

The Band's Visit

a film by Eran Kolirin



Running Time: 89 mins

**Official Selection 2007 Cannes International Film Festival
Official Selection 2007 Toronto International Film Festival
Official Selection 2007 Telluride International Film Festival**

Starring

Sasson Gabai, Ronit Elkabetz, Saleh Bakri, Khalifa Natour

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CAST

Tewfiq	-	SASSON GABAI
Dina	-	RONIT ELKABETZ
Haled	-	SALEH BAKRI
Simon	-	KHALIFA NATOUR
Camal	-	IMAD JABARIN
Iman	-	TARAK KOPTY
Fauzi	-	HISHAM KHOURY
Makram	-	FRANCOIS KHELL
Saleh	-	EYAD SHEETY
Papi	-	SHLOMI AVRAHAM
Itzik	-	RUBI MOSCOVICH
Iris	-	HILA SURJON FISCHER
Avrum	-	URI GABRIEL
Lea	-	AHOVA KEREN

CREW

Writer/Director	-	ERAN KOLIRIN
Director of Photography	-	SHAI GOLDMAN
Sound	-	ITAI ELOAV
Editing	-	ARIK LAHAV LEIBOVITZ
Casting	-	ORIT AZOULAY
Costume Designer	-	DORON ASHKENAZI
Production Designer	-	EITAN LEVI
Original Score	-	HABIB SHEHADEH HANNA
Producers	-	EILON RATZKOVSKY EHUD BLEIBERG YOSSI UZRAD KOBY GAL-RADAY GUY JACOEL
Co-Producers	-	SOPHIE DULAC MICHEL ZANA

Synopsis

The Alexandria Ceremonial Police Orchestra arrives in Israel to play at the opening of an Arab Cultural Center. Dressed in full regalia and observing all military police protocol, the members of the orchestra are at a pivotal time in their careers. It's not just the political nature of an Arab military police band playing traditional Arab music in Israel that makes this event so important; budget cuts and many reorganizations have threatened the continued existence of the Orchestra. Faced with the heavy burden of this assignment, the stoic conductor Tewfiq (Sasson Gabai) is determined not to foul their excursion.

Despite all Tewfiq's efforts, it's not long before problems arise. The band arrives at the airport with no one there to greet them. Stranded and unable to contact their Israeli hosts or the Egyptian consulate for help, Tewfiq decides that the Orchestra will persevere with its assignment and orders, and designates Khaled, a suave young ladies man (Saleh Bakri), to ask for directions. Khaled and the station agent struggle in English, Arabic and Hebrew to communicate, but despite their best efforts, the Orchestra is sent to the outskirts of a small forgotten Israeli town in the desert.

Faced with an unknown landscape, and disgruntled and hungry men, Tewfiq brings the men to a small café in the nearby town and humbly asks the proprietor, Dina (Ronit Elkabetz), for lunch. Not wanting the turn the Orchestra away, Dina invites the men to stay with her and a few of her friends. To punish Khaled for his earlier subordination, Tewfiq orders Khaled to stay with him at Dina's, while the other men break up and follow their hosts for the night.

Dina brings the two men to her modest apartment where they begin to discuss not the political issues that divides their two cultures, but it's the intimate details of their personal lives that bring the trio closer together. Before long, Dina's wry, playful self-confidence, and undisguised sexuality make Tewfiq immediately uncomfortable. Regardless, she is persistent in her attraction to the older, serious Tewfiq, and after some prodding from Khaled, the melancholy band leader reluctantly accepts Dina's invitation to dinner. The proud Arab man in his powder blue military uniform and the free-spirited Israeli woman make an odd couple at the local restaurant, but her persistent compassion breaks through his gentlemanly demeanor and the duo form a bridge of understanding.

With the older Dina and Tewfiq gone from the apartment, Khaled decides to tag along with people closer to his age and convinces the shy and insecure Papi (Shlomi Avraham) to let him join as the fourth wheel on a double date night at a roller disco. When Papi fails to court the girl his cousin set up as his blind date, Papi turns to the suave Khaled for advice. With a little prodding and a lot of direction, Khaled helps Papi break the ice with his date. Meanwhile, the other band members, headed by second-in-command Simon (Khalifa Natour), stay with Itzik (Rubi Moscovich), which ultimately lead to tensions with his family and to revelations about fulfillment that cross cultural boundaries.

When the band leaves in the morning for their intended destination, it is clear that their unplanned detour was worth the trip.

Director's Statement

When I was a kid, my family and I used to watch Egyptian movies. This was a fairly common Israeli family practice circa early 1980's. In the late afternoon on Friday's we'd watch with bated breaths the convoluted plots, the impossible loves and the heart-breaking pain of Omar Sharif, Pathen Hamama, l'del Imam, and the rest of that crew on the one and only TV channel that the country had. This was kind of weird, actually, for a country that spent half of its existence in a state of war with Egypt, and the other half in a sort of cold, correct peace with its neighbor to the south.

