

*Strand Releasing presents*

# THE CUT

**A FILM BY FATIH AKIN**

**Starring Tahar Rahim**

## **PRESS NOTES**

*“Fatih Akin’s THE CUT is a genuine, hand-made epic, of the type that people just don’t make anymore. In other words, a deeply personal response to a tragic historical episode, that has great intensity, beauty and sweeping grandeur. This picture is very precious to me, on many levels.”*

- Martin Scorsese

Official Selection, *Venice International Film Festival*

**Country of Origin:** Germany | France | Poland | Italy | Canada | Turkey

**Format:** DCP/2.35/Color

**Sound Format:** Dolby Digital

**Running Time:** 138 minutes

**Genre:** Drama/History

Not Rated

**In Armenian, Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, Spanish and English with English Subtitles**

NY Press Contact:

Sophie Gluck / Aimee Morris

Sophie Gluck & Associates

Phone: 212.595.2432

[sophie@gluckpr.com](mailto:sophie@gluckpr.com)

LA/National Press Contact:

Jenna Martin / Marcus Hu

Strand Releasing

Phone: 310.836.7500

[jenna@strandreleasing.com](mailto:jenna@strandreleasing.com)

[marcus@strandreleasing.com](mailto:marcus@strandreleasing.com)

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<http://strandreleasing.com/films/cut/>

***The Cut*** is an epic film, a drama, an adventure movie and a western all rolled into one. The film may be set a hundred years ago, but it could not be more topical: it tells a tale of war and displacement, as well as portraying the power of love and hope, which enables us to achieve the unimaginable.

*The Cut* is the conclusion of Fatih Akin's *Love, Death and the Devil* trilogy. In *Head-On* (2004) we see a young German-Turkish woman's furious struggle to live her own life and learn how quickly love can turn into pain.

*The Edge of Heaven* (2007) tells the tale of six people whose paths cross without meeting each other; it is death that brings them together in the end.

*The Cut* now explores the theme of "the devil", examining evil and the harm we are capable of inflicting on others – both unwittingly and deliberately, showing the fine line that often separates good from evil.

Fatih Akin's view on the world also has a defining influence on the final part of the trilogy: "*The Cut* has become a very personal film. Thematically, it explores my conscience and formally it expresses my passion for the medium of film."

### **Mardin, 1915:**

One night, the Turkish police round up all the Armenian men in the city, including the young blacksmith, Nazaret Manoogian, who is separated from his family.

Years later, after managing to survive the horrors of the genocide, he hears that his two daughters are also still alive. He becomes fixated on the idea of finding them and sets off to track them down. His search takes him from the Mesopotamian deserts and Havana to the barren and desolate prairies of North Dakota. On this odyssey, he encounters a range of very different people: angelic and kind-hearted characters, but also the devil incarnate.

## **SYNOPSIS**

1915: Armenian blacksmith Nazaret Manoogian (*Tahar Rahim*) lives in Mardin, north-eastern Mesopotamia, with his wife Rakel (*Hindi Zahra*) and their twin daughters Arsinée and Lucinée (*Zein and Dina Fakhoury*). During World War I, the political winds turn and the minorities of the Ottoman Empire suddenly acquire enemy status. One night, Turkish gendarmes arrest Nazaret, his brother Hrant (*Akin Gazi*), and their brother-in-law Vahan (*George Georgiou*), leaving behind Nazaret's wife Rakel and the twin girls.

The men are forced to work as road builders. Anyone who refuses will be shot. Anyone converting to Islam gets pardoned, an offer that few accept. The prisoners watch groups of old Armenians, women and children pass by while they work in the blazing heat.

The gendarmes suddenly disappear one morning. But before Nazaret and the others manage to escape, they are arrested again by a crew of mercenaries and ex-convicts. Chained to one another, they are taken to a deep valley to be executed by sword and knife – in order to save bullets. Nazaret suffers a life-threatening cut to the neck, but survives.

At night, former petty thief Mehmet (*Bartu Küçükçağlayan*) returns to the bloody scene and rescues Nazaret. Nazaret's cut has made him lose his voice.

The two men wander aimlessly through the rocky desert, Nazaret more dead than alive, until they run into a group of deserters. When the deserters rob one of Nazaret's former clients, Baron Boghos (*Sévan Stephan*), he finds out that all the women and children have fled from Mardin.

Nazaret leaves the deserters in order to search for his family. He heads toward Ras al- Ayn, a refugee camp in the middle of the desert. He breaks down after having marched through the torrid heat for days, but Rakel's voice in a dream puts him back on his feet.

In Ras al-Ayn, Nazaret sees thousands of suffering refugees. Among the sick and dying, he finds his sister-in-law Ani (*Arévik Martirossian*), who tells him that everyone in the family has died and that she'll soon die, too. Furious and desperate over the horror of what he has encountered at the camp, he jumps on one of the passing Badhdad Railway trains and rides until he's discovered.

A lone traveller finds Nazaret completely exhausted and hungry by the side of the tracks. Omar Nasreddin (*Makram J. Houry*), a soap maker from Aleppo, sneaks him into town under the gaze of Turkish guards. Omar takes Nazaret in. For the time being, he can be secure behind the heavy gates of the soap factory, where he befriends another Armenian refugee, Krikor (*Simon Abkarian*).

When the War ends in November 1918, the Turks leave Aleppo, having been vanquished by the British, and Omar Nasreddin takes in even more refugees; soap production ceases for the time being.

In 1921, the Armenians are finally able to move freely again. One night, Nazaret attends an outdoor screening of Charlie Chaplin's silent movie *The Kid*. It's the first time he's been able to laugh in a long time, but then he's reminded of his children and moved to tears. In the square, he meets his former apprentice Levon (*Shubham Saraf*), who has news for him: before dying, Rakel entrusted the twins to a Bedouin family. This news restores Nazaret's courage, the prospect of finding his daughters reestablishing his will to live. He posts a search notice and tours the bordellos to find them. Nazaret makes a list of the almost 100 orphanages in French- Syria and Lebanon where they might have been taken and sets out to check them all.

