

YOUTH

A FILM BY TOM SHOVAL



63 [■] Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Panorama

CAST

David Cunio Yaki
Eitan Cunio Shaul
Moshe Ivgy Moti
Shirili Deshe Paula
Gita Amely Dafna

CREW

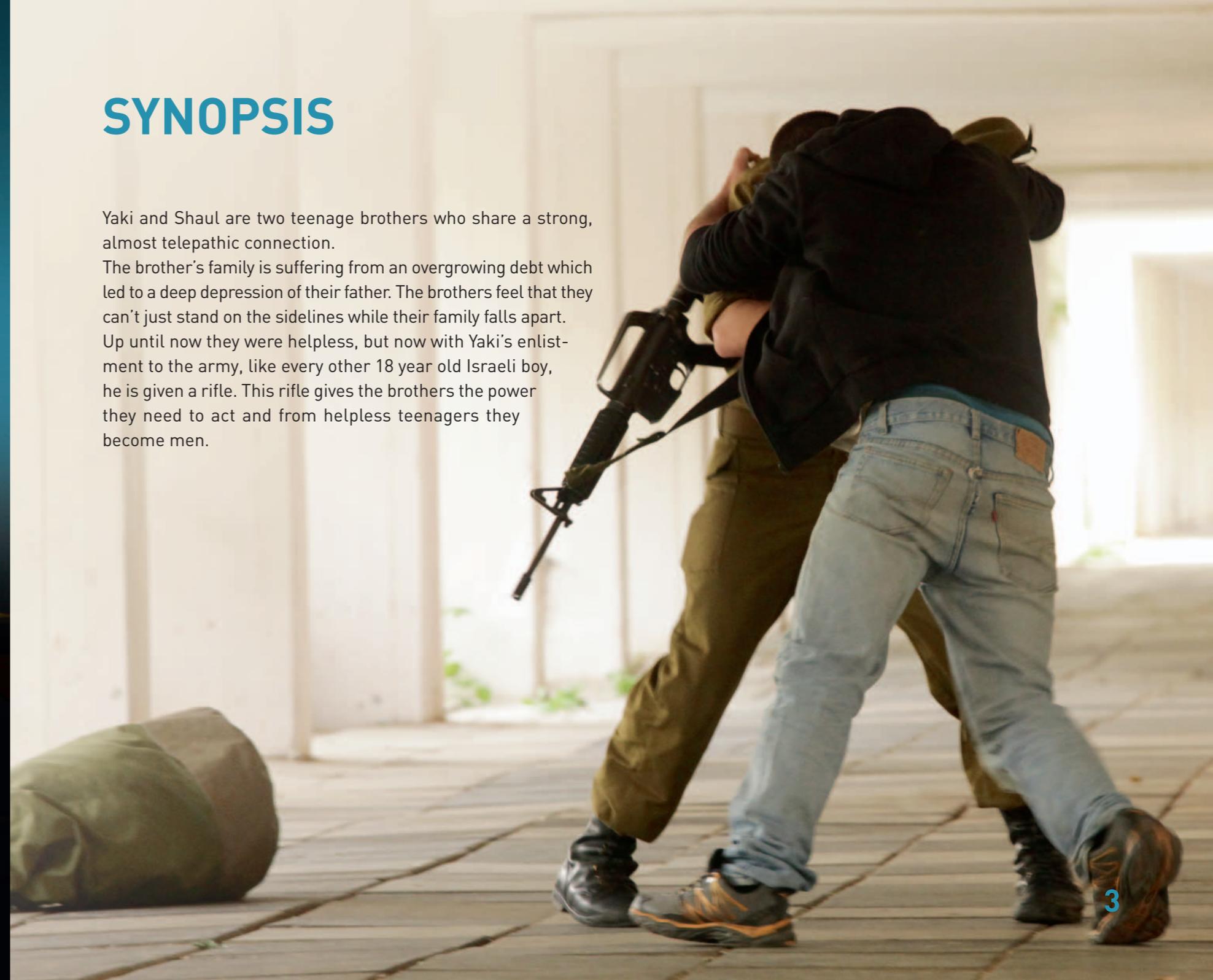
Director Tom Shoval
Producers Gal Greenspan, Roi Kurland
Moshe Edery, Leon Edery
Co-Producers Sol Bondy, Jamila Wenske
Director of Photography Yaron Scharf
Editor Joelle Alexis
Casting Director Orit Azoulay
Production Designer Carmela Sanderson
Sound Design Gil Toren
Production Companies Greenproductions
United King Films / Israel
One Two Films / Germany

