



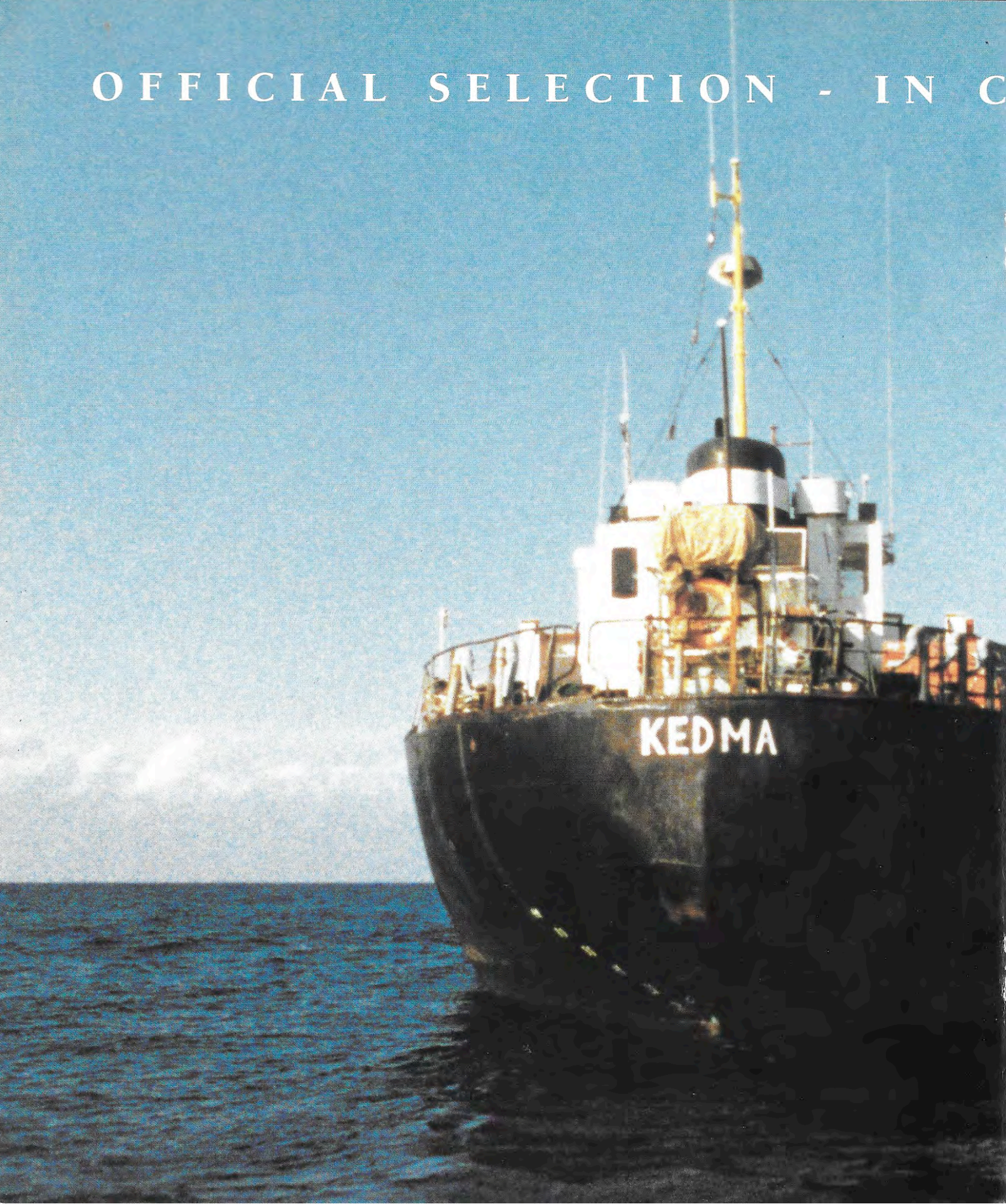
OFFICIAL SELECTION
IN COMPETITION
CANNES 2002



KEDMA

A FILM BY AMOS GITAI

OFFICIAL SELECTION - IN C



COMPETITION - CANNES 2002



MICHEL PROPPER
presents

KEDMA

A FILM BY AMOS GITAI

A coproduction Agav Films, Arte France Cinéma, MP Productions,
Agav Hafakot, BIM Distribuzione
with support from Eurimages, Israel Film Fund, Tel Aviv Foundation
with participation from MK2, Canal +, Telad, Rai Cinéma,
Centre National de la Cinématographie

Israel - Dolby SRD / DTS - Color - 100 minutes

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S H O R T S Y N O P S I S



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May 7, 1948, a week before the creation of Israel. The British empire will end their mandate and leave Palestine. Violence has already raged for six months between the Jewish and Arab communities... The cargo freighter Kedma ("Toward the Orient") sails toward Palestine. Hundreds of concentration camp survivors from all corners of Europe are crammed on board. The Palmach, the underground Jewish defense forces, are preparing for the arrival of the Kedma. The British soldiers are positioned to stop the boat's unauthorized landing. After total confusion on the beach, dispersed groups of immigrants manage to escape into the nearby hills...

