

Strand Releasing presents

A BORROWED IDENTITY

A FILM BY ERAN RIKLIS

Written by Sayed Kashua

*Starring Tawfeek Barhom, Yaël Abecassis, Michael Moshonov,
Ali Suliman & Danielle Kitzis*

*Official Selection:
Locarno Film Festival
Telluride Film Festival
San Francisco International Film Festival
Toronto Jewish Film Festival*

PRESS NOTES

Country of Origin: Israel
Format: DCP/2.35/Color
Sound Format: Dolby SRD
Running Time: 104 minutes
Genre: Drama
Rating: Not Rated
In Hebrew and Arabic with English Subtitles

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<http://strandreleasing.com/films/borrowed-identity/>

SYNOPSIS

A BORROWED IDENTITY is a coming-of-age drama set in the early 1990s about an Arab teenager trying to find his place in Israeli society. Written and adapted from two autobiographical novels by Arab-Israeli author and journalist Sayed Kashua (*Dancing Arabs, Let It Be Morning, Second Person Singular.*)

Gifted Eyad (Tawfeek Barhom), a Palestinian Israeli boy, is given the chance to go to a prestigious Jewish boarding school in Jerusalem. As he desperately tries to fit in with his Jewish schoolmates and within Israeli society, Eyad develops a friendship with another outsider, Jonathan (Michael Moshonov, *Lebanon*) a boy suffering from muscular dystrophy, and gradually becomes part of the home Jonathan shares with his mother, Edna (Yael Abecassis, *Kadosh, Alila, To Live and Become*). After falling in love with Naomi (Danielle Kitzis), a Jewish girl, he leaves school when their relationship is uncovered, and he discovers that he will have to sacrifice his identity in order to be accepted. Faced with a choice, Eyad will have to make a decision that will change his life forever.

ERAN RIKLIS – DIRECTOR

Eran Riklis is one of Israel's most acclaimed filmmakers and has been working as director, writer and producer for nearly more than thirty years.

The Human Resources Manager (2010), an Israel-France-Germany-Romania co-production, was shot in Jerusalem and Romania, won **5 Israeli Academy Awards** (including Best Picture and Best Director and was Israel's nominee to the American Academy Awards) and the **Audience Award in Locarno**.

Riklis enjoyed wide international success with ***Lemon Tree*** (2008), winner of the **Audience Award** at the **Berlin and San Sebastian** film festivals and released worldwide.

The Syrian Bride (2004) won **18 international awards**, including **Best Film in Montreal** and the **Audience Award at the Locarno** Film Festival. Co-produced with France and Germany.

Previous films include:

Cup Final (1992, presented in **Venice and Berlin** and numerous other festivals worldwide.

Zohar (1993, the biggest Israeli box office success of the 90's. The tragic story of the iconic singer Zohar Argov)

Temptation (2002, based on an Israeli best-seller by Ram Oren)

Vulcan Junction (2000, a nostalgic rock & roll film set in 1973 a few days before the Yom Kippur War)

Zaytoun (2012) won the Runner Up **People's Choice Award**. Starring Stephen Dorff, the film is a UK-Israel-France co-production and was produced by Academy Award winner Gareth Ellis-Unwin (*The King's Speech*). Also shown at the Rio, London, AFI and many other festivals.

Playoff (2011), an Israeli-German-French co-production, shot on location in Germany, based on the life of basketball coach Ralph Klein, starring Danny Huston. In competition at the **2011 Montreal Film Festival** it won the **Best Actor** Award for Danny Huston.

On a day you can see Damascus (1984, a political thriller shot upon graduating from the National Film School in England.)

Riklis produced the films ***Three Mothers*** (2006) ***Burning Muki*** (2008) and the 26 episode TV series ***Room Service*** (2008-9), also created by Riklis. He created and directed the TV series ***The Truck*** (2005, 13 episodes) and numerous major TV series

and drama such as ***Cause of Death: Murder, Me and my Family, Lucky, Lethal Money*** and more. Riklis also directed well over 300 commercials and various promotional films in Israel and the UK.

Riklis is a graduate of the **NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL** in **BEACONSFIELD, England** (1982) and also studied at the film department of the Tel Aviv University (1975-77). Married to **Dina Zvi-Riklis** (film director) and father of **Tammy** a journalist, and **Yonatan**, a jazz musician who composed the score of **A BORROWED IDENTITY**.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

Living in the Middle East is a question of identity. All of us here have a long history behind us, claims to the land, spiritual and religious bonds, fear, terror, moments of grace, hope and hatred which have split people and nations here for far too long. Whether you wake up in Tel Aviv, Damascus, Jerusalem, Cairo or Tira – the town where Eyad, our hero, was born – you have to face who you are, what you believe in and where you want to see yourself tomorrow, questions which are not easy to answer, are not easy to live with.

