



BLEIBERG ENTERTAINMENT and MH1 present

**TZAHY GRAD
ALA DAKKA
OSNAT FISHMAN**

THE COUSIN

A film by TZAHY GRAD

Casting GALIT ESKHOL
Line Producer BARAK KESSLER
Costume Design DANI BAR SHAI & NAIM KASSEM
Sound Designer ALEX CLAUDE
Music SAPIR MATITYAHU
Editors SARI BISHARAT & DANNY RAFIC
Production Designer MIGUEL MERKIN
Cinematographer EITAN HATUKA
Executive Producer CHARLES WACHSBERG
Executive Producer NICHOLAS DONNERMEYER
Producer EHUD BLEIBERG
Director/Writer/Producer TZAHY GRAD



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SYNOPSIS

One morning before daybreak, Naftali (Tzahi Grad - *Big Bad Wolves*), a local media personality, collects a Palestinian labourer and brings him home to patch up the crumbling studio on the grounds of his rented property in an Israeli village. Fahed (Ala Dakka – *Beyond the Mountains and Hills*) isn't the man Naftali thought he was hiring (he claims to be his brother and business partner) but insists he knows his way around a building site. Full of good intentions and equally keen to get on with his project, Naftali puts aside any misgivings and puts Fahed to work.

Later that day, rumours begin to circulate: a young woman who lives near the builders' yard has been assaulted and fingers immediately point to Fahed, the outsider in their midst. Initially, Naftali's decent impulses, combined with his passion for home improvement, compel him to defend Fahed against these accusations. But very soon, cracks begin to show in his liberal façade: mounting pressure from his would-be vigilante neighbours, his wife's unease with the stranger in the house, his children's interest in the images of Mecca on Fahed's phone and his growing conviction that his worker doesn't know the first thing about electricity persuade Naftali to question his own judgement.

Directed and written by Grad, **THE COUSIN** is both a darkly comical exploration of Arab-Israeli relations and a cautionary allegory about a universal phenomenon – the fear of 'the other' which can so easily turn into racism.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

We, the Jewish Israelis, have a strong and existential fear of the Arabs. We do not tend to talk about this fear, but we also do not want to give it up. We grip it tightly – too tightly for my taste.

The core theme of the film came from the understanding that our fear of 'Arabs' is much deeper and more relevant than we think it is; a result of a long, bloody conflict and violent messages in the media. And our fear leads to racism (which is inherently natural, at least as an instinct). In THE COUSIN, the character of Naftali says "My racism is natural, everyone is a racist. The question is what do you do with it? Do you surrender to it or fight it?"

Out of this fear came the comic situation that was always at the base of THE COUSIN – A liberal hero who wants to behave like a liberal, but who finds reality is stronger than he is. He loses control, bad things happen and things go wrong...very wrong, but the film is always full of humor.

I do not know exactly why, but I modelled the hero Naftali as closely as possible on myself. So we 'share' a lot - kids, car, mobile, home, studio, profession, social initiative, my middle (unknown) name... all I could. Even the crack on the studio's floor and the noise of the shooting range is real. So as you can imagine THE COUSIN is very close to my heart.

Tzahi Grad

BIOGRAPHIES

TZAHY GRAD (Director/Writer/Producer/"Naftali")

Tzahi Grad was born and raised in Jerusalem. He travelled to North America and Africa both before and after completing his military service as a paratrooper. He also served during the Lebanon war.

He gained a BA in mathematics and computing with excellency, before studying at the Nissan Nativ Acting Studio. After graduating from the Studio, Grad performed on stage, film and television, becoming an acclaimed actor in Israel. He has also directed several theatre productions.

He is perhaps best known to international audiences for his starring role in the breakout hit *Big Bad Wolves*, which Quentin Tarantino called the best film of 2013. He has been nominated for six Israel Film Academy Awards for his performances, including most recently for THE COUSIN, and received the Best Supporting Actor Award for *Someone to Run With*.

Grad is also an award-winning filmmaker; THE COUSIN is his third film as director. His first film, *Giraffes*, which he also wrote, gained 14 nominations from the Israeli Academy, the Script Award at the Jerusalem International Film Festival and First Prize at the Scottsdale International Film Festival. Both films were distributed in Israel and internationally.

His second film *Foul Gesture*, netted him a nomination for Best Director at the Israeli Film Academy Awards alongside several other nominations for the film; First Prize at the Haifa International Film Festival; Fipresci Prize and Special Mention at the Miami International Film Festival, and Special Mention at the Third Eye International Film Festival.