Klibanov : Where are you going?
Rawda : We're fleeing.
Klibanov : Who from?
Rawda : The Jews. And you?
Klibanov : I'm fleeing.
Rawda : Who from?
Klibanov : The British.



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Yussuf : We'll remain here, in spite of you, like a wall! We'll be hungry, we'll be in rags! But we'll defy you! Here we will remain, in spite of you, like a wall! We'll write poems, our demonstrations will fill the streets! We'll father generations of rebellious children!

Janusz : Millions of men, a whole nation that sinks into madness for two thousand years. What an admirable people, what an awful people! Awful to the point of insanity! It's madness with a purpose: the belief in the Messiah. A simple myth that changed everything. They'd have gone back to Palestine or elsewhere, forced to make plans for their future, to get out of the nightmare...



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Early May, 1948. For the past six months, combat between Jews and Arabs have raged Palestine. Next week, the British will end their mandate and leave the country. Ben Gurion will proclaim the creation of the state of Israel.

The cargo freighter Kedma ("Toward the Orient") sails toward Palestine. Hundreds of Holocaust survivors from all corners of Europe are crammed on board. Among them, Rosa, a Russian, Janusz from Poland, and Roman, a Ghetto escapee. Teenager Menahem flips through his book of prayers. He only speaks Yiddish. Stories, memories, whispers, songs. The boat heads for the coast.

On the shores of Palestine, the Palmach, the underground Jewish defense forces, are preparing for the arrival of the Kedma. Mussa and his fighting unit are unaware of the detachment of British soldiers now positioned to stop the boat's unauthorized landing.



The immigrants take their first step onto shore. The British soldiers rush in to arrest them. The Palmach forces launch the attack to stop them. There is total confusion on the beach.

Dispersed groups of immigrants manage to escape with Palmach soldiers into the nearby hills. Their next several hours consist of walking, getting separated, then finding each other again. They cross paths with Arab families fleeing the advancing Jewish forces. The immigrants manage to arrive at an encampment set up around a supply convoy destined for Jerusalem under siege by Arab forces.

Two hills away, a fortified Arab village stops the convoy from advancing. Menahem, Janusz and some other men receive arms and are sent to combat. The assault is bloody. Menahem and many others are killed. Janusz wanders frantically among the line of vehicles which transport the wounded and the dead. The road has been unblocked and the convoy can now pass...







of research, we ended up with the idea of a very simple structure, composed of seven key moments punctuated by songs. From the arrival of the boat to the final speech. And the characters stood out: the couple on the boat, the Palmach officer, the Polish survivor, the Palestinian farmer. The literature of the period in Hebrew and in Arab was also a precious source of documentation. I wanted to rediscover the emotional density of works by Haim Azaz or by Tawfik Zayad, a Palestinian poet. From that point, the screenplay didn't change until meeting the actors and choosing the shooting locations.

Does a screenplay serve like a score or a blueprint, existing so that a director can then turn to improvisation and free himself during the shoot?

A. GITAI : I always put the screenplay under question during the shoot and the editing. The



shoot of KEDMA was going to take off when I understood that it wasn't about shooting the battle of Latrun, which was against the Arab coalition army and took place after the departure of the British. I had to present the fighting between two civil populations, Jewish and Arab. I changed everything. At the beginning, we're with the immigrants on the boat. As soon as we touch ground, we meet another element, the British soldiers. It was as if there was a first layer, the immigrants, then the juxtaposition of a second, the British. In the same way followed the Palmach soldiers and the Palestinians. All the actors speak different languages - Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, Polish, Arabic. At the end of the film, there's the feeling of a country made up of displaced peoples. This is still the case today. The country is made up of peoples displaced from Europe, North Africa or Palestinians displaced by the Israelis. The equilibrium of the film is composed in the same way. For a country like Israel, filming is a way to testify, to be a witness. In my films, I compose little by little the puzzle of its history through the observation of a microcosm which is different every time.

You work regularly with Arab-Israeli actor Yussef Abu Warda. In KEDMA, he plays a Palestinian farmer...

A. GITAI : Yussef is from Haifa, like me. He played the father in YOM YOM and the rabbi in KADOSH. I think he's the best actor in Israel. From the moment we began working on his dialogue, I told him: "This time you'll finally be playing a Palestinian!" He chose to use literary Arab for his monologue-poem. This decision made sense. Israelis don't have the monopoly on beauty and subtlety of language.

You have the reputation of shooting quickly and editing day and night. Was this the case for KEDMA?