Success in 1922 in Lebanon: the head of the Byblos orphanage (*Trine Dyrholm*) shows him a photograph in which he recognizes his twin daughters. They've grown into young women, and left the institution a year ago. He becomes fixated on the idea of finding them and sets off to track them down. His search takes him across the ocean to Havana, and eventually to the USA, from Florida to Minneapolis to the barren and desolate prairies of North Dakota...

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH FATIH AKIN, DIRECTOR & SCREENWRITER**

***There are lots of events that are worth making a movie about. The most taboo in Turkey is undoubtedly the genocide of the Armenians. Why did you choose this topic for your new film THE CUT?***

I didn't choose the topic, the topic chose me. My parents are Turkish, so it's a topic that interests me, especially the fact that it's a taboo. If something is forbidden, it always catches my attention and I want to know more – no matter what the topic is. I discovered a lot of things that haven't been addressed and come to terms with yet.

***How much of a taboo is the topic in Turkey today?***

If you'd talked about the genocide in a pub in Istanbul when Hrant Dink (editor-in-chief of the Turkish-Armenian newspaper *Agos*, and prominent Armenian minority leader assassinated in Istanbul in 2007) was killed seven years ago, the people on the next table might have butted in and asked, "Hey, what are you talking about there?" Today, you can talk about it without having to whisper.

***Hardly any other word in Turkish is as politically charged as "soykırım" – genocide. Do you use the word when you're in Turkey?***

Yes. A book by the well-known Turkish journalist Hasan Cemal "1915: Ermeni soykırımı" (1915: The Armenian Genocide), gave me the courage to do this. If the grandson of Cemal Paşa – one of the Ottoman military leaders responsible for the killings during the First World War – gives his book that title, then I can use the word, too. Every bookshop sold the book. It was on display in the shop windows!

***Why do you think it's still so hard for Turkish people to deal with this part of their history?***

If the population of an entire country is systemically lied to by historians and governments, if generation after generation is told, "It's a lie. That's not what happened", then eventually they just internalize it and this is what happened to most people in Turkey. Their parents, schoolbooks and newspapers had never given them a different version of events. So I can't reproach them for that. But I don't agree with politicians when they say we should leave history to the historians. History is ours. The people's. Everyone's.

***How did you research the topic?***

I think I've read about 100 books on the topic, even the diary of an Armenian who emigrated to Cuba. Documents about orphanages, stories about the brothels in Aleppo. I also travelled to Armenia for the first time and visited the genocide memorial in Yerevan, where I met the memorial's director, Hayk Demoyan. He told me that a lot of Armenians had emigrated to Cuba to reach North America. There are lots of Armenians who don't even know this! So I incorporated that into the film.

***The main protagonist Nazaret lives in Mardin. What made you choose this city?***

I'd read the book by the French historian Yves Ternon on the Armenians in Mardin. The city is not far from the Syrian border, so geographically and in terms of storytelling, it made sense to begin Nazaret's ordeal here: he had to be close to the desert. So I decided that he wouldn't be one of the Armenians who were deported to Deir Zor...

***... the city belonged to the Ottoman Empire during the First World War and was one of the main destinations of the death marches...***

I decided he would be one of the Armenians who were banished to one of the smaller camps: Ras al-Ayn. Armenians from places such as Mardin, Diyarbakir and Midyat were taken to Ras al-Ayn. We figured out that it would take a few days to get there from Mardin. So this is the path our protagonist takes. Before we started filming, we drove along the route and checked it out.

That was six months before the outbreak of the Syrian civil war. We were walking around there like archaeologists, notebooks always at the ready, trying to track down the places we'd read about in historical documents. The inhabitants of Ras al-Ayn didn't know where the Armenian death camp had been. The Armenians living there didn't know either. There's no plaque to commemorate what happened there – unlike in Deir Zor. So while we were there, we decided to ring Wolfgang Gust...

***... the author of books on the genocide and Ottoman Empire. Gust revealed how the diplomatic records of the German Foreign Office had played down the role of the German Empire in the genocide...***

... Wolfgang was our main source. We used old maps to try and pinpoint the approximate location of the camp. I've lost count of how many historians helped us along the way. As well as the Syrian secret service.

***Were you aware of the role of the German Empire in the genocide? That Germany knew what its Ottoman allies planned to do to the Armenians, but decided not to intervene for strategic reasons. The German Empire couldn't afford to lose the support of the Ottomans.***

Yes, exactly. The German Empire knew about the massacres and atrocities, but didn't interfere. Under no circumstances did the Germans want to lose the Ottomans as "brothers in arms". That's why they didn't intervene or try to obstruct the Turkish leaders. So the Germans were at least accomplices. The extent to which the Germans actively participated in the massacres or made them logistically possible is still being researched.

***Is THE CUT a film about the genocide of the Armenians?***

I'm telling the story of a father who travels around the world looking for his two daughters. It's a western: the father travels west until he reaches the US. It's a story about emigration and immigration. The story is set against the backdrop of this genocide, but it's not a film about the genocide. I'm not a politician and I'm

not trying to convey a political message with my film. I've taken traumatic historical events – which have yet to be examined and dealt with – and integrated them into a story. In *The Cut*, the line between good and evil is not always clear-cut. The main character, for example, – the Armenian, Nazaret – goes from being a victim to a perpetrator. And he only survives thanks to the compassion and mercy of a Turk.

***How did you find your lead actor Tahar Rahim?***

I'd seen the film *A Prophet* by Jacques Audiard and Tahar had played the main role. In my opinion, it's one of the best European films to come out in the last decade. Tahar features in every scene and he really carries the film – even though he barely says a word most of the time. We had the same idea for our main protagonist: a Turk is supposed to slit his throat, but stops at the last minute because he can't bring himself to kill an innocent man. However, he does manage to damage Nazaret's vocal chords and the hero remains mute.

***I hear you asked well-known directors for advice on the film.***

Yes, I consulted Roman Polanski about the language, for example. Should the characters speak Armenian, Turkish or English? I decided to take Polanski's approach in *The Pianist*: The main characters speak English with an Armenian accent and all the other characters speak their own languages. This helps the audience identify with the protagonists and allowed me to control the dialogues in the film. It also gave me freedom in my casting choices; I wasn't restricted to an Armenian-speaking cast, but could choose the people I really wanted for the part.

