



presents

# AMERICA



a film by  
**Ofir Raul Graizer**

starring  
**Oshrat Ingedashet, Michael Moshonov, Ofri Biterman**



**Karlovy Vary**  
**International Film Festival**  
Crystal Globe Competition

## Screenings at Karlovy Vary

<b>Tue, July 5</b>	<b>10:30</b>	<b>Congress Hall</b>	<b>Press &amp; Industry</b>
<b>Tue, July 5</b>	<b>17:00</b>	<b>Grand Hall</b>	<b>World Premiere</b>
<b>Wed, July 6</b>	<b>10:00</b>	<b>Pupp Cinema</b>	<b>Festival Screening</b>
<b>Thu, July 7</b>	<b>16:00</b>	<b>Lazne III Cinema</b>	<b>Festival Screening</b>
<b>Fri, July 8</b>	<b>19:00</b>	<b>Congress Hall</b>	<b>Festival Screening</b>

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## Press Materials:

Images & clips can be downloaded here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/y9y20qckt2abd4x/AAATyoZLu4w1GlijmOfOIB8Ka?dl=0>

## Cast

Eli **Michael Moshonov**  
Iris **Oshrat Ingedashet**  
Yotam **Ofri Biterman**  
Moti **Moni Moshonov**  
Orna **Irit Sheleg**  
Dr. Margarita **Evelyn Shafir**  
Dr. Ruba **Ruba Blal Asfur**  
Josh **Lukas Henri Kropat**  
Moshiko **Or Butbul**

## Crew

Written and directed by **Ofir Raul Graizer**  
Producer **Itai Tamir**  
Line Producers **Jiries Copti, Simon Lubinski**  
Co-Producers **Marcos Kantis, Jan Macola, Ami Livne**  
Production Companies **Laila Films in coproduction with  
Schiwago Film, Mimesis Film**  
Funded by **The Rabinovich Foundation,  
Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, The  
Czech Film Fund, Mifal Hapais**  
Director of Photography **Omri Aloni**  
Editors **Michal Oppenheim, Ofir Raul Graizer**  
Casting **Lilu Goldfine**  
Original Music **Dominique Charpentier**  
Production Design **Daniel Kossow**  
Art Director **Nitzan Zifrut**  
Costume Design **Lilu Goldfine**  
Sound Design & Mixing **Václav Flegl**

## Technical Data

Israel, Germany, Czech Republic 2022  
Length: 115 minutes  
Screen Ratio: 1:2.35  
Shooting Format: 3.2k  
Languages: Hebrew, English

## Logline

A swimming coach from Chicago returns to his homeland Israel after 10 years of absence. A visit to a childhood friend and his newly engaged fiancée will set a series of events in motion that will affect everyone's lives.



## Synopsis

Eli is an Israeli swimming coach living in the United States. A phone call notifies him that his father, who he has not been in touch with, passed away. Eli reluctantly travels to Tel Aviv for the first time in 10 years to deal with the estate. On his short trip, he decides to visit his childhood friend, Yotam, who used to swim with Eli when they were young. However, Yotam has left swimming long ago. He is running a small and beautiful flower shop in Jaffa, together with his fiancée Iris, a talented florist who, like Eli, is not in touch with her family. When Eli comes to visit the two, he will set in motion a serious of events that will affect everyone's lives. A story set between a flower shop and an ancient monastery, between a swimming pool and the Mediterranean, between life and death - and somewhere in the middle.

## Ofir Raul Graizer – director & screenwriter

Ofir Raul Graizer is a director, screenwriter, fiction writer, editor and artist. He was born in Raanana, Israel, to a religious father and a secular mother. When he was 14 years old he purchased his first Camcorder, and when he was 15 he was the first one in his school to come out as gay.

After finishing highschool, Graizer worked in different fields - from graphic design, call centre, line-cook, books seller, room service and managing a clothing store. At the age of 24 he finally decided to follow his foremost passion and to start studying film in the Film and Television School in Sapir College in Sderot, in the south of Israel, on the border with the Gaza Strip.



In the first year of his studies, Graizer created a small film, *A Prayer in January*, titled after an Italian song he admires. The film was Graizer's first break-out success - although it was merely an exercise, one of his professors suggested that Graizer should send it around. It was invited to 20 film festivals and was even distributed by Edition Salzgeber. The 1-minute trailer that Graizer created, just for fun, was viewed more than 3 Million times on YouTube.