Eyad is Palestinian, Eyad is Israeli, he is a Muslim, he is a Jew, he was born and raised in a typical Arab town and yet his youth was spent in a lucrative Jewish-Israeli school in Jerusalem – liberated or occupied, depending on who you are and what your identity is. Eyad is constantly on the run – from who he is, from what he is supposed to be, from what is expected of him. A man, a young man on the run, is on a voyage of self-exploration, which leads us to embark on this voyage and explore his and our aspirations, our identity, our daily struggles, our fears and our hopes.

The soul of a dancing Arab, forever juggling who he is and what he really wants to be, connects with my fears, with my soul as an Israeli who is part of this land, part of his people and yet is not sure where and how he wants to be. It connects with the sense of solitude we all have and yet with our strong will to survive whatever the odds while we dance away our life – fulfilling our dreams, fulfilling someone else's dreams, achieving goals, failing, dancing.

This film is a slow dance, perhaps a traditional dance, a dance through life, which we all embark on – and find ourselves either alone on the dance floor, or surrounded by our loved ones. It was shot through the eyes of a boy and yet from the perspective of an adult.

Eran Riklis

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:

1984 *On A Day You Can See Damascus*

1992 *Cup Final*

1993 *Zohar*

2000 *Vulcan Junction*
2002 *Temptation*
2004 *The Syrian Bride*
2008 *Lemon Tree*
2010 *The Mission of the Human Resources Manager*
2011 *Playoff*
2012 *Zaytoun*
2014 *A Borrowed Identity*

SAYED KASHUA – SCREENWRITER, NOVELIST AND JOURNALIST

One of Israel's most renowned contemporary writers, Sayed Kashua was born in 1975 in the Arab town of Tira in the Triangle region of Israel. At the age of 15 Sayed was admitted into The Israel Arts and Science Academy in Jerusalem, one of the few Palestinian students to attend it at the time. Upon graduation he proceeded to study Sociology and Philosophy at the Hebrew University, where he met his wife-to-be. After receiving his degree, he took a job as a reporter for the "Kol Ha'ir" local newspaper. Initially writing magazine articles, Sayed later moved on to television reviews and eventually his own satirical column in the leading Israeli newspaper Haaretz.

In 2002 he published his first book, DANCING ARABS, which became a best-seller, and was translated into several languages. In 2004 his second book, LET IT BE MORNING, was published. 2010 saw the publishing of his third and latest book, SECOND PERSON SINGULAR, for which he was awarded the 2011 Bernstein prize for an original Hebrew novel.

Kashua created the popular sitcom ARAB LABOR, which first aired in 2007 on Israel's Channel 2. The series, a tongue-in-cheek yet piercing look at Arab-Jewish relationships inside Israel, is partially based on Kashua's weekly columns at Haaretz and his personal story and experiences.

Kashua now lives in the United States.

CAST

Tawfeek Barhom (Eyad) (born 1990) is an Israeli Arab actor from Tel Aviv, who has appeared in various TV shows, including *Euphoria*, *Special Ops*, and *Greenhouse*. Barhom's upcoming projects include *The White City* co-directed by Tanner King Barklow (producer of the Oscar-nominated *The Invisible War*) and Gil Kofman, and award-winning director Erez Tadmor (*Strangers, A Matter of Size*)'s *Wounded Land*.

Yael Abecassis (Edna) began her career appearing in commercials and television and has become one of Israel's leading film actresses, working with international filmmakers including, Amos Gitai (*Alila, Kadosh*), Olivier Panchot (*Sans Moi*), Radu Mihaileanu (*Live and Become*), Véra Belmont (*Survivre avec les loups*), Salvatore Mereu (*Three Step Dance*), and Ronit and Shlomi Elkabetz (*7 Days*). Abecassis is also one of the founders of the organization Ruach Nashit (Women's Spirit) that supports women victims of violence.

Michael Moshonov (Yonatan) began acting at the age of four, and has already received two Ophir Awards (Israeli Oscars) for best actor in Reshef Levi's *Lost Islands*, and best supporting actor in Guy Nattiv's *Mabul*. Additional films include Raphael Nadjari's *Tehillim*, Samuel Moaz's *Lebanon* and Nadav Lapid's *Policeman*. Moshonov is also part of an underground hip hop group "Cohen and Moshon".