***THE CUT is your first film since IN JULY to be set in so many different countries. What was it like to film in so many locations?***

Of all my films, it was the hardest to make, particularly in physical terms. After all, the film's central theme is an epic journey. I thought it was important to capture the uniqueness of each of the locations: the boundaries between the city and the desert, the city and the sea, the sea and the jungle, the jungle and the prairies. I like this kind of "physical cinema"; I want the audience to feel like they're actually at these locations, that when a sandstorm sweeps across the screen, it's real and not digital.

***How did that affect the visual concept? Was every location intended to have a different mood? Was there any kind of motto for the look of the film?***

At an early stage, my cameraman Rainer Klausmann and I defined the overall concept with the word "distance". And we wanted to employ "classical storytelling", whatever that means, and give the images dignity. Under no circumstances was the film to be playful or overly aesthetic. So we didn't even entertain the idea of giving the different locations different looks. We had so many locations that already differed in terms of wind, weather and latitude. If we had tried to emphasize them, the pictures would've been overloaded. We studied the films of Terrence Malick, especially *Days Of Heaven*, and ensured that the

sun was behind us as often as possible. Sometimes we arrived late to a location (often we shot multiple locations each day) and then had to fight against the sun's backlight, for example in that scene in the desert when Omar, the soap dealer, picks up Nazaret. There was also a strong desert wind that kicked up the sand that day, which intensified the dynamics of the image – coincidence played a large role.

If you want to shoot movement in wide- open nature, you can't avoid using Steadicam. Otherwise, I would've preferred a dolly and pans – “old school” techniques.

From the very beginning, I insisted on shooting in CinemaScope. With anamorphic lenses. And 35mm, of course. It was all a dream! Sometimes I had to pinch myself to believe it all! Because the lenses are incredibly heavy for this format and because we had traveled halfway around the world with them, we decided to use only two lenses for the entire movie: a 75mm lens for close-ups and the mighty 40mm for the rest (for inserts, we also had the 60mm). The 40mm is the widest-angle lens we used. In my opinion, it's the lens that comes closest to replicating human vision. With this lens, you'll always have a certain distance to the action. I needed this distance. Especially in the depiction of violence. In the depiction of violence, today's cinema caters to man's most primitive instincts! It has degenerated into purely violent pornography! Because one of the topics of *The Cut* is violence, I of course had to show it, but at the same time, I had to ensure that the people who are killed in the movie retained their dignity.

We had a very tight time schedule. We couldn't afford to rebook 50 people or even all the equipment that traveled with us halfway around the world. So we only shot what we desperately needed for the film. We couldn't shoot the scenes from every conceivable angle. We had planned every shot months in advance! There was no time for variations or alternatives. Only once in Canada, when there was a snowstorm that buried everything under meters of snow, did we have to wait until the snow melted a bit and for the light to be back on our side.

***Allan Starski was production designer on sets for international hits like Schindler's List and The Pianist. What was his creative input in this film?***

Allan is a true master! A teacher from whom I learned so many things. He taught me how to do lighting when shooting wood, how colors can create structures and how to create real depth!

The look had to be credible, that was the concept. The audience should understand, perceive, and be able to delve into the world that we open up to them. Of course, we weren't shooting a documentary, we did avoid certain colors.

We didn't have a big enough budget to build all of the sets. Location scouts searched in different countries for locations where we had to build “as little as

possible”, because construction is expensive. At the same time, our line producers asked us to schedule as few countries as possible to save travel costs.

Jordan’s a small country, the distances are manageable, and there are still functioning historic steam locomotives and tracks for them in the desert. The Jordanian team has a lot of international experience, too, and was extremely well-organized.

None of us had any experience of shooting in Cuba. That’s why we had originally wanted to shoot in Cádiz, Spain. But nowhere in Europe are there mangrove forests like those found in Florida. However, the same vegetation exists in Cuba, which is only 90 miles from Key West. So we decided we had to go to Cuba, which eventually proved to be a godsend. I would recommend to any filmmaker that they should shoot there. Instead of North Dakota, we chose Alberta, Canada, because trade union laws in the United States are quite complicated. Our film negative was once damaged in Jordan during a fairly complex scene, and for logistical reasons, we couldn’t shoot it again in Jordan. So we re-shot the scene in Malta. We shot a lot of the interior scenes in Germany, mainly in studios.

Due to the great directors with whom Allan has worked in the past, he was used to building 360-degree sets, but we couldn’t afford that. We had to tell Allan months in advance precisely where a shot would start and end. So he could avoid having to paint and decorate an entire city block, and just do the facades of three buildings, for example. Allan was initially skeptical that I’d actually adhere to such strict guidelines, but once you start looking around Allan’s sets, it feels like they have no limits.

***This film is the conclusion of your Love, Death and the Devil trilogy. How difficult was it for you to find a “devil”?***

It was clear to me that there’s a devil in each of us. It doesn’t have to be a horror movie or a film about Satanism. Humans are capable of love, as we see in *Head-On*. In *The Edge of Heaven*, death triggers a metamorphosis. *The Cut* deals with the fear of confronting one’s own history. Originally, it’s an existential anxiety that begins at the moment when the umbilical cord is cut. People might think that the film goes off in a different direction to the first two parts of the trilogy because it examines another topic and doesn’t focus on German-Turkish issues. But each film is in fact a continuation of the other. I can see parallels between Cahit from *Head-On*, Nejat from *The Edge of Heaven* and Nazaret – they’re like three brothers, closely observing the world around them and fixated on their goals.

***You got Mardik Martin on board to help with the film – the Armenian-American screenwriter who worked with Martin Scorsese on RAGING BULL, and NEW YORK, NEW YORK. What was his role in the film?***

After we’d decided to shoot in English, I wanted to find someone who could transform the script into an American screenplay. Martin Scorsese put us in

contact with Mardik Martin, who was teaching at the University of Southern California.