THE COUSIN has received a Best Screenplay nomination for Grad at the 2017 Israeli Academy Awards, as well as a Best Actor nomination for Grad and Best Supporting Actor for Ala Dakka.

While focusing on his work as a filmmaker, Grad continues to act, alongside his work on 'Ehad Ehad' (One by One), which features in THE COUSIN.

ALA DAKKA ("Fahed")

Ala Dakka was born in 1994 in Beer-Sheva, and is a graduate of the Goodman Acting School of the Negev. He is fluent in three languages (Hebrew, Arabic, and English) and speaks some Russian. He is a singer, rapper and musician, playing

the guitar, bass guitar, piano and drum. As an actor, he made his film debut in Eran Kolirin's *Beyond the Mountains and Hills*, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival. Dakka's most recent credits include *Entebbe* from director Jose Padhila and Participant Media and the TV series *Mosad 101*, which will be premiering on Netflix later this year. He received a Best Supporting Actor nomination for *THE COUSIN* at the 2017 Israeli Academy Awards.

OSNAT FISHMAN ("Yael")

Osnat Fishman is an Israeli stage and screen actress. She graduated from Beit Zvi School of Acting and has since starred in dozens of major theatre performances, including *Fatal Attraction*, *The Seagull* and *A Month in the Village*. Her film credits include the smash hit *Nina's Tragedies*, *Single Plus* and *Indoors*.

URI HOCHMAN ("Haim")

Uri Hochman was born in Tel Aviv and is a graduate of the Nissan Nativ Acting Studio and Rimon School. He was a member of the IDF "Lehakat Hanahal" and the IDF theatre company. He has been an actor for more than 23 years, appearing in repertory theatres across Israel, and appearing in dozens of films and television series.

YARON MOTOLA ("Boaz")

Yaron Motolla is a highly esteemed Israeli actor, stage director and dramaturgist. A graduate of the Nissan Nativ Acting Studio, he has appeared in productions at the Habima Theater, Cameri Theater, the Haifa Theater, Beit Lessin Theater Tel Aviv, Akko Festivals and many other venues. He has acted in several successful television series and film and has written and staged pieces for Tzavta, the Tmuna Festival and others. He has specialized as acting coach and teacher (Impro, Nissan (Nativ, etc. and has specialized in drama-therapy.) M.A.A.T

ELI BEN DAVID (the Lawyer)

Eli Ben David is the creator and director of several Israeli television shows. He has appeared in films, television series and theatre productions in Israel.

BEN GRAD COHEN and ALMA GRAD COHEN (Naftali's son and daughter)

Ben and Alma are 16 and 11 years old respectively. *THE COUSIN* marks their first acting roles outside of the 'home made' theatre they created at the home with their father Tzahi Grad.

EHUD BLIEBERG (Producer)

A key figure in international independent cinema, Ehud Bleiberg has produced more than 30 films over the past three decades. Bleiberg's extensive management and creative background have allowed him to develop, finance and produce films that run the gamut of both budget and genre. His producing credits include *The Iceman* starring Michael Shannon, Winona Ryder and Chris Evans, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2012; *Adam Resurrected* starring Oscar nominees Jeff Goldblum and Willem Dafoe; Cannes Film Festival Award-winner *The Band's Visit*; *Ingenious* with Jeremy Renner; *The Assassin Next Door* with Olga Kurylenko; and the HBO Documentary Films release *Precious Life*, which was shortlisted for an Academy Award.

EITAN HATUKA (Cinematographer)

Eitan Hatuka started filmmaking in high school before attending the Sam Spiegel Film & Television School. Military service in the spokesperson-film unit of the IDF led him to experiences as a cinematographer during the separation policy of Gaza strip and in the second Lebanon war. *THE COUSIN* is his second feature film, following Limor Shmila's *Montana*. He most recently served as cinematographer on the Netflix docu-series *Shadow of Truth*.

SARI BISHARAT (Editor)

Sari Bisharat graduated from the Sam Spiegel Film & Television School, Jerusalem in 2013. He wrote and directed the short film *Tormus*, which won the Jury award at the Tel Aviv Film Festival and best student film at the New York Short Film Festival. Bisharat has since directed and edited numerous music videos, commercials and TV documentaries.

DANNY RAFIC (Editor)

Danny Rafic was the editor of *Criminal* and *The Iceman* for director Ariel Vromen. He edited Brian Hacker's *Bart Got a Room* and worked as a visual effects editor on such titles as *The Avengers* and 2013's *G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra*. Rafic also served as assistant editor on such films as *The Yards*, *We Were Soldiers*, *A Man Apart*, *The Passion of the Christ* and *Fantastic Four*, among others.