

AGAT FILMS & CIE presents

Golshifteh
Farahani



Korkmaz
Arslan

OFFICIAL SELECTION
UN CERTAIN REGARD
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

MY SWEET PEPPER LAND

A film by Hiner Saleem





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MY SWEET PEPPER LAND

A film by **Hiner Saleem**

with **Golshifteh Farahani & Korkmaz Arslan**

Kurdish – France – Germany / 2013 / Kurdish / 1,85 / 95' / 5.1

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Synopsis

After the fall of Saddam Hussein, Baran, a Kurdish independence war hero, resolves to accept a position in a godforsaken village at the borders of Iran and Turkey, an illegal trafficking Mecca.

There he meets Govend, a beautiful young woman who has come to work as the teacher in the newly-opened school despite her twelve brothers' hostility to the idea.

Director's Statement

My grandfather used to say with a great big smile: "Our past is sad, our present is tragic, but lucky for us, we have no future."

When I returned to Kurdistan after several years of exile, I traveled more than two hundred kilometers across mountainous lands without seeing a single living soul. Those who survived the extermination had been deported to camps in southern Iraq. The only thing I could see were black patches where villages used to be. The Iraqi wars had razed them all to the ground. Then I saw a few goats through the car window and my eyes filled with tears of joy. It was a sign of life reasserting itself in this country devastated by a century of war. That was in 1991. A "safe haven" had just been established for the Kurds after Saddam Hussein's defeat in Kuwait.

Since then, the Kurds have organized themselves and conducted free elections for the first time in history. They elected a Parliament, their own government, created an army and a national police force. But the entire country still needed to be reconstructed: infrastructure, villages, roads, electricity, schools, etc. On every visit, I noticed immense changes.

With the fall of Saddam Hussein (2003), Iraq officially became a Federal State: Forthwith, the Kurds began managing their own government, independent of Baghdad. Billions of dollars, oil money, started flowing in. The country became a huge building site. Life picked up again, starting with the rebirth of villages, new roads, all in a very oriental anarchy.

From then on, these distant regions would need to be given a sense of order. Baran, the film's male lead, dreams of being a part of this.

When I was writing my film, everything I saw reminded me of the Far West. Some former combatants had become sheriffs, others mercenaries, or businessmen. The border between Kurdistan, Iran and Turkey is an ideal thoroughfare for every kind of illegal trafficking. Oil is traded with the Turks for medicine (often past its use-by date). Sometimes it's alcohol for Iranian soldiers – everything you can think of, down to tomato paste for the

Kurds. For the country has to import everything.

The opening of the country and democracy now allows the youth to express their secular and contemporary demands: More democracy, secularism and freedom of speech. My filmmaking has always focused on these questions.

Furthermore, born in a Muslim country I am particularly sensitive to the standing of women in our society. In today's Kurdistan, women are hoping to find a new identity, a new social and political role.

Women, old friends of mine, who

have become doctors, professors or school teachers, have gone to work in these distant villages and have told me their stories. I created and fleshed out the character of Govend from their experiences. Govend respects some aspects of tradition, but defies her family, society and the culture of honor. I admire these women; I love them and want to pay tribute to them. This is the story I want to tell in my film, with feeling and humor. For as the saying goes: God created ten Kurds, and then one more to make them laugh.

Hiner Saleem







Director's Biography

born March 9th, 1964 in Akre, Irak. Hiner Saleem had already started shooting scenes for his first film, *Un bout de frontière*, when he was interrupted by bombardments and prevented from completing the film. Gillo Pontecorvo, however, decided to present this footage in 1992 at the Venice film festival as an "unfinished work," which in turn allowed Mr. Saleem to raise the financing he needed for his next film, *Vive la mariée... et la libération du Kurdistan* (Kebab Connection).

He then made a drama with autobiographical underpinnings, *Passeurs de rêves* (Beyond our Dreams), followed by *Vodka Lemon*: awarded Best Film (Controcorrente) at the Venice Film Festival 2005. His feature film, *Kilomètre zéro*, was part of the official selection at the Cannes Film Festival. This was followed in 2007 by the release of *Dol ou la vallée des tambours*. He directed Michel Piccoli in the film *Les Toits de Paris* (Beneath the rooftops of Paris - Best actor prize, Locarno International Film Festival), and in 2011 shot *Si tu meurs, je te tue* (If you die, I'll kill you).

Director and screenwriter

- 2013 **MY SWEET PEPPER LAND**
Un certain regard, Cannes Film Festival
- 2011 **SI TU MEURS, JE TE TUE** (If you die, I'll kill you)
Hong Kong and Dubai International Film Festivals
- 2007 **LES TOITS DE PARIS** (Beneath the rooftops of Paris)
Golden Leopard Best Actor, Locarno Toronto Film Festival
- 2007 **DOL OU LA VALLÉE DES TAMBOURS**
Panorama, Berlinale 2007
- 2004 **KILOMÈTRE ZÉRO**
Official Selection, Cannes Film Festival
- 2003 **VODKA LEMON**
Grand Prize, Mons International Love Film Festival San Marco Prize, Venice Film Festival
- 2001 **ABSOLITUDE** (Arte TV)
- 1999 **PASSEURS DE RÊVES** (Beyond Our Dreams)
- 1997 **VIVE LA MARIÉE... ET LA LIBÉRATION DU KURDISTAN** (Kebab Connection) *Audience Award, International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg*



Cast

Govend
Baran
Reber
Tajdin
Jaffar
Aziz Aga
Nîroj

Golshifteh Farahani
Korkmaz Arslan
Suat Usta
Mir Murad Bedirxan
Feyyaz Duman
Tarik Akreyi
Véronique Wüthrich

Credits

Screenplay & Dialogues
in collaboration with
1st Assistant Director
Editing

Hiner Saleem
Antoine Lacomblez
Antoine Chevrollier
Sophie Reine
Clémence Samson
Juliette Haubois

Script Supervisor
Cinematography
Sound mix
Art director
Make-up/Costume

Véronique Wüthrich
Pascal Auffray
Miroslav Babic
Fehmi Salim
Pauline Batista

Location manager
Post-production
Recording mix

Ceylan Remezhan
Sirwann Mahmud Adbulahman
Pierre Huot
Michael Kaczmarek

Sound design
Colorist
VFX
Producers

Daniel Sobrino
Moritz Hoffmeister
Isabelle Julien
Arnaud Chelet

Co-producers

Marc Bordure & Robert Guédiguian
/ AGAT Films & Cie (France)
Benny Drechsel & Karsten Stöter
/ Rohfilm (Allemagne)
Hiner Saleem / HS Production (Kurdistan)
Arnaud Bertrand, Dominique Boutonnat
& Hubert Caillard / Chaocorp (France)
Memento Films

French distribution

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With the support of Eurimages

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et de l'image animée – Ministère des affaires étrangères – Institut Français

Ministère de la culture et de la communication (CNC) France

Ministère de la culture et de la jeunesse du Kurdistan

And Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung (Germany), Filmförderanstalt mit Unterstützung

der Deutsch-Französischen Kommission

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