During his studies and after his graduation, Graizer wrote, directed and produced several more short films that were screened at Cannes, Clermond Ferrand, Max Ophüls and more. In 2009, right after his graduation, Graizer moved to Berlin and started developing his first feature film *The Cakemaker*. The project was granted the Nipkow Program and was invited to several co-production markets like Berlinale and Agora. However, Graizer and his producers were unable to find the proper financing for the project. They kept trying, and the film was rejected 18 times by different film funds in Israel, Germany and France. It only received a small support from the Jerusalem Film Funds of 80K. During that time Graizer

edited several documentaries and started to teach cooking in Berlin's most hyped cooking schools. He also worked as a private chef and caterer.

However, Graizer did not give up his dream and eventually he and his producers decided to shoot *The Cakemaker* in a micro budget of 80K, in 21 days, in Berlin and Jerusalem. Based on the rough cut, producer Itai Tamir, who has been Graizer's filmmaking partner from the very start, managed to raise funds to complete the film. Films Boutique picked up and handled *The Cakemaker* internationally. It premiered at Karlovy Vary IFF in the main section in 2017, honored with standing ovations by an enthusiastic audience. During the festival, the film received the highest score of FIPRESCI (International Federation of Film Critics) and won the Ecumenical Jury Award. Following that screening, *The Cakemaker* was invited to more than 100 festivals including San Sebastian, Istanbul, Palm Springs. It was released theatrically in 26 countries including USA, France, Germany, Japan and Mexico. It was the Los Angeles and New York Times critic's pick and won numerous Awards, including seven Awards of the Israeli Film Academy, thus becoming Israel's official entry to the Oscars. Later Netflix USA purchased *The Cakemaker*. It was even optioned to a Hollywood remake, which is currently in the works. During the release of *The Cakemaker* in 2018, Graizer published a book of short stories and recipes in German language with INSEL VERLAG, one of Germany's leading publishers. The book was highly praised and still is in high demand in the German-speaking world. In parallel Graizer developed a number of projects. Amongst them was *America*, which turned out to be his second feature film. It was financed as an Israeli-German-Czech co-production and was shot in Tel Aviv, Berlin and Chicago during the first summer of the pandemic. The film's shoot was postponed twice, then rescheduled to shoot earlier than planned and wrapped in the White Waterfall east to the Tiberius Sea, under-schedule, right before the beginning of the second lockdown. *America*'s postproduction was done in Prague, Berlin, Tel Aviv and even in the Provence. The screening at KVIFF will be the film's world premiere.

Another film that Graizer developed is the psychological art-house drama *The Shepherd's Dream*, which was financed by the IDM - Südtirol Film Fund. Graizer hopes to shoot the film in the near future. In addition, he wrote a cross-genre thriller, *Beautiful Absence*, and is attached to the musical bio-pic *Moondog* written by Law & Order staff writer Denis Hamil. Graizer was hired to join the staff of a high-profile TV series that will be shot in Israel in 2023, and is developing a number of new projects for film and TV in the American market. Graizer lives on the line between Tel Aviv, Los Angeles, Berlin and the Uckermark.

He always finds time to cook.

## Filmography

<b>2022: America</b>	feature film. writer, director
<b>2018: The Cakemaker</b>	feature film. writer, director
<b>2016: La Discothèque</b>	fiction short. co-writer, co-director
<b>2014: Recognition</b>	full-length documentary. editor
<b>2009: Dor</b>	fiction short. writer, director, producer
<b>2009: Fragments</b>	full-length documentary. editor
<b>2008: Reds</b>	full-length documentary. editor
<b>2007: A Prayer in January</b>	short. writer, director, producer

## Q&A with Ofir Raul Graizer

**What is AMERICA about, what is at the core of this film for you?**

It's a difficult question because *America* for me is about many different things. When I made this film, I felt like I was writing a novel. For me the core of the story is a strong and almost metaphysical friendship or companionship. But I believe and hope everyone who watches it will find something else, because it tells different stories. It's about life changing abruptly, our dreams and aspiration suddenly adjusting to a new reality that forces us to deal with our past and re-think our place in the world. It's a story about finding or rediscovering the term "home". It's also a coming-to-age story. It deals with childhood, guilt, sacrifice, and the power of healing and regrowth. It's also about the choice between the one we love and the one we desire. America is about many things. Like life.