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Shooting Format Alexa
Screening Format DCP & 35mm
Aspect Ratio 1:2.40
Sound Dolby SRD
Length 107 Min.

SYNOPSIS

Yaki and Shaul are two teenage brothers who share a strong, almost telepathic connection. The brother's family is suffering from an overgrowing debt which led to a deep depression of their father. The brothers feel that they can't just stand on the sidelines while their family falls apart. Up until now they were helpless, but now with Yaki's enlistment to the army, like every other 18 year old Israeli boy, he is given a rifle. This rifle gives the brothers the power they need to act and from helpless teenagers they become men.





INTERVIEW WITH TOM SHOVAL

What brought about the idea for “Youth”?

From a very young age, movies for me were a place where miracles happened. Even after growing up and learning “how it worked”, I still felt that the theater was situated somewhere between concrete reality and our consciousness. I wanted to try and evoke that feeling in my first feature. This film focuses on the story of two teenage brothers, and many elements in the film are borrowed from the deep bond I have with my brother, a bond that has been the only possible parallel to the Seventh Art. The sense that one can talk to the other without words, or that togetherness creates a singular identity, another, intimate world. I see the film as a combination of cinema and reality. It combines cinema’s suggestion of the impossible with real life, where gravity is strong and often ruthless.

In a sense, this is a film about a family repressing its own situation.

Yes, it is definitely a tragedy, where the brothers take on a desperate and crazy act to try and alter their fate. They operate out of the hubris of youth, and that is how they fail as well. The film describes a family suffering from blindness; their financial situation is insufferable due to the father losing his job and sinking in debt, putting them in a situation where they are about to lose their house, but they keep on living as usual, because they don’t know any other way. The broadening gaps between social classes in Israel are slowly eroding the middle class. Up until two years ago, the middle class seemed to be like a lamb led to the slaughter, accepting its fate or perhaps unaware of it. But its awakening during the social protest movement has changed the rules of the game a bit, and the people of the middle class have become more aware of their situation. “Youth” tries to tell the story of this awakening, as well as its consequences.

Shaul works at a movie theater Cineplex. The family’s house is overflowing with mainstream Hollywood merchandise. Why is that?