A. GITAI : I've worked that way since DEVARIM. It's difficult to maintain such absolute concentration for months. So this kind of pressure permits breaking down barriers which cut off my emotions. When I shoot, I'm looking to hit a nerve. KEDMA was shot in five weeks, from December 20, 2001, to January 25, 2002. Always to the limit of exhaustion, on the edge, to paradoxically come to a sort of purification, the simplest possible expression.

In KEDMA, a scene shows the convoy of Jewish immigrants crossing Arab families on the route to exile. "Where are you going?" "We're fleeing." "From whom?" "The Jews. And you?" "We're fleeing, too." "From whom?" "The British." This is a dialogue of the deaf between Jews and Arabs. Fighting is aptly avoided. This difficult cohabitation, Jews and Arabs in the same shot, does this echo of the actual situation in Israel?

A. GITAI : It's this kind of deafness which makes dialogue difficult today in 2002. This only allows for monologues coming from one side and the other. In this sense, a fiction film, a historical film, these are the ways to question the present, the types of narration, the sources of information. The shoot, with a cast from various origins, was an experimental space outside of society. Because society is actually at war. Society believes in victories. On one side and the other. This is terrible. Each side has adopted its own logic of victory. I think the only thing we are actually gaining are additional dead. The Israelis and the Palestinians are two populations of the same size which are sentenced to coexist. This is how film can show opposing views to the binary, simplistic images presented daily on television. With KEDMA, I wanted people to hear the arguments from both sides, without over-simplification. That justifies all the effort put into the making of a film.

The end of the film is made up of two monologues that express the double tragedy told in KEDMA. One is the prophetic anger of Yussuf, the Palestinian farmer, then the desperate rage of Janusz in regards to the history of the Jews. Yussuf's cry echoes the one of Janusz. Yussuf says, "Despite you, we will remain here like a wall. We will lack food. We will lack clothes. But we will defy you. We will write poems. Despite you, we will remain here like a wall. We will fill the streets in protest. Our outraged children will follow us, generation after generation..." And Janusz says, "From the day we were chased from our country, we became a people without a history. The Messiah, a simple myth. Without him, everything would have been

different. They would have finished by going back to Palestine or somewhere else, obligated to reflect on their future, only to end up with this nightmare. Israel is no longer a Jewish country. Not now, and even less than ever in the future. Everything is ruined. Finished.”

A. GITAI : Each of those monologues is different in structure. Yussef’s monologue is of a poetic nature, like classic Arab literature. Through its circular, cyclic structure, Arab literature transforms daily life into fable or allegory. Hebrew literature is often of a conceptual order. Janusz understands something which literally drives him mad — after 2000 years of submitting to a fate imposed upon them, the creation of Israel permits the Jews to take their History into their own hands. From that moment on, they have to assume a certain number of contradictions. The greatest is to know how to control strength. A people who controls its history, its destiny, must not let strength control it.



- 2002 **KEDMA**
EDEN
- 2001 WADI GRAND CANYON (documentary)
- 2000 **KIPPUR**
- 1999 **KADOSH** (Sacred)
- 1998 **YOM YOM DAY AFTER DAY**
ZION, AUTO-EMANCIPATION (documentary)
A HOUSE IN JERUSALEM (documentary)
- 1997 **WAR AND PEACE IN VESOUL** (improvised docudrama)
- 1996 **MILIM (WORDS)** (docudrama/theater)
- 1995 **DEVARIM**
THE ARENA OF MURDER (documentary)
- 1994 **GIVE PEACE A CHANCE** (documentary)
IN THE NAME OF THE DUCE (documentary)
- 1993 **THE PETRIFIED GARDEN**
WAR MEMORIES (documentary)
IN THE VALLEY OF THE WUPPER (documentary)
THE WAR OF THE SONS OF LIGHT AGAINST THE SONS OF DARKNESS
(documentary/theater)
QUEEN MARY (documentary)
- 1992 **METAMORPHOSIS OF A MELODY** (documentary/theater)
- 1991 **GOLEM, THE SPIRIT OF THE EXILE**
WADI , 10 YEARS LATER (documentary)
- 1990 **BIRTH OF A GOLEM** (docudrama)
- 1989 **BERLIN-JERUSALEM**
- 1987 **BRAND NEW DAY** (music documentary)
- 1985 **ESTHER**
- 1984 **BANGKOK - BAHRAIN** (documentary)
- 1983 **ANANAS** (documentary)
- 1982 **FIELD DIARY (YOMAN SADE)** (documentary)
- 1981 **WADI** (documentary)
IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY (documentary)
AMERICAN MYTHOLOGIES (documentary)
- 1980 **HOUSE (BAIT)** (documentary)