**Variety called your debut *The Cakemaker* „tender, tactile and humane“, all of this seems valid also for AMERICA: colours, scents and sounds are very strong throughout the film. Would you call yourself a sensual filmmaker?**

I don't know if I am a sensual filmmaker, but I hope that I am a sensual person... For me cinema is the art of the senses; colours, and sounds allow us "zoom in" to the hidden aspects of everyday life, and explore them to learn something new. It gives life a new meaning. And I don't mean for aesthetic reasons, but the necessity of senses. They are crucial to our survival, physical and emotional. You can only be alive when you can feel something, touch, to smell, like when Iris smells the sage in the pot she found in Eli's garden. These little things are meaningful and necessary and I hope my work reflects that.

**AMERICA appears to deal with the dialogue between opposites that feel very different, but are interdependent: Loss and Gain. Eli loses his father and regains his old life with the relationships connected to it, in particular his friendship with Yotam. Yotam regains a friend, but loses consciousness. Iris needs to lose Yotam to open up to Eli.**

**This alternating rhythm seems offset in your Film, unruly or even unfair – for Eli. Do you believe there is some sort of natural balance in this dialogue of two fates?**

I believe that for some people, in some places in life, we really are a result of where we came from, our parents, our homes, our countries, our religions. These entities try so hard to define who we are. Eli's story was that his only chance for redemption was to escape, but he could not escape who he is - someone who grew up in a home where there was no mercy. Eli had a tragic upbringing in a home that did not love or nurture him. Contrary to Yotam, who grew up being loved and supported, under circumstances that made it possible for him to heal. It's akin to plants, when you water them and when you give them light, sun, or shade when they need it. If you nurture them, they will grow, bloom and bear fruit. That is the main difference between Yotam and Eli for me. Do you need one upbringing to be tragic for the other to be good? I am not sure. But it's a fact of life that when you lose something, when you no longer have it, that is when you long for it, but then it is too late because it is gone. It might be a harsh approach, but this is what Eli's story needs to tell.



**The majority of the film is set in Israel (Tel Aviv), yet the title AMERICA would suggest the contrary. What does the title allude to if not the place the film takes place in?**

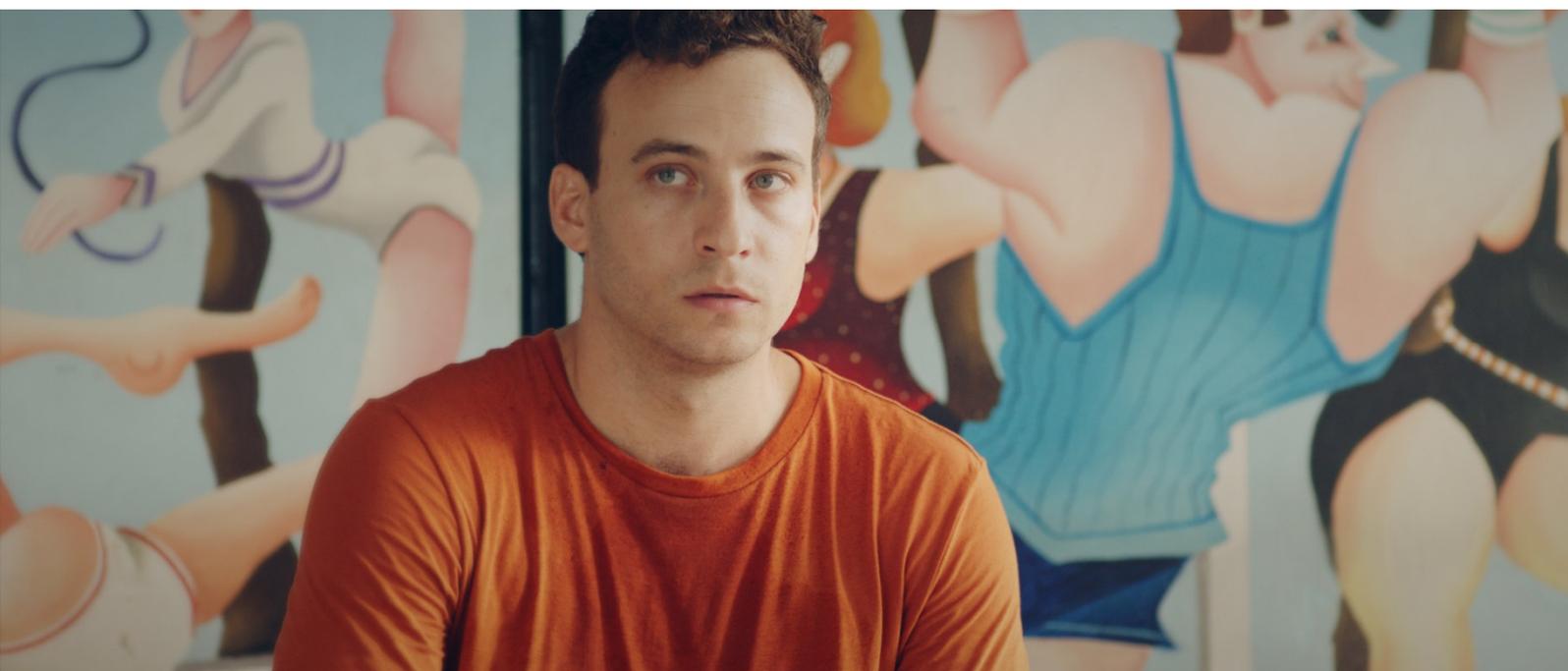
America is the place where Eli went to build a new life, his way for salvation. For Iris and Yotam America was where the person they both love has chosen to live his life, a distant place behind the sea, on the other side of the world. It's a place of longing and that longing is part of a dream I had as a child. I grew up in Israel in the 80's, and for me America meant something so far away, like a distant dream, not a real place, but an idea of a place. Its movies, music, landscapes infiltrated into my dreams. The stars we admired were Michael Jackson and Madonna, the movies we escaped to were *Indiana Jones* and *The Goonies*... Everything came from America. I myself did not go to the United States until I was 37 years old. My film *The Cakemaker* was invited to a festival in the USA, so I went to Chicago, and that is when I wrote the first synopsis for America.