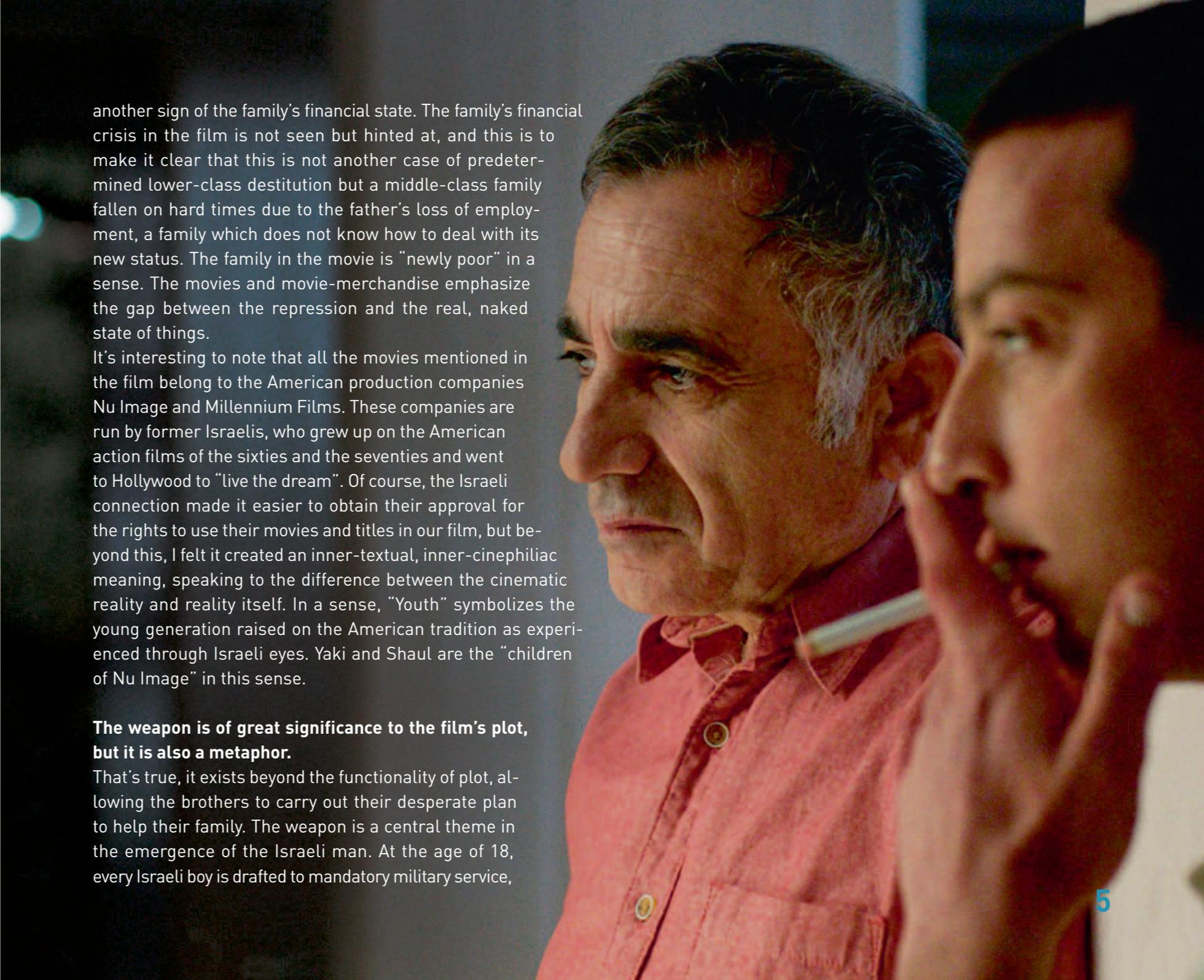
The movies are an external replica of the brothers’ inner world. Furthermore, the posters decorating their rooms and the shirts Shaul brings home from his job at the Cineplex are

another sign of the family’s financial state. The family’s financial crisis in the film is not seen but hinted at, and this is to make it clear that this is not another case of predetermined lower-class destitution but a middle-class family fallen on hard times due to the father’s loss of employment, a family which does not know how to deal with its new status. The family in the movie is “newly poor” in a sense. The movies and movie-merchandise emphasize the gap between the repression and the real, naked state of things.

It’s interesting to note that all the movies mentioned in the film belong to the American production companies Nu Image and Millennium Films. These companies are run by former Israelis, who grew up on the American action films of the sixties and the seventies and went to Hollywood to “live the dream”. Of course, the Israeli connection made it easier to obtain their approval for the rights to use their movies and titles in our film, but beyond this, I felt it created an inner-textual, inner-cinephiliac meaning, speaking to the difference between the cinematic reality and reality itself. In a sense, “Youth” symbolizes the young generation raised on the American tradition as experienced through Israeli eyes. Yaki and Shaul are the “children of Nu Image” in this sense.

The weapon is of great significance to the film’s plot, but it is also a metaphor.

