nataya Cassirer
Production Manager :	Talia Steinmatz
Producers :	Hadas Ben Aroya & Maayan Eden

Country of Production: Israel

International Sales: Best Friend Forever



U

U

u