**The fateful menage-a-trois is not an uncommon constellation in cinema. Would you be offended if one called it a cliché? What interested you here? What is different or new about your take on it?**

I don't pretend to have a new take about anything. I don't think that cinema can provide anything new, everything was tried and made 50 years ago. I am very much full of love and respect to the old traditions of cinema and I think my take on the story is my own personal perspective. Whether it is original or interesting I don't really know, but it's the story I had to tell the way I told it. Would I be offended if someone called my film cliché? On the contrary. Life is full of clichés. Everyone has stories that sound like a soap opera, and if not, they are lucky, or maybe not. Clichés sometimes contain some truth that is honest, authentic and far more complex than one thinks. The love-triangle is only a small part of the story. To me, there is so much more. There are enigmas, secrets, hidden truths and meanings that are there in every shot and frame.

**What is the story of the song, Iris is singing beside Yotam's bed?**

I wrote the song for Oshrat Ingedashet, who portrays Iris, while working on the rehearsals, which were a beautiful and intimate process. In the original script, a passage described how Iris and Yoram met, in agriculture school. He heard her singing and fell in love, so I knew that Iris must sing to him. I learned that Oshrat is also a singer so I wrote and composed this song for her. It's a song about searching for home. A theme that connects the three characters. Their need for home, their need to define it. For Eli it's escaping it, then forced to go back to it, and even renovate it. For Iris it's growing up without it, and through her love for Yotam being able to create it. For Yotam going home is a meaningful place in his healing, as is with the people I spoke with in rehabilitation from brain damage, going home is one of the most meaningful symbols of returning to life. We had to cut most of the song from the film but we hope to release it in a special soundtrack album.



## **How did you find the locations for the film, the shop, the waterfall, the ancient cave with the graves?**

We could not find a flower shop that matched our vision so we build the shop from scratch. My husband Daniel Kossow was the production designer, and he is a florist, so the flower shop was inspired by his work. I love that we designed it the way I had imagined it from the first daft. The cave was a miracle. I actually had a different cave in mind, but it collapsed 2 weeks before the shoot, so we drove one Saturday to find the one that would end up on screen. It was a place I had visited on a field trip when I was child, and I remembered it exists but I was skeptical at first. The art director Nitzan Zifrut came with us on the scouting tour and she said, "Today, we will find the cave." And we did! I was so happy. That scene was so important for me. The waterfall was the biggest challenge. We visited 6 or 7 locations, some were convenient for the production, but not suitable for the film. When Omri Aloni, the DOP, and I went to see The White Waterfall, it felt right. However, there was no vehicle access at all, and getting there meant 1 hour hike through the mountains in each direction. And it meant 20 crew member, equipment, electricity... But when Itai (Tamir, the producer) saw the pictures from the scout, he said, "This place feels right, let's just do it." And we did. It was quite an adventure, but it was worth it.