***So you reworked the script page for page?***

I actually just wanted him to revise the dialogues. But he said: “Just going through the dialogues won’t be enough.” He was pretty reserved at first: he hadn’t written a screenplay for more than 30 years. He’d studied with Scorsese at New York University under an American-Armenian professor called Haig P. Manoogian. So we gave Nazaret the surname Manoogian. Mardik Martin fine-tuned or got rid of a lot of scenes, which really took the pressure off our budget. He completely reworked the end of the film.

***As well as getting Scorsese’s screenwriter on board, you also consulted Scorsese himself. What did that involve?***

He’d seen the film twice. At the end of 2013, we were both on the jury at the Marrakech film festival. While I was there I showed him the film before we’d finished the technical details. He thought the film was too light and criticized a lot of different things. But he liked it because it deals with Armenians settling in North Dakota and explores a part of American history that many Americans know absolutely nothing about. We all watched it a second time in New York. Mardik Martin and Scorsese met each other at the screening for the first time after years. Everything I like about cinema is in this film. It’s more a film about a passion for cinema than genocide. It was inspired by Elia Kazan’s *America, America* – I “borrowed” two scenes from that film. At the end of *The Cut*, we see Nazaret with a scarf around his head, like the main character in Yilmaz Güney’s *YOL*. In terms of dramatic composition, I looked to *The Searchers* by John Ford. Scorsese made a documentary film about Kazan called *A Letter To Elia*. In the film he says: “You are my father”. Scorsese is my “cinematographic father”, which makes Kazan my cinematographic grandfather, so to speak. Incidentally he was also born in Istanbul.

***How do you think your film will be received in Turkey?***

Two friends of mine, who are both Turkish film producers, have seen the film. One said: “They’ll throw stones at you”. The other said: “No, they’ll throw flowers”. Ultimately, I think it’ll be a bit of both: guns and roses.

*This interview was conducted by Özlem Topçu and Volker Behrens.*

**TAHAR RAHIM - BIOGRAPHY**

Lead actor, was born in 1981 in Belfort, France. He had his international breakthrough with the lead role in Jacques Audiard’s prison thriller *A Prophet*. For this debut, a subtle portrayal of a Maghreb illiterate who during his detention works his way up to become a drug lord, Rahim won two Césars and a European Film Award. He also performed in Kevin MacDonal’s action drama *The Eagle* and in Jean-Jacques Annaud’s fourth desert drama *Black Gold*.

In 2013, he appeared in Asghar Farhadi's relationship drama *The Past*. He recently starred in *Samba*, the follow-up film to *The Intouchables* by directing duo Eric Toledano and Olivier Nakache.

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH TAHAR RAHIM, NAZARET**

### ***How did you join THE CUT?***

Fatih's French co-producer Fabienne Vonier told me about the project. I knew *Head-On* and *The Edge of Heaven* as well as *Soul Kitchen*, and was taken immediately. She then organized a meeting with Fatih. He told me the plot and asked me what I thought. I said, I'm your man. Let me know when we start. I was then kept up to date about each most recent version of the script, so I followed how the story evolved. Before shooting began, we rehearsed for two weeks. The rehearsals were quite different from any I'd known until then. All the actors sat around a table and discussed the roles, dialogues, costumes, and how to best express the film's dramatic progression.

### ***You've worked with a number of reputable directors. What's typical of Fatih Akin's way of working?***

I'd never met a director before where I felt like we were so similar. I'm not sure if he sees it that way, but we respect the same human and spiritual values. Fatih approaches his work from the gut and with intellect, the same way I do as an actor. I never know beforehand where it'll eventually lead me. Fatih is like a brother to me, and he's an excellent captain. He knows what he's doing.

### ***It's unusual in that you play someone who early on in the film loses his voice.***

In preparing for the film, I consulted a leading ear, nose and throat doctor in France. I asked if it was possible to survive a knife cut to the neck while losing one's voice. He thought it was possible, just as you could lose your voice for eight years due to a traumatic experience.

### ***Nazaret remains remarkably composed when the Turkish army arrests him at night and drags him away from his family.***

We wondered about accepted behavior at the turn of the century. Did people show their sentiments in public? Armenians had a reputation for being quite guarded. Nazaret simply plants a parting kiss on his wife's forehead.

### ***It's the moment when the audience realizes that everything will change. Ultimately, he'll lose nearly everything that ever meant anything to him. How can he, or any human being, still continue to live under such circumstances?***

Initially, it's about sheer physical survival, which he manages somehow. But he's dead inside. After the death camp, he's like a lost soul, driftwood. He doesn't know where to turn. But when he finds out that his daughters might still be alive, his desire, his hope to find them becomes his driving force and brings him back to life. Love is such a strong force. But we're also dealing with faith, and the loss of

it, and the desperation one feels in the face of a God pretending to be almighty and yet consenting to such inhumanity.

***Did you hesitate when you heard the story unfolds against the background of the Armenian genocide, which after all is still controversial and almost a taboo subject in Turkey?***

No, I didn't. I take on roles for three reasons: for the director, the script, and the character I'm supposed to play. *The Cut* isn't just about the Armenian suffering. It's also a Western focusing on a father figure desperately looking for his daughters. So it's about the repercussions of a terrible genocide. It was the first time I'd ever read such a film. You can compare it to a slave drama, such as *12 Years a Slave*. Nazaret loses his family, his voice, and his faith. All this is metaphorical, of course. The Armenian people lost their voices; they weren't supposed to talk about these terrible events.

***How long did shooting take?***

From start to end, five months. We went to Cuba, Canada, Jordan, Germany, Malta, and back to Germany again. I'd never invested so much time in a film before.

***You appear in almost every scene. Was that difficult?***

Yes, indeed. Every scene was a challenge. There are films where the actor just walks from left to right all the time while yearningly gazing into the distance. Here, I was saying something in every scene, finding and expressing, struggling, etc.

***Which scenes were the hardest to do?***

The survival scenes in the desert. In Jordan, it was a blistering 40°C sometimes, and there were repeated sandstorms. In Canada, the temperature went down to -10°C. I fasted in order to look emaciated. That weakened me. In the end, I had to go to the hospital, I woke up with my heart racing. The tests showed I suffered cardiac arrhythmia. My heart went crazy for four hours. I really had to take a rest then. I'd over exerted myself. I still loved doing the role. The scene where Nazaret watches the Charlie Chaplin *The Kid* movie was hard to do.

