



FOREIGN LETTERS

A film by Ela Thier

"*Foreign Letters* is an unsentimental coming of age film that is itself a love letter to the unshakeable bond between friends...Thier establishes herself as a powerful new voice in independent American cinema."

- Susan Starkman, Toronto Jewish Film Festival



**USA / 2012 / English, Hebrew, Vietnamese w. Eng. Subtitles
Drama / 100 min / HD**

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SYNOPSIS

Ellie, a 12-year-old immigrant girl from Israel, is lonely and homesick. Life brightens when she meets Thuy, a Vietnamese refugee her age. Trust slowly builds as the two teach each other about life in America. As Ellie and Thuy become inseparable, they eventually hurt and betray each other. Ellie must give up her most prized possession, in order to save their friendship. Based on the filmmaker's own experience, *Foreign Letters* is a story about prejudice, poverty, shame, and the power of friendship to heal us. The film features the music of iconic Israeli musician Chava Alberstein, who was the director's favorite musician when her family immigrated to the US in 1982.

FILM FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

WINNER – Honorable Mention, Nashville International Film Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION

Toronto Jewish Film Festival 2012

Atlanta Jewish Film Festival 2012

Austin Jewish Film Festival 2012

New Jersey Jewish Film Festival 2012

UK Jewish Film Festival, London 2012

Rochester Jewish Film Festival 2012

Berkshire Jewish Film Festival 2012

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

My works are, at their core, stories about human relationships. Whether it's a romantic relationship, a mother and daughter, two siblings, or in the case of *Foreign Letters*, the friendship between two 12-year-old girls, the common thread that runs through all of my stories is the belief that human connection is what we most long for, and rightly so.

More than anything else in life, the feeling of connection with another human being is what gives us strength, meaning, and self-esteem. Nothing in the world is quite interesting or complex enough to a human mind, than the opportunity to connect with another human mind. This is why any one of us will go to any length, when lured by the hope of feeling connection with another human.

I'm especially pleased with *Foreign Letters*, because it highlights a connection between two tween-aged girls, a demographic that is largely invisible in our culture's stories. Yet, while childhood best friends are a relatively novel subject in cinema, it's one of the most common, familiar, and universal experiences any of us have had.

BIOGRAPHY and FILMOGRAPHY

ELA THIER - Director

Ela Thier's three feature film credits to date are: FOREIGN LETTERS (writer-director-producer), a dramedy about her personal immigration story, to be released in 2012. PUNCTURE (story-by, co-producer), a film starring Chris Evans (Fantastic Four, Captain America), which premiered at the 2011 Tribeca Film Festival. and THE WEDDING COW (writer), which won eighteen international awards, including four Best Feature and four Audience Choice awards.

Thier has written and directed over a dozen short films. Among them: A SUMMER RAIN (writer-director-producer), on which FOREIGN LETTERS is based on, which won numerous Best Short awards and screened at over 200 film festivals and venues. Prior to that she made GENTLE CYCLE ONLY (director), won Brightest Emerging Director at The View From Here Film Festival, and JUDO GIRL (writer-director-producer), produced by Fluidfilm.

A prolific writer, Thier's scripts were selected four times by the Independent Film Week (formerly IFP Market). Among numerous recognitions, she was awarded a fellowship grant in screenwriting from the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), and was nominated for the White House Project Emerging Artist Award in 2010.

In 2006 Thier began teaching screenwriting with a class of eight participants. Since then, as word spread, over two thousand working and aspiring filmmakers have attended her writing and directing workshops. She also teaches writing-directing seminars at the School of Visual Arts, and has played a variety of roles in her students' film projects. A partial list of credits is listed on IMDB and her reel can be viewed at ElaThier.com.

FILMOGRAPHY

2012 – FOREIGN LETTERS
2010 – GENTLE CYCLE ONLY (short)
2010 – JUDO GIRL (short)
2009 – A SUMMER RAIN (short)

CREDITS

CREW

Writer-Director	ELA THEIR
Cinematographer	MILTON KAM
Producers	ELA THEIR, INNA BRAUDE, BRANT KANTOR
Executive Producers	EVAN GLUCK, TERRY LEONARD
Co-Executive Producer	NICK BUZZELL
Hair & Make-up	LAUREN PALMER
Costume Designer	KAMA K. ROYZ
Art Director	VIRGINIA HASTINGS
Composer	ROB SCHWIMMER
Production Designer	TOM SOPER
Line Producers	JOHANNA BUDZILOWICZ, EVE MCKNIGHT
Sound Designer	EVE CUYEN
Editor	BEN INSLER

CAST

Ellie	NOA ROTSTEIN
Thuy	DALENA LE
Elli's brother	DANIEL BAHR
Teacher	LAURA CAMIEN
Thuy's "ABC'S" Sister	JADE GURMAN-CHAN