Ali Suliman (Salah) is a Palestinian actor who graduated from the Yoram Levinstein Acting School in Tel Aviv. With a career spanning over a decade, Suliman is one of the leading Arab actors in cinema today with film credits including Eran Riklis' *Lemon Tree* and *The Syrian Bride*, Hany Abu-Assad's *Paradise Now*, which received nominations for both a Golden Globe Award and an Academy Award® for Best Foreign Language Film, Yahya Alabdallah's *The Last Friday*, for which Suliman won Best Actor at the Dubai Film Festival, Ziad Doueiri's *The Attack* and US productions including Peter Berg's *The Kingdom* and Ridley Scott's *Body of Lies* alongside Leonardo DiCaprio, Russell Crowe and Mark Strong. Suliman's television projects include two critically acclaimed series, *The Promise* and Showtime's *Homeland* alongside Claire Danes and Damian Lewis.

Danielle Kitzis (Naomi) was born in the United States and later immigrated to Israel with her family. In high school, she studied theater. She made her first cinema appearance in Dror Shaul's award winning film *Sweet Mud* (2005). In 2012, Danielle played in the remake of the Reshet television series, *Matter of Time*. In between shooting commercials, clips, auditions and acting, Danielle works as a cook in the heart of Tel Aviv.

Marlene Bajali (Grandmother Aisha) was born in Jerusalem in 1947. She studied at the German Schmidt Girl College and later at the El Umah College. While she managed the Ministry of Tourism, she took courses in stage direction and make up in East Jerusalem. Bajali previously worked with Eran Riklis in the *The Syrian Bride* (2004), and in several other films including *Neighbors* (1989) and *My Mother, the General* (1979). Marlene has also starred in numerous television series, such as *Short*

Stories, Aadel and Samira (1971), **The Big Restaurant** (1985), **HaBachur Shel Shuli** (1997), **Samira's Kitchen** (1983-1984) and many more. Marlene still resides in East Jerusalem.

Laëtitia Eïdo (Fahima) is a French actress of Lebanese descent, whose international career includes roles in television series **Strike Back**, **The Destiny of Rome**, and the successful comic series **Hero Corp**. Her film work includes the leading role in the historical feature **Fadhma N'Soumer**. Laëtitia was first trained in classical acting techniques in Paris theatre schools; then with Peter Brook, Jacques Lecoq and Philippe Genty companies; and in the Meisner technique in New York. She started on stage, with various projects including the Greek tragedy **Andromaque** (Racine), the French classic comedy **The Dispute** (Marivaux), the Operetta **Phi Phi**, and singing theatre with **Merci l'Ours**. Her multicultural ethnic look has enabled her to work in seven languages, with upcoming projects in Lebanon, Spain and the United States.

Razi Gabareen (Eyad – Boy) was born in 2001 to a Christian mother and a Muslim father. At a very early age, Razi displayed an interest for acting and music, and at seven, began to play the violin and later joined the Orchestra at the Kiriya Bialik Conservatorium. In addition to his regular school program, Razi also studies at the Center for gifted students. **A Borrowed Identity** is his first feature film.

Norman Issa (Principal Jamal) is a renowned actor, director and playwright. He appeared in the films **The Syrian Bride** by Eran Riklis and **My Lovely Sister** by Marco Carmel, and is well known for his leading role in the television series, **Arab Labor** created by A BORROWED IDENTITY screenwriter Sayed Kashua. Issa has directed numerous plays and won the Best Director Award for the children's play, **Ach Ach Boom Tach**, which he both wrote and directed. The Israeli Foreign Ministry selected this play to represent Israel in festivals worldwide. He has been named Best Actor in the Haifa Theater (2001), Best Actor in a one-man show (2005), Best Arab Director (2005), and was named Best Director for **Gilgamesh** (2009). Issa is the Art Director of the Jaffa International Children's Festival.

CREW

Michael Wiesweg (Director of Photography) was born in Essen, German, in 1960. After graduating from high school and working as a camera trainee for one year he attended the Technical College of Photography in Berlin, Germany and worked as an assistant cameraman for feature films and TV movies. His most important teachers became Konrad Kotowski and Jürgen Jürges. Wiesweg shot his first feature film as DOP in 1990, **Wonder Years**, with director Arend Agthe. In the following years he worked on numerous films for cinema and television as well as commercials. In 2004, he shot Eran Riklis' **The Syrian Bride**. In 2007, he started his collaboration with Dominik Graf on the film **The Vow**, which earned him the German Camera Award. For his work on the acclaimed mini-series **Face to face with crime** (2009) also directed by Graf, he received the German TV-Award and the Adolf-Grimme-Award. Michael Wiesweg lives with his wife and four children in Berlin and Brandenburg, Germany.