- 1917 Lord Balfour, British minister of Foreign Affairs, declares that Great Britain is in favor of establishing “a national home for the Jewish people.”
- 1922 The League of Nations confides to Great Britain a mandate over Palestine. This power is quickly confronted by the question of Jewish immigration and clashes between Jewish and Arab communities.
- 1929 Violent incidents between Jews and Arabs. The British empire is concerned by an eventual general uprising of Arabs in the Middle East. The British decide to restrain Zionist activities.
- 1933 Hitler rises to power in Germany. Jewish emigration to Palestine increases.
- 1936 Violence erupts again between Jews and Arabs. The Arab revolt challenges the power of the British mandate.
- 1937 The British government proposes the partition of Palestine. Zionist leaders accept. The Arab leaders reject these propositions, judging them contradictory with the official British discourse toward them. Uprising spreads throughout Palestine.
- May 1939 Trying to reconcile with the Arabs, the British publish a White Paper announcing a drastic limitation of Jewish emigration to Palestine at the time of imminent Nazi menace.
- 1942 With the advance of German troops in North Africa, the Haganah, the secret Jewish defense organization, decides to form a force capable of opposing the Germans and their allies in case of invasion of Palestine. The kibbutzim are supposed to serve as shelters in this operation. By the end of 1945, the Haganah counted some 30,000 men and women, while the Palmach special units, 2000.
- 1944 The Irgun and the Stern Group, armed organizations of the Zionist Right, launch a series of violent anti-British attacks.
- 1946 Fearing Jewish uprising, the British reinforce their presence by recruiting 100,000 soldiers. Ben Gurion is determined to create the state of Israel in spite of all opposition.
- 1946-48 Thousands of Holocaust survivors try to enter the country by clandestine, camouflaged boats, fishing boats or cargo freighters. Some succeed and seven to 10 thousand immigrants are enlisted in the Haganah. But numerous boats are intercepted. Their passengers are confined in Mauritius Island and Cyprus or sent back to Germany.

- November 29, 1947** Faced with this situation, Great Britain decides to present the question of Palestine before the United Nations. On November 29, the UN votes in favor of the partition of the country. The British announce their departure by May 14, 1948.
- December 1947** The day after the UN declaration, fighting erupts between Jewish and Arab forces. Both sides suffer severe losses.
- Late January 1948** The beginning of the “battle for the roads” around the Tel-Aviv-Jerusalem axis. Jerusalem can no longer be reached except by Palmach-escorted truck convoys. Armed Arab villagers attack the convoys from above. Local units are reinforced with 10,000 soldiers from the Arab Legion. Created by the British in 1920 in Jordan (then known as Transjordan until its independence in 1946), the Arab Legion remains financed and commanded by British officers.
- February 1948** The British decide not to interfere any longer. They leave both sides to face one another.
- Late March 1948** The battle for the roads seems lost by Jewish forces. Jerusalem is under siege.
- April 1948** The Haganah launches a new operation to occupy villages along the main road. Fighting rages throughout the whole month of April. Some sections of the main road are opened. Throughout Palestine, battles continue for the control of the urban centers. Atrocities are committed on both sides. Masses of the Arab population flee. Their exodus is facilitated by the Jewish forces.
- May 7, 1948** The Kedma (“Toward the Orient”), a rusty old cargo freighter transporting concentration camp survivors, enters into view from Caesarea.
- May 14, 1948** In the morning, the British leave Palestine for good. At 4:00 pm, Ben Gurion proclaims the independence of the State of Israel.
- May 15, 1948** The first Arab-Israeli war begins.





Andrei Kashkar Janusz
Helena Yaralova Rosa
Yussef Abu Warda Yussuf
Moni Moshonov Klibanov
 Juliano Merr Mussa
Menachem Lang Menahem
 Sandy Bar Yardena
 Tomer Ruso Milek
Veronica Nicole Hanka
 Liron Levo Gideon
Roman Hazanowski Roman
 Dalia Shachaf Dalia
 Keren Ben Raphaël Isha
Sacha Tchernichovsky Sacha
 Rawda Suleiman Jaffra
 Gal Altschuler Yigal



Director Amos Gitai
Screenplay Amos Gitai & Marie-José Sanselme
with the collaboration of Marc Weitzmann
Mordechai Goldhecht
Haim Hazaz
Taufik Zayad
Produced by Amos Gitai
Co-producers Michel Propper
Valerio de Paolis
Michael Tapuach
Producer Laurent Truchot
Line Producer Shuki Friedman
Cinematography Yorgos Arvanitis
Sound Michel Kharat
Production designer Eitan Levi
Casting Ilan Moscovitch
Costumes Laura Dinulescu
Makeup Artist Ziv Katanov
Special Effects Pini Klavier
Editing Kobi Netanel
Sound Editor Alex Claude
Sound Mix Cyril Holtz
Philippe Amouroux
Music David Darling
Manfred Eicher
Continuity Sari Turgeman