***Why? It doesn't look so hard.***

I was short of time, as I had to go to Cannes. When we did the scene, the camera didn't work properly. We repeated the take. Again, there was a problem. All we needed was a close up of my face. During the third take, the projector casting the film on the wall broke down. So we needed to do another one. I nearly thought the scene was doomed.

***You traveled to the US with Fatih Akin to show it to Martin Scorsese and Mardik Martin. How did that go?***

Great. There couldn't have been a nicer way to see the film – I hadn't seen it until then either. We watched *The Cut* in the Directors Guild of America's projection room because the machine in Scorsese's office didn't work. It was really strange

watching yourself while sitting next to these masters. That was an amazing experience.

### **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

After *Head-On* (2004) and *The Edge of Heaven* (2007), it took seven years before *The Cut*, the last part in Fatih Akin's trilogy about "love, death and the devil," could be finished. *The Cut* is Akin's most ambitious production yet, in financial terms as well as the realization. Strong partners were important – both creatively and in production. Akin has worked with the French production company Pyramide Films since *The Edge of Heaven*. Producer Fabienne Vonier, a fighter and great visionary, showed her excitement about Akin's new project from the beginning. On the German side, Fatih Akin was able to convince Karl Baumgartner of Pandora Film of his movie idea. He ensured that *The Cut* could be financed with a budget of €16 million almost exclusively as an independent film. Baumgartner was a father figure. A dreamer, but one who let dreams become a reality. Difficulties only increased his enthusiasm and ambition. While filming in Canada, Akin didn't shoot for a whole day because he didn't like the sky; any other producer would've refused to do that, given the additional costs involved. Not Karl Baumgartner, who understood very well what was so important to Akin. The weather cleared overnight and in the morning, the sky, cloud formations and light appeared exactly as Akin had wanted. That scene is now the closing sequence of *The Cut*. Neither Fabienne Vonier nor Karl Baumgartner was able to witness the completion of the film. Fabienne Vonier died in July 2013 and Karl Baumgartner in March 2014. Without them, this film wouldn't exist.

The "Devil" is ubiquitous for Fatih Akin. He has many facets, inside each one of us, ready to break out at any time. For the third part of his trilogy, Akin worked on different scenarios in parallel. The genesis of *The Cut* lasted several years and went through many changes. At the beginning, the plot consisted of twelve narrative strands. When Akin showed a first draft of the screenplay to director Costa-Gavras, the latter advised Akin to choose only one of the plot lines for the film. So Akin focused on a story about expulsions and genocide in Southeastern Anatolia during World War I. It tells of the Armenian coppersmith Nazaret Manoogian and his family who were victims of persecution in 1915. It's about the individual fate of a man who's separated from his family, survives the genocide and begins a search for his daughters once he learns that they're still alive.

When the script was almost complete, Fatih Akin had the great opportunity to get to know another great screenwriter via Martin Scorsese: Mardik Martin. Martin, who wrote the screenplays for *Raging Bull* and *Mean Streets* for Scorsese, advised Fatih Akin to condense the story even more. In good American style, he said, "You've packed too much meat on the grill." Fatih Akin traveled to Los Angeles, and in ten days, the two not only slimmed down the script together, but also effectively the budget.

Akin is a perfectionist when it comes to historical accuracy, so the screenplay for *The Cut* didn't come into being in a void. On numerous trips, Akin and his team, Kathrin Pollow (historical consultant), Nurhan Sekerci (producer) and Faminio Zadra (producer), approached this historically complex subject. Many results and experiences of these trips were incorporated into the story. Wolfgang Gust, former Spiegel magazine editor and author of numerous publications about the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian genocide and the German joint responsibility, as well as Taner Akçam, professor of history at the University of Minnesota and genocide expert, helped the team on many issues. Sound historical elucidation of the Armenian genocide started only a few years ago. Kathrin Pollow followed the traces of Armenian children who died in 1915 in orphanages as far as Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. She researched the foreign, including German, participation in the planning and construction of the so-called Baghdad Railway, which was so important for the expansion and preservation of the Ottoman Empire. In archives, she found reports by German, Danish or Swiss priests, among others, and on-site envoys, detailing the violent crimes against Armenians at an early stage. The route Armenian refugees took was followed and it turned out, for example, that Cuba was a first port of call to emigrate to the US. But even the smallest details had to be researched: what the tattoos of Bedouin women looked like 100 years ago, if the Kurdish horsemen who served in the Turkish army had buttons on their pants or not, how soap was manufactured around the turn of the century in Aleppo and what it looked like...?

On one of their last research trips to Jordan, shortly before filming, Rainer Klausmann, Akin's cinematographer since *Head-On*, accidentally fell and broke his hip. The doctor's prognosis was that Klausmann might be good to go in six weeks at the earliest. During the first days of filming in Cuba, Klausmann worked from a wheelchair. By the end of the island shooting, he was dancing again.

For some of the creatives in Akin's production team, *The Cut* was like a family reunion, because they had worked for Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* and/or Roman Polanski's *The Pianist*. Oscar-winner Allan Starski as production designer, Ralph Remstedt as 1st AD, Waldemar Pokromski as lead makeup artist and Julie Adams as dialog coach. As costume designer, Fatih Akin once again won over Katrin Aschendorf from Hamburg, who had previously designed the costumes for his films *Head-On*, *The Edge of Heaven* and *Soul Kitchen*. But *The Cut* was a particular challenge because the film plays on three continents, depicts three cultures – and takes place in an era that's so rarely explored in films, there are hardly any costume collections to rent. Aschendorf traveled to Spain, Italy, England and Canada to find appropriate clothing. The Canadian-Armenian director Atom Egoyan provided costumes in the end that he had used for his film *Ararat*. He even "lent" the team his wife: Arsinée Khanjian plays the wife of Cuban barber Hagob Nakashian in a supporting role. This committed Armenian originally comes from Beirut, and the fact that she stands in front of the camera for a director with Turkish roots has a particularly conciliatory character.