Richard Marizy (Editor) is a renowned French editor and César nominee for his work on *La Vie en Rose* directed by Olivier Dahan. His feature film credits include Dahan's *Les Seigneurs*, *Les Rivières Pourpres II* and *La Vie Promise*, as well as Olivier Baroux's *Les Tuche*, *L'Italien*, and *Ce soir je dors chez toi*. Marizy is also very active in television films and commercials.

Yonatan Riklis (Original Score) was born in 1986 in Tel Aviv, Israel. He is a 2011 BFA honorable graduate of the New School for Jazz & Contemporary Music, where he studied under the instruction of jazz giants such as Junior Mance, Billy Harper, Reggie Workman, Charli Persip, David Schnitter, Hal Galper and many more. In New York, Yonatan has had the honor of playing with jazz masters such as Jimmy Heath, Don Hahn, Ned Goold, John Mosca, the late great Frank Wess, Warren Vache & many others at various venues such as Dizzy's Coca Cola Club, Symphony Space, The Iridium, Fat Cat, Smoke, Smalls, Garage & more. Beyond jazz and composing for the screen, Yonatan is involved in Hip Hop (with the Israeli band Cohen & Mushon) and in rock (his former band, Poster Boys, appears in the film).

Yoel Herzberg (Production Designer) is one of Israel's leading production designers, and has a B.F.A from Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem. His feature film credits include *Omar* (Hany Abu Assad), *Giraffada* (Rani Massalha), *Zaytoun* (Eran Riklis), *The Attack* (Ziad Doueiri), *The World is Funny* (Shemi Zarhin), *The Flood* (Guy Nativ), *The Human Resources Manager* (Eran Riklis), *Miral* (Julian Schnabel) and many others. He has also designed numerous television drama series and commercials.

Hamada Atallah (Costume Designer) is a fashion designer and has taught craft and design since 1992. Atallah has worked extensively as a costume designer in film and in theatre with film credits including *Villa Touma*, *A Borrowed Identity*, *Omar*, *Zaytoun*, *Out in the Dark*, *The Attack*, *A Bottle in the Gaza Sea*, *Salt of This Sea* and *Rana's Wedding*. Atallah's theatre work encompasses productions of 'Jidariyeh', 'Eyes That See', 'Handala' at the Palestinian National Theater, and 'Gilgamesh He is Not Dead' as well as 'Shams' at Al-Hakawati in France.

Gil Toren (Sound Design) is a feature film mixer and sound designer, and has worked on close to 90 films, winning six Ophir Awards (Israeli Academy awards) for his work on *Kippur*, *Broken Wings*, *Nina's Tragedies*, *Walk on Water*, *The Human Resources Manager* and *Balade le'aviv ha'bohe*. Gil began his career in the 1980s as a technician and music mixer for films. In addition to being a sound designer, Gil has also worked as a sound post-production supervisor.

PRODUCERS

Chilik Michaeli, Avraham Pirchi & Tami Leon are the founding partners of United Channels Movies (UCM), established in 2006. One of the leading production companies in Israel, UCM's goal is to create feature films telling local stories for international audiences. UCM films have appeared in major international film festivals, reaching worldwide audiences and selling internationally.

Filmography

Strangers (2007) – By Guy Nattiv & Erez Tadmor - official selection Sundance Film Festival.

A Matter Of Size (2009) - By Sharon Maymon & Erez Tadmor - winner audience award - Karlovy Vary.

The Matchmaker (2010) – By Avi Nesher - official selection Toronto International Film Festival.

MABUL (The Flood) (2011) – By Guy Nattiv - World Premiere Berlin International Film Festival (special mention).

Big Bad Wolves (2013) - By Navot Papushado & Aharon Keshales - won best film prize at the Fantasia International Film Festival, and the Award for best director in The International Fantastic Film Festival Sitges.

Yona (2014)- By Nir Bergman.

Antoine de Clermont-Tonnerre,

MACT Productions President & Producer. After serving as an advisor to French Prime Minister Raymond Barre, Antoine de Clermont-Tonnerre was nominated in January 1979 as Chairman of *Société Française de Production (SFP)*, a company managing all the studios and facilities of French public television. He left *SFP* in July of 1981 to become Chairman of *Editions Mondiales*, one of the largest magazine publishers in France. There he diversified the company's activities in the field of film and television, acquiring *Films Ariane* in 1986. In January of 1992, he and his wife, Martine de Clermont-Tonnerre, created their own production company, *MACT Productions*. Since then he has produced and coproduced close to fifty films. On top of his production commitments, Antoine de Clermont-Tonnerre served as president of Unifrance from 2009 to 2013.

