

Synopsis

“In every pomegranate there is one seed that comes from heaven” – Old Arab proverb

Free-spirited Kamar, finds herself separated from her new husband, Zaid, and everything she loves until she decides to return to her dancing. She is consoled by Kais, the new choreographer who has returned to Palestine from exile in Lebanon. Kamar is in turmoil as she becomes increasingly attached to Kais and the desire to dance, while struggling to fulfil her role as wife. Meanwhile, the family’s legal case against the confiscation of Zaid’s land faces endless obstacles, making the villagers unable to reach the olive groves for the annual harvest and placing their livelihoods in danger.



Overview

Pomegranates and Myrrh is the debut feature film from award-winning documentary maker Najwa Najjar. The film makes no political argument and is not intended to be an examination of Middle Eastern politics; the extent to which the characters’ everyday lives are affected by political strife and society’s boundaries makes the loudest statement on the plight of the ordinary people in the area.

Director’s Statement

“The second Palestinian Intifada which began in 2000 changed forever the way I saw the world.

“To witness the daily violence, humiliation, grinding poverty, curfews, movement controls, assassination attempts ... and the tit-for-tat suicide bombings ... to be there when violence, hate and anger becomes the only life around me – almost broke my spirit and soul, and my faith in humanity.

“I needed to find a way to survive, to find hope in what seemed to be a hopeless situation ... to breathe again despite the suffocating weight of frustration. Yet in this search I was also confronted with barriers in a Palestinian society – those which can hinder individual development , dreams and aspirations ... but none as challenging as those which force people to turn to lose themselves when despair, uncertainty and loss prevails.

“Writing offered me the escape I need and a way to release my frustrations.

“The daily barrage of stereotypes broadcast on television stations worldwide tired me. I wanted a Palestinian story. A story different to what the world was used to seeing – simply a story of Palestinians trying to live an ordinary life under extraordinary circumstances which has been (and continues to be) overlooked.”

Najwa Najjar, writer and director

Booking Information

DVD bookings on the BFFS Booking scheme | Jaq Chell | info@bffs.org.uk | 0114 221 0314

Cast and Crew

Kamar	Yasmine Al Massri
Zaid	Ashraf Farah
Kais	Ali Suleiman
Umm Habib	Hiam Abbas
Director/Writer	Najwa Najjar
Producer Palestine	Hani E. Kort
Creative Producer UK	Robin Gutch

Film Information

Length: 95 min, Colour, Language: Arabic, English, Hebrew Subtitles. Premiered in Egypt, March 2010

Reviews and Quotes

“Najjar’s intimate storytelling and Yasmine Al Massri’s sensitive portrayal of Kamar create a film that addresses honestly the way a woman might face the realities of life in modern-day Palestine while refusing to be defined by them.” *Sundance.org*

“The point is that many things can happen when people's lives are controlled by forces that are hostile, suspicious or just capricious, and it's a state of being Najjar has captured very pointedly, and with great care.” *Variety*

“The most aggressive character is Umm Habib, played by a riveting Hiam Abbas. The heartfelt depiction of Zaid's stoic suffering by newcomer Farah also offers one of the film's most moving performances.” *Daily News Egypt*

“Najjar nimbly walks a tightrope in *Pomegranates and Myrrh*: the universality of the narrative belies her courage in tackling the specifics of her society, including the struggle between traditional and contemporary cultural mores, and the taboo subject of a prisoner’s wife tempted to go astray. She references the struggle of life under occupation, but portrays its suffocating, all-pervasive nature in matter-of-fact storylines that are all the more accessible and human for it. Her characters live their lives surrounded by the Israeli military (and settler) machine, but they live life: the film’s power lies in its ability to focus closely upon the everyday rollercoaster of familial and other relationships – the affiliations and rapport so often denied Palestinians (and others under siege) when we 'consume' their lives solely through grisly media reportage.” *Antonia Carver, Edinburgh Film Festival*