The decision as to who should assume the lead role was made early on. Known for not relying on the “big names” of the industry but recognizing the quality and potential of less well known actors, Fatih Akin watched Jacques Audiard’s movie *A Prophet* with great enthusiasm. The French actor Tahar Rahim is convincing in the role of a young illiterate. As the central figure of the film, he carries it almost alone, much as is the case with *The Cut*.

During the auditions, something like a small miracle happened. Mardik Martin came from Los Angeles to Hamburg just to attend the casting. Fatih Akin had opted for British actor Sévan Stephan in the role of the Armenian Baron Boghos, as he has Armenian roots. Away from the auditions, Sévan Stephan and Mardik Martin started talking and found out that they’re related to each other. Sévan’s mother is Mardik Martin’s cousin. Sévan called his mother right away, and she and Mardik had their first talk in more than half a century. Because the family lived scattered around the world, it took the detour via Hamburg to rediscover one another.

Filming took place from March through July 2013 in Cuba, Canada, Jordan, Germany and Malta. The first shoot in Cuba went very well. The team found good working conditions and the authorities didn’t interfere. Only wood, paper and a printer had to be brought along. In Cuba, there’s no longer much wood, and for some scenes, production designer Allan Starski worried there would be a lack of it on site. Some scenes that actually play in the Middle East were also filmed in Cuba. But the shooting was not to continue so smoothly. Actually, they had wanted to film in Morocco, but the locations there were too far apart. They found everything they needed in Jordan. The desert there was perfect and even a functioning historic train was available. In addition, the Jordanian crew turned out to be very professional.

However, cooperation among the extras was more difficult than one might’ve guessed. Among the extras were refugees from Iraq, Syria and Iran. During filming in the desert, they had to share large tents for costume and make-up, catering and waiting in between shots. Again and again, clashes and scuffles flared up between the groups. It was a frustrating experience to see that a fictional story about events from 100 years ago abutted the reality on the ground in Jordan, being somehow revived and repeated. One time, a Bedouin interrupted the filming, which was taking place on his land, for a few hours. His brother had approved the shooting with the team, but the brothers had been arguing. Bedouin herders blocked the streets, and the police had to resolve the matter. The weather also played its games. A desert storm interrupted the filming. At 40°C, the camera overheated and had to be cooled. The crew experienced the opposite in Canada. There, the team found themselves bunkered down in a snowstorm. The average daily temperature was 10°C. Oddities also confronted the team. A scene was filmed on Malta, taking place after the end of World War I as the Turks withdraw from Aleppo and are stoned by an angry mob. However, the “stones” were made of plastic and bounced back like tennis balls as they hit the people,

walls and streets. In meticulous detail, the images had to be retouched in postproduction so as to avoid any unwanted comedic moments.

Just like Nazaret Manoogian experiences an odyssey in the film, the film shoot in reality was also a long journey with many stops for the team. The death camp was filmed in the studios of Babelsberg. The scenes on the emigrant ship “Santa Isabel” were filmed aboard the “Rickmer Rickmers” in Hamburg. The sewing room scenes were also shot in the Hanseatic city. A family from Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania that owns numerous historical sewing machines came to the aid of this scene. The exterior shots of Minneapolis were, however, shot in Berlin on the Havel island Eiswerder. Nazaret’s house was reconstructed in the MMC Studios in Cologne. The happy days of the family were shot there. The office in which Nazaret posts the search for his two daughters was, in turn, shot in Wuppertal. Nazaret’s forge in Mardin is actually at the Kiekeberg Museum in Lower Saxony.

### **A WORD FROM MARDIK MARTIN, SCREENWRITER**

Dreams come true sometimes. When I was 15, I worked for MGM in Baghdad, where I took film cans from one theater to another. I wondered then if I’d ever participate in one of those Hollywood movies myself.

Years later, I found myself studying at NYU and was awarded a scriptwriting masters scholarship, which took me to Hollywood, my dream for so many years.

I authored and co-wrote many successful films, such as *Raging Bull*, *Crisis*, *New York, New York*, and *Valentino*.

Once I’d left the industry, I was convinced I’d had my fill of dreams. Then I received insistent calls from Nurhan Sekerci, who asked me to read and treat the script by a young German-Turkish director, Fatih Akin. I politely refused, as I was more than busy with my professorship at USC. But Fatih and his producer Nurhan wouldn’t take no for an answer. They sent me Fatih’s films, and I was impressed. In the end, I was persuaded, also because Fatih took it upon himself to make the long journey out to Los Angeles from Hamburg to talk to me in person. Not only did I love the story, I took to Fatih, too. Like Martin Scorsese, Fatih let me do what I wanted.

We worked over the script for ten days and discussed film and filmmaking. Marty Scorsese and I had an Armenian Professor at NYU, Haig P. Manoogian. He’d really supported us and had been a major influence. When Fatih heard that Manoogian had co-produced Marty’s first film *I Call First*, we spontaneously changed the name of the main character to Nazaret Manoogian. It was an expression of Fatih’s respect for someone who’d meant something to us, just as we’d been important for his progress. That’s the way he is. Fatih is an amazing

director. He knew exactly what he wanted, and the result has come out exactly as we intended.

A story about survivors of the Armenian genocide is a sensitive subject to tackle. I'd never imagined anyone would have the courage to do it. Fatih has it. Not only has he realized my own dream, he went far beyond. When I saw the rough cut, I was overwhelmed by Tahar Rahim's unbelievable acting achievement. Everything about the movie seemed perfect.

I can only hope that the audience is able to delve into the feel of the era and its turbulence and upheaval. For me as an Armenian, this is an incredible adventure movie.