That’s true, it exists beyond the functionality of plot, allowing the brothers to carry out their desperate plan to help their family. The weapon is a central theme in the emergence of the Israeli man. At the age of 18, every Israeli boy is drafted to mandatory military service,



and every young man has a rifle put in his possession. In Israeli society this is an entirely normative fact of life, and so the image of young men playing soccer with a weapon slung over their shoulders or a young man flirting with a girl while holding a rifle in his hands are commonplace and normal. The presence of the weapon symbolizes the Israeli youth's transition from childhood to adulthood by becoming an active part of the body that protects the state from its "enemies", and constitutes a seal of approval that this young men are now being trusted to make life and death decisions. In addition to all that, "Youth" emphasizes the distortion in the Israeli perception of reality, and the danger inherent in such a perception. This is evident in the scene on the bus where the brothers lead the kidnapped girl down the aisle. To many, this scene may seem absurd and impossible, where in fact in the absurd Israeli tapestry of life, a young man with a loaded rifle on a bus is a banal, routine image.

The film combines several different genres – the coming of age story, a family drama and a kidnapping thriller. As a result, the film's tone shifts appropriately. There's humor in the film, as well as sentimentality and tragic elements, but they all weave together to create polarized reactions. What stood behind this decision?

I wanted the film to move brutally from one thing to its opposite,

to speak to this polarized state of being known as "youth", where joy turns to depression with barely any warning. These upheavals create a sense of danger as well, of surprise and inability to guess the next move.

In addition, the film asks its audience not to judge its characters. They are often horrible and dangerous, often infantile and often good, helpless boys. This shifting between cinematic moods, which resembles the shift between the underground shelter and the third floor apartment, the evil in the shelter vs. the tender warmth of the Cooper family, creates a duality that is the film's beating heart.

What can you tell us about the cinematography choices in the film?

I think the central decision made was to shoot in cinemascope, which really determined that the film has two main characters – the two brothers. The two-shot became the close up in this case. Other than that, the cinematographer Yaron Scharf and I tried to maintain frames that the characters are either in or walking into, to speak of the suffocation and tension in their world. Beyond this, we strove for minimalism, and for a sense of an expansive and empty depth of field, and made sure to emphasize the difference between the family's warm, realistic house

and the cold artificiality of the shelter. In a way I used 'Hitchcockian' means to create a sense of tension through out the film.

The word "youth" is repeated in the final scenes in relation to an entirely functional plot motivation. Is there another symbolic dimension to the word that you have chosen to appropriate for the name of the film?

"Youth" (H'anoar) is also a Hebrew expression, as in "the best of the youth", a future we all look to with pride. These "youths" are lost.



TOM SHOVAL (WRITER AND DIRECTOR)

Tom Shoval was born in Petach Tikva, Israel in 1981 and is a filmmaker, film critic and a teacher. He made award winning short films including THE HUNGRY HEART, SHRED OF HOPE and I WILL DRINK MY TEARS, which participated in numerous festivals around the world. He graduated with merit the 'Sam Spiegel' School for cinema and television, in 2007. YOUTH is Shoval's debut feature film.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2011 I Will Drink My Tears (short feature)
- 2008 That's the Spirit (short, video art)
- 2007 Shred of Hope (short feature)
- 2005 The Hungry Heart (short feature)
- 2002 Van Gogh in Tel Aviv (short feature)

DAVID AND EITAN CUNIO (YAKI & SHAUL)

David and Eitan are two brothers living in the Kibbuz „Nir-Oz“ in the south of Israel.

The brothers were chosen to play the parts of Yaki and Shaul after a long and unique process of casting that included a search for an eminent special bond between brothers, both mental and physical.