## **Then the waterfall was the most challenging scene to shoot?**

The obvious answer would be yes. It was a difficult scene with make-up effects, stunts, and very physical and emotional acting. However, the main issue was that we had to change the schedule, because of a new lockdown, so we moved the shoot to the end of a very crazy week. It was tough, but the hospital scenes were far more challenging. Very emotional. It's where my Grandmother passed away. The apartment of Iris and Yotam was the building where my mother grew up, another strange coincidence (which I don't believe was a coincidence at all). It was very personal and emotional. I love my job, but I have had my share of hospital visits and as much as I admire doctors and nurses and all the staff involved, it's hard for me to visit hospitals. It was also a night shoot, which in the middle of production disrupts your sleep even more than usual.

**The shooting also was delayed and then brought forward again due to Covid. How did you work around these obstacles?**

We somehow made it happen. I had an incredible crew and producers and we just did what needed to be done. I am extremely lucky and honoured to work with wonderful people who have made it possible, in spite of the crazy and bizarre circumstances. Eventually we shot under-schedule (one day less) and still managed to get everything done so it worked for the best. But it was without doubt totally insane. I'd do it again.

**Please tell us more about the casting, how did you find your main actress and both main actors?**

Michael Moshonov was our choice from the start, but we thought he would be Yotam. When we started casting I realised he is perfect Eli. For the role of Iris, the first person I met was Oshrat, whom I saw in a small role in a movie. I did not know her, but something about her energy captivated me. So we met for coffee, and then for auditions. I saw 40 other actresses; but during the entire process I always felt Oshrat was the one. The same thing happened with Ofri - I saw him in a showreel and invited him to an audition, and when he entered the room I looked at Liu (Goldfine, casting director), she looked back at me, and that was it, boom, we knew it. Of course, we had entered a long process of matching and trying with other actors, but eventually our final choice aligned with our instincts.

**Now you are returning to Karlovy Vary IFF with your new film. Which memories do arise?**

I remember the welcome we had. The Karlovy Vary IFF staff treated us like beloved guests, and that is the greatest honour you can give to filmmakers and their teams. You never know what kind of life the film will have, and if it will even be seen or released, especially nowadays. So I'm grateful to come back. The main thing I love about KVIFF is that it's a festival for the actual audience; the attendants of the festival are there for the right reason - passion for cinema. It is not just an industry festival, where you need to sell your soul to get a ticket. KVIFF is a festival for the real audience and I make films that I want this audience to see. I dedicate my films to audiences like that. Besides walking by the river with all these nice buildings is just beautiful, and I love beautiful things. Maybe I will go to a spa after the premiere, get myself a massage. I know it's a cliché, but that is not a bad thing.

**The interview was conducted by Beta Cinema via Email.**

## Main Cast

### Oshrat Ingedashet – Iris

Oshrat Ingedashet graduated from the renowned acting school, Yoram Levenshtein, in 2013. For the last eight years, she has been a resident actor at Habima, The National Theatre of Israel, where she has won multiple prizes. Oshrat has played in various TV series and films including *Laces*, winner of the Audience Award in Atlanta Jewish Film Festival. In *America* she took on the lead role.



### Michael Moshonov – Eli

Michael Moshonov is a film and theater actor from Israel. He started his career when he was a child. He has won two Israeli Academy Awards for his roles in the films *Lost Island* by Reshef Levi and *The Flood* by Guy Nativ. He is also known for his roles in *Lebanon* by Samuel Maoz, *Tehilim* by Raphaël Nadjari and *The Policeman* by Nadav Lapid. Michael portrayed Shimon Litvak in the BBC mini series *The Little Drummer Girl* directed by Park Chan-wook.



## **Ofri Biterman – Yotam**

Ofri Biterman is an Israeli actor. Ofri has been studying acting since his high-school years in Hayovel High School and Al-Habama Group, and he is a graduate of the Yoram Leowenstein Acting Studio in Tel Aviv. As part of his career, Ofri took part in the Israeli-German co-production film *Sarah Stein, Shalom Berlin, Shalom Tel Aviv*, as well as the *Incitement* film that won the Best Film Award at the Israeli Ophir 2019. Ofri also appeared in the *Kepat Barzel* show, which aired on Keshet, in *Valley of Tears* by Kan 11, and the Israeli adaptation of *Jane the Virgin*. Ofri also performs on stage taking the lead role in the *Chaplin* Israeli Musical. He won the Promising Actor Theater Award 2017 for his variety of roles at the Beit-Lessin Theater, and is currently part of the ensemble of the Cameri Theater of Tel Aviv.