## **THE FILMMAKERS**

### **FATIH AKIN – DIRECTOR, CO-WRITER-PRODUCER**

Born in 1973 in Hamburg, Germany, as the son of Turkish immigrants. He studied at the University of Fine Arts. After making two short films, he achieved his breakthrough in 1998 with his debut feature *Short Sharp Shock*. It was followed by the road movie *In July* with Moritz Bleibtreu and Christiane Paul, as well as the documentary *I Think about Germany: We Forgot to go Back* about his parents' immigration story. *Solino*, from 2002, tells the story of an Italian immigrant family in Germany. His international success came with the melodrama *Head-On*, for which he won the Golden Bear, the German Film and the European Film Awards. He documented the diversity of the Istanbul music scene in *Crossing the Bridge – The Sound of Istanbul*. His next feature film, *The Edge of Heaven*, won the Best Screenplay Award at Cannes in 2007. The following year he directed an episode for the compilation film *New York, I Love You*. In the 2009 comedy *Soul Kitchen*, he created a monument to his hometown and won the Special Jury Prize in Venice. *Polluting Paradise* (2012) is a long-term feature documentary about environmental damage in the Turkish village of his ancestors. *The Cut* is the final film in his trilogy about “love, death and the devil”, following *Head-On* and *The Edge of Heaven*.

### **FABIENNE VONIER - PRODUCER**

Born in 1947 in Dakar, and died in 2013. She founded the French production company Pyramide Productions and film distribution company Pyramide Films along with Louis Malle, Vincent Malle and Francis Boespflug. She has produced and co-produced more than 40 films, including works by Louis Malle, Alain Resnais, Aki Kaurismäki, Alejandro Gonzalez Inárritu, Elia Suleiman, Youssef Chahine, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Claire Denis, Benoît Jacquot and Denys Arcand. Vonier has also co-produced all of Fatih Akin's films since *SoulKitchen*.

### **KARL “BAUMI” BAUMGARTNER - PRODUCER**

Born in 1949 in Bruneck in South Tyrol (1949-2014). Alongside his work as a producer, he was also a film distributor with Pandora Film and Pallas Film. Working with Reinhard Brundig, he discovered Andrei Tarkowski, Jim Jarmusch, Jane Campion, Sally Potter, Kim Ki Duk, Aki Kaurismäki, among others. His first success was with Emir Kusturica's *Underground*, which won the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1995. In addition to the Raimondo Rezzonico Prize in Locarno (2004), he was recently awarded the Berlinale Camera (2014) as a lifetime achievement award. *The Cut* was the first time he collaborated with Fatih Akin as co-producer.

### **NURHAN SEKERCI-PORST - PRODUCER**

Born in 1975 in Marburg an der Lahn. She has worked with Fatih Akin as an assistant since 2005, notably in the music documentary *Crossing the Bridge – The Sound of Istanbul*. She was assistant director for Fatih Akin's *The Edge of Heaven*, *New York*, *I Love You*, *Soul Kitchen* and *Being Murat Kurnaz*. Most recently, she was producer and assistant director for the feature documentary *Polluting Paradise*. She is Akin's closest confidante and supervised and produced *The Cut* from the very start.

### **FLAMINIO ZADRA - PRODUCER**

Born in 1975 in Rome. He is from the Dorje Film production company in Rome, which has worked on many films by corazón international. These include Fatih Akin's films *The Edge of Heaven*, *Soul Kitchen* and *Polluting Paradise*. He also co-produced *Takva – A Man's Fear of God*, *Min Dit – The Children of Diyarbakir* and *Fraktus*. His involvement with *The Cut* was in the role of executive producer.

### **MARDIK MARTIN – CO-WRITER**

Born in 1937 in Iran. He emigrated to the USA and completed his Master's degree at New York University. In 1973, he went to Hollywood and wrote *Mean Streets* with Martin Scorsese. With Ken Russell, he wrote the screenplay for *Valentino*, and then worked with Scorsese again on *The Last Waltz* and wrote the first three drafts of the screenplay for *Raging Bull*. Mardik Martin is a professor at the prestigious USC School of Cinematic Arts.

### **RAINER KLAUSMANN –DIRECTOR OF CINEMATOGRAPHY**

Born in 1949 in Wettingen, Switzerland. He has been behind the camera for around 60 feature and TV films so far, including all five feature films by Fatih Akin since *Solino*. He won the German Camera Award for *Head-On*. Klausmann's credits include Oliver Hirschbiegel's films *The Experiment*, *Downfall* and *Diana*, Uli Edel's *The Baader Meinhof Complex*, Eran Riklis's *The Lemon Tree* and Markus Imboden's *On the Edge*.

### **ALLAN STARSKI – PRODUCTION DESIGNER**

Born in 1943 in Warsaw. He became known as a set designer for many films by Andrzej Wajda, including *Danton*, *Man of Marble* and *Man of Iron*. His other

credits include Agnieszka Holland's *Hitler Youth Salomon*, Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* for which he won the Academy Award for Best Production Design, and Roman Polanski's *The Pianist* and *Oliver Twist*.

#### **KATRIN ASCHENDORF – COSTUME DESIGNER**

Born in 1965 in Hamburg. Trained in costume design for theater, he moved on to cinema and TV movies. She created the costumes for Fatih Akin's films *Head-On*, *The Edge of Heaven* and *Soul Kitchen*. Her other credits include Anno Saul's *Kebab Connection* and *The Door*, Ulrike Grote's *The Church Stays in the Village* and Bettina Oberli's *Lovely Louise*.

#### **WALDEMAR POKROMSKI –MAKE UP ARTIST**

Born in 1946 in Wroclaw. Worked on Michael Haneke's *Funny Games* and *The White Ribbon*, Tom Tykwer's *Perfume: the Story of a Murderer*, Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, Roman Polanski's *The Pianist* and *Oliver Twist*, Oliver Hirschbiegel's *The Downfall* and Stefan Ruzowitzky's Academy Award-winning *The Counterfeiters*, as well as Sherry Hormann's *3096 days* and *Ludwig II* by Peter Sehr and Marie Noëlle.

#### **ANDREW BIRD - EDITOR**

Born in 1956 in London. The Hamburg resident has edited all of Fatih Akin's films since his first short film *Sensin... You're the One!* For his work on *The Edge of Heaven*, Bird won the German Film Prize and the Award of the German Film Critics Association in 2008. Other films edited by Bird include *Absolute Giants* by Sebastian Schipper, *The Countess* by Julie Delpy and *The Future* by Miranda July.