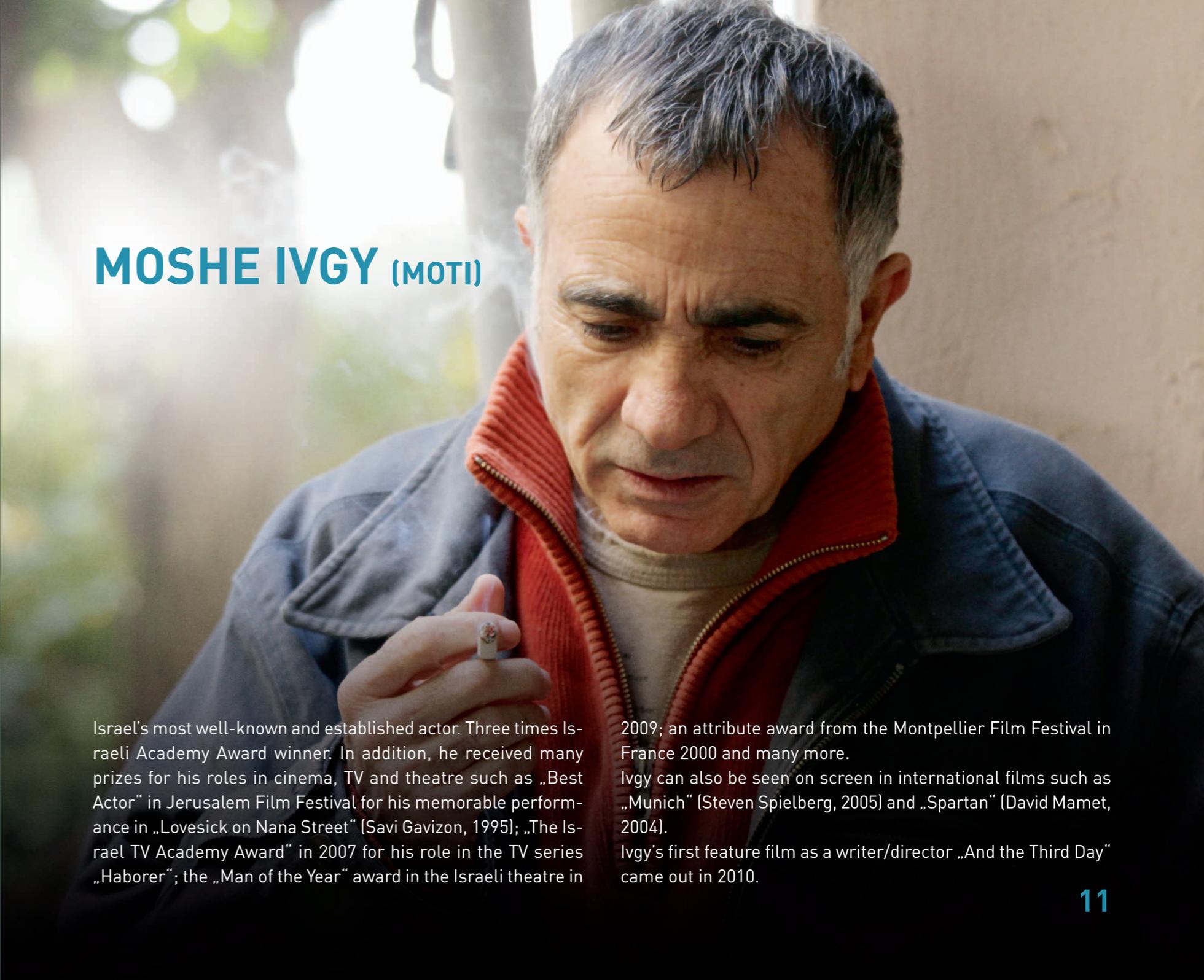
David and Eitan are not professional actors. In order to participate in the film they delayed their military service and committed themselves to a long period of preparation that included acting lessons, training and rehearsals.





GITA AMELY (DAFNA)

Gita Amely is a young emerging actress. Her first role in cinema, was in the film "Six Acts" (Jonathan Gurfinkel, 2012) which won awards at Haifa International Film Festival and San Sebastian International Film Festival. Her part in "Youth" is her first role as a leading actress.



MOSHE IVGY (MOTI)

Israel's most well-known and established actor. Three times Israeli Academy Award winner. In addition, he received many prizes for his roles in cinema, TV and theatre such as „Best Actor“ in Jerusalem Film Festival for his memorable performance in „Lovesick on Nana Street“ (Savi Gavizon, 1995); „The Israel TV Academy Award“ in 2007 for his role in the TV series „Haborer“; the „Man of the Year“ award in the Israeli theatre in

2009; an attribute award from the Montpellier Film Festival in France 2000 and many more.

Ivgy can also be seen on screen in international films such as „Munich“ (Steven Spielberg, 2005) and „Spartan“ (David Mamet, 2004).

Ivgy's first feature film as a writer/director „And the Third Day“ came out in 2010.

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