## Main Crew

### Director of Photography – Omri Aloni

Omri is a director of photography for feature films, television, commercials and documentaries, based in Berlin and Tel Aviv. During his film studies at Sapir Academic College he twice won the award for “Best Cinematography” at the Cinema South Film Festival for short films. After being accepted to the Berlinale Talent Campus, Omri moved to Germany, where he completed his BFA and MFA in advanced Cinematography studies at HFF Potsdam. Omri's first feature length film, *The Cakemaker*, was a box office hit in Israel. The film was also selected to over 70 film festivals worldwide, won numerous awards and was sold for distribution to 22 countries. *Tracing Addaj*, a short documentary that Omri shot, won the Best Short Film Award at the DocAviv Film Festival and multiple other awards in dozens of festivals worldwide, and was shortlisted for Best Short Student Documentary at the 2018 Academy Awards.

### Music – Dominique Charpentier

Dominique Charpentier is a French composer, drawing inspiration from the contemplation of nature (*Lou vènt*) and the beauty of everyday life (*Carnet de voyage*), Dominique primarily uses the piano as means of expression. He has signed record deals with an array of modern classical labels, among them 7K! (Germany), Sonder House (U.S.A), 1631 Recordings (Sweden), and Memory Recordings (Italy). He collaborates on a regular basis with talented artists like Klangriket, Kyle McEvoy, Manuel Zito or Illuminine. Dominique also composes original soundtracks for movies; *The Cakemaker*, the first feature film he worked on, was acclaimed by critics and audiences around the globe. He also worked on the short film *Labyrinthe* by Svetlana Trébulle and the documentary *On Our Own Island* by Ellie Dylan and Sky Dylan-Robbins.



## About the Production Company - Laila Films

Laila Films was established as a boutique Production Company for high quality independent cinema intended for emerging Israeli and international filmmakers. As well as providing constant support from script to screen, we believe in an intimate approach to achieve personal, innovative and distinct cinema.

## The Producers

### Itai Tamir

Itai Tamir was born in 1958 in Kibutz Kfar Rupin, Israel. In the year 2010, Itai established Laila Films, an independent productions company. He produced over 30 feature films and international co-productions, among them award-winning films that have received worldwide recognition. In addition to feature films, he has produced documentaries, dramas and television programs.

### Ami Livne

Since 2014 – working with Laila Films – Amir Livne is involved in all the company's projects such as feature films, documentaries and TV Drama series. Among the projects Ami co-produced are *Red Cow* by Tsivia Barkai Yacov, *Here & Now* By Roman Shomonov, *The Dead of Jaffa* by Ram Loevy, *Abu Omar* by Roy Krispel, *Flowers Gate* by Haim Buzaglo, *America* by Ofir Raul Graizer, *Sand Flakes* by Gitit Cabiri (in-coproduction with Norma productions, Israel).



## Selected Filmography – Laila Films

<i>Policeman</i>	by Nadav Lapid
<i>Not in Tel Aviv</i>	by Nony Geffen
<i>Sharqiya</i>	by Ami Livne
<i>Alice</i>	by Dana Goldberg
<i>Closed Season</i>	by Franziska Schlotterer
<i>Arabani</i>	by Adi Adwan
<i>House of Wishes</i>	by Haim Bouzaglo
<i>Above the Hill</i>	by Raphael Najadri
<i>Ben Zaken</i>	by Efrat Corem
<i>Awakening</i>	by Guy Meirson
<i>Everything is broken up &amp; Dances</i>	by Nony Geffen
<i>Low Tide</i>	by Daniel Mann
<i>The Cakemaker</i>	by Ofir Raul Graizer
<i>Red Cow</i>	by Tsivia Barkai Yacov
<i>Here &amp; Now</i>	by Roman Shomonov
<i>The Dead of Jaffa</i>	by Ram Loevy
<i>Abu Omar</i>	by Roy Krispel
<i>Roses Gate</i>	by Haim Buzaglo
<i>America</i>	by Ofir Raul Graizer
<i>Sand Flakes</i>	by Gitit Kabiri

**Laila Films** also produced the **Documentaries** *Translation, Poetics of the Brain, Signer & Yiddish, Words that Remain* all by Nurith Aviv and *The Other City* by Livi Kessel.

### Short films

<i>My First Dog</i>	by Moshon Salmona
<i>Messiah's Donkey</i>	by Ofir Deri
<i>When You Were with Me</i>	by Efrat and Gili Danon
<i>Fully Effaced</i>	by Sophie Artus

**America will be distributed in Israel by**

Nachshon Films

**And in the Czech Republic by**

Mimesis Film

## **WORLD SALES**



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