#### **ALEXANDER HACKE - COMPOSER**

Born in 1965 in Berlin. The musician, singer and music producer has been a member of the avant-garde band Einstürzende Neubauten for more than 30 years and has worked internationally covering a broad spectrum of genres and fields within popular music, and also as a film composer. He produced the recordings for Akin's *Head-On*, composed the music for *Polluting Paradise*, and was the main protagonist in the documentary *Crossing the Bridge – The Sound of Istanbul*. Together with his wife, American artist Danielle de Picciotto, he has created multimedia projects since 2003 that the two of them perform in the USA and across Europe.

## **FULL CAST AND CREW**

### **CAST**

(in order of appearance)

*Nazaret Manoogian* – TAHAR RAHIM

*Baron Boghos* – SÉVAN STEPHAN

*Levon* – SHUBHAM SARAF

*Priest (voice)* – ALI AKDENIZ

*Lucinée Manoogian (child)* – DINA FAKHOURY

*Arsinée Manoogian (child)* – ZEIN FAKHOURY

*Mrs. Balakian* – ANDREA HESSAYON

*Rakel* – HINDI ZAHRA

*Vahan* – GEORGE GEORGIOU

*Hrant* – AKIN GAZI

*Nazarets Father* – BAKER QABBANI

*Ani* – ARÉVIK MARTIROSSIAN

*Delal* – HATUN KAZCI

*Turkish Gendarmes* – MEHMET YILMAZ, MAHIR ORAL

*Priest in Caravan* – ADAM BOUSDOUKOS

*Girl on Death March* – JENIA JABAJI

*Mother of Armenian Girl* – SESEDE TERZIYAN

*Hungry Boy* – ALAA ABDEL HASAN

*Governor's Assistant* – ÖNDER ÇAKAR

*Leader of Mercenaries* – KORKMAZ ARSLAN

*Mehmet* – BARTU KÜÇÜKÇAĞLAYAN

*Mercenary* – MURAT AKAGÜNDÜZ

*Leader of Deserters* – NUMAN ACAR

*Dursun* – FERIDUN KOC,

*Bedouin* – ALÍ ELAYAN

*Armenian Grandmother* – JOSEPHINE LLOYD-WELCOME

*German Engineer* – RALPH REMSTEDT

*Women in Camp* – KATERINA POLADJAN, SESEDE TERZIYAN

*Omar Nasreddin* – MAKRAM J. KHOURY

*Gendarmes in Aleppo* – YAŞAR ÇETİN, AYHAN HACIFAZLIOĞLU

*Ali* – KEVORK UMEZIAN

*Riza* – KIRAM UMEZIAN

*Krikor* – SIMON ABKARIAN

*Boy Hit by Stone* – EMIN SANTIAGO AKIN

*Mother of Child Hit by Stone* – SESEDE TERZIYAN

*NER Employee* – ALÍ AKDENIZ

*Woman in Soap Factory* – ROZET HUBES,

*Woman in Caravanserai* – ZRNKA MIŠKOVIĆ

*Woman Reading in Soap Factory* – SAMIRA EL ASIR

*Elderly Woman in Soap Factory* – AYSAN SÜMERCAN

*Man in Newspaper Office* – ZINOS PANAGIOTIDES

*Editor in Aleppo* – GARY OLIVER

*Polish Nun* – MAJA REMSTEDT  
*Singing Woman in Soap Factory*– ARÉVIK MARTIROSSIAN  
*Orphanage Director* – TRINE DYRHOLM  
*Mrs. Kricorian* – ANNA SAVVA  
*Spanish Steward* – OSCAR ORTEGA SÁNCHEZ  
*Sick Woman* – PATRYCIA ZIOLKOWSKA  
*Woman from Prado* – LORENA GOMEZ SANTOS  
*Lost Woman in Bar* – TANIA ROJAS  
*Hagob Nakashian* – KEVORK MALIKYAN  
*Mrs. Nakashian* – ARSINÉE KHANJIAN  
*Postal Worker* – ALICIA BUSTAMANTE  
*Rum Smuggler* – HILARIO PEÑA  
*Wealthy Armenian* – ARGELIO SOSA  
*Captain of Smugglers* – ALEXEI RIVERA  
*Smuggler* – JORGE E. FERDECAZ DE CASTRO LEON  
*Todd* – CARLOS RIVERÓN  
*Alvin* – CARLOS CALERO  
*Vagabond* – JOHN KEOGH  
*Peter Edelman* – MORITZ BLEIBTREU  
*Tom* – JOEL JACKSHAW  
*Henry* – DUSTIN MACDOUGALL  
*Danny* – ALEJANDRO RAE  
*Indian Girl* – GRACEY DOVE  
*Arman* – BADASAR CALBIYIK  
*Lucinée & Arsinée Manoogian (Erwachsene)* – LARA HELLER

## **CREW**

*Director* – FATIH AKIN  
*Writer* – FATIH AKIN, MARDIK MARTIN  
*Producers* – FATIH AKIN, KARL BAUMGARTNER, REINHARD BRUNDIG,  
NURHAN ŞEKERCI-PORST, FLAMINIO ZADRA  
*Co-Producers* – FABIENNE VONIER, FRANCIS BOESPFLUG, ALBERTO  
FANNI, VALERIO DE PAOLIS,  
RUBEN DISHDISHYAN, ARAM MOVSESYAN,  
LAURETTE BOURASSA, DOUG STEEDEN,  
PIOTR DZIECIOL, EWA PUSZCZYŃSKA  
*Co-Executive Producer* – STÉPHANE PARTHENAY  
*Associate Producers* – ALI AKDENIZ, ALI BETIL  
*NDR Commissioning Editor* – CHRISTIAN GRANDERATH *Line Producer* –  
MARCUS LOGES  
*Cinematography* – RAINER KLAUSMANN (BVK)  
*Film Editing* – ANDREW BIRD  
*Production Design* – ALLAN STARSKI  
*1st AD* – RALPH REMSTEDT  
*Casting* – BEATRICE KRUGER (CSA, U.I.C.D.)  
*Costume Design* – KATRIN ASCHENDORF  
*Makeup* – WALDEMAR POKROMSKI

*Music* – ALEXANDER HACKE

*Sound* – JEAN-PAUL MUGEL

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