Michael Eckelt

Producer Michael Eckelt founded Riva Filmproduktion GmbH in Hamburg in 2006. Previously, he served as the Managing Director of Neue Impuls Film Produktionsgesellschaft mbH. Michael Eckelt and his team successfully combined decades of film industry experience with new talent, establishing durable and fruitful relationships with business and creative partners worldwide. Apart from German feature and television productions, Riva Film has a strong focus on international co-productions of high quality feature films for the art house market. Recent titles include the international co-productions **I, Anna** by B. Southcombe with Charlotte Rampling and Gabriel Byrne (Berlinale 2012), **Voice of my father** by O. Eskiköy/Z. Dogan (Rotterdam 2012) and the German feature **Das Leben ist nichts für Feiglinge (Life's no piece of cake)** by André Erkau (nominated for German Film Award 2013, German Cinema - LOLA@Berlinale 2013). Additional co-productions include **The Invisibles** by Mushon Salmons, **Cornea** by Jochem de Vries, **Yona** by Nir Bergman, **The Blue Wave** by Merve Kayan/Zerep Dadak and **Gett - The Trial of Viviane Amsalem** by Ronit & Shlomi Elkabetz.

Bettina Brokemper

In May 2003, producer Bettina Brokemper and Munich-based commercial production company Embassy of Dreams joined forces to form Heimatfilm, a production company for film and TV in Cologne, Germany. Brokemper previously established the Cologne branch of Hamburg's Neue Impuls Film; and also headed Zentropa International Köln GmbH. Besides Eran Riklis' *Lemon Tree* and *The Syrian Bride*, her numerous producing credits include *Hanna Arendt*, *Nymphomaniac*, *Melancholia*, *Bal*, *Dear Wendy*.

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS

Moshe Edery & Leon Edery

Brothers Moshe Edery and Leon Edery, the children of immigrants, came from Morocco (Tangier) at a young age and worked at a local cinema. Their love of cinema paved the way to their success in the local industry culminating in the production of Israeli movies, and opening the Cinema City cinema complex theater chain. In the 1970's the brothers formed United King Films, and now distribute films for various companies abroad including Dreamworks, Summit Entertainment, Nu Image (owned by Avi Lerner and Danny Dimbort), and Red Granite. Moshe Edery and Leon Edery are the largest private investors in Israeli cinema, and produce approximately 15 films annually.

Simon Ofenloch

After getting his degree in Film Studies, Journalism and American Studies, Simon Ofenloch worked in film production, film restoration and preservation, theatre and festival work, leading to employment at the German Film Institute DIF in Frankfurt. Ofenloch has worked for the cinema department of ZDF/ARTE, a section of Germany's public broadcasting corporation ZDF, since 2009.

CAST

Tawfeek Barhom	Eyad
Yael Abecassis	Edna
Michael Moshonov	Yonatan
Ali Suliman	Salah
Danielle Kitzis	Naomi
Marlene Bajali	Grandmother Aisha
Laëtitia Eïdo	Fahima
Razi Gabareen	Eyad (Boy)
Norman Issa	Principal Jamal
Khalifa Natour	Bassem
Kais Nashef	Wassim
Loai Nofi	Wajdi

CREW

Directed by Eran Riklis

Produced by

Chilik Michaeli, Michael Eckelt, Antoine de
Clermont-Tonnerre, Avraham Pirchi, Tami Leon,
Bettina Brokemper

Co-produced by

Moshe Edery, Leon Edery, Simon Ofenloch

Written by

Sayed Kashua (based on his novel)

Cinematography

Michael Wiesweg BVK

Production design

Yoel Herzberg

1st Assistant Director

Doron Ofer

Costume design

Hamada Atallah

Hair/Makeup artist

Giedrė Jarockaitė

Sound

Rolf Manzei, Gil Toren, Herve Buirette

Music

Yonatan Riklis

Editor

Richard Marizy

Casting

Yael Aviz

Line Producer

Karen Belz, Christian Vennefrohne

Stills

Eitan Riklis

The film was produced with the participation of: Israel Film Fund – The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, The Israel Film Council, The Jerusalem Film & Television Fund at the Jerusalem Development Authority, Israel Lottery Council for Culture & Arts, Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein, ZDF-ARTE, Eurimages, CNC, CANAL+, CINE +, NEW LINEO CINEMA This film was produced with the support of the Israel Fund for Film Production