Sometimes, after the Arab movie, they'd broadcast a performance of the Israeli Broadcasting Authority's orchestra. This was a classical Arab orchestra, made up almost entirely of Arab Jews from Iraq and Egypt. When you think of the IBA orchestra, maybe the custom of watching Egyptian movies ceremony sounds a little less odd.

The Arab movie has long since disappeared from our screens. TV became privatized, and has sunk out there among the fifty seven or who knows how many channels that have descended on us.

And then the IBA orchestra was disbanded. We got MTV and BBC and RTL and "Israeli Idol" and pop songs and 30-second commercials. So who cares about quarter-tone songs that last half an hour any more?

Afterwards, Israel built the new airport, and they forgot to translate the road signs into Arabic. Among the thousands of shops they built there, they found no room for the strange, curling script that is the mother tongue of half our population.

A lot of movies have been made touching on the question of why there is no peace, but it seems that fewer have been made about the question of why we need peace in the first place. The obvious is lost on us in the midst of conversations centering on economic advantages and interests. At the end of the day, my son and my neighbor's son will meet, I am sure of that, in some neon-blinking mall under a giant McDonald's sign. Maybe that's some kind of comfort, I don't know. What's certain though is that we've lost something on the way. We traded true-love for the one-night stands, art for commerce, and human connection, the magic of conversation for the question of how big a slice of the pie we can put our hands on.

Director's Bio

Eran Kolirin - Director and Script Writer

Born in 1973, Eran Kolirin's first work for cinema was the screenplay for the film *Zur - Hadassi*, for which he won the "Lipper Prize" for best screenplay at the Jerusalem International Film Festival, 1999.

In 2004, Eran Kolirin wrote and directed *The Long Journey*, a film made for television.

The Band's Visit is Eran's first feature film. Currently, Eran is writing his second film entitled, *Pathway's to the Desert*.

About the Actors

Sasson Gabai - Tewfiq

One of Israel's leading and prolific actors, Sasson Gabai is a graduate of Tel Aviv University, Drama Dept. He has played in an enormous number of Israeli and international films, television series and theater plays. He has won numerous prizes and awards including among the rest: Landaw Award for the performing arts; Best Actor, The Israeli Academy of theater; Best Actor for supporting role, The Israeli Academy of Cinema. Selected works for cinema: *Aviva My Love, Rambo III, the Order, Made in Israel, Scar, Les Patriots, Tel Aviv Stories, Cherry Season, First Light, Not Without My Daughter, the Quarry, WarZone.*

Ronit Elkabetz - Dina

One of Israel's leading actresses. 2005 also saw Ronit Elkabetz direct her first feature film: *Prendre Femme*. (the film opened in Venice IFF and won the critical acclaim and audience awards). She is currently in pre-production for her second feature film; *Shiv'ah*. Elkabetz has played in an enormous number of Israel productions international films; television series and theater plays in Israel and France. She won numerous prizes and awards including among the rest; Excellency award - Valencia IFF for her role in *Or (My Treasure)* Best Actress award - Sweden IFF for her role in *Prendre Femme*, two Best Actress awards - Jerusalem IFF for her roles in *Prendre Femme* and *Or*; Critics choice of the American Press for her role in *Late Marriage*, Best Actress Award - Buenos Aires IFF for her role in *Late Marriage*, Best Actress award - Saloniki IFF for her role in *Late Marriage* and two Israeli Film Academy awards for best actress for her roles in *Late Marriage* and *Sh'Chur*. Selected works for cinema include: *Prendre Femme, Or Allia, Origine Controlee, Late Marriage, Scar, ShChur, Eddie King* and *The Appointed*.

Saleh Bakri - Haled

One of Israel's emerging Palestinian actors, Saleh Bakri is a graduate of the "Beit Zvi" School for the Performing Arts. Bakri has appeared in several plays at Israel's most prestigious Theaters (Habima, Haifa Theater, the Acco Festival of Alternative Israeli Theater, etc) *The Band's Visit* is his first acting role in a feature film.

Khalifa Natour - Simon

Another of Israel's emerging Palestinian actors, writers and directors, Kalifa Nator is also a graduate of the "Beit Zvi" school for the performing arts. Natour has performed in numerous plays at Israel's and Palestine most prestigious Theaters (Habima, Beer Shiva Theatre in East-Jerusalem and Ramalla; El Hakawati Theatre; the Lab Theatre). Natour also played in Television films and series and in feature films such as *Three Diamonds* and *Rana's Wedding*.

Production Companies

July-August Productions - Israel

July-August Productions is a Tel-Aviv, Israel based independent production company specializing in International co-productions, feature films and television productions. Since its establishment, the company is considered to be one of the fastest-rising production companies in Israel. Over the past years, July-August produced a number of feature films, several made for TV films, television series, mini series and feature-length documentaries which include: *Love and Dance* (feature-film, Berlin IFF, Moscow IFF, Rome IFF), *The Champagne Sky* (feature-length documentary, Israeli- German co-production, produced for Arte/ZDF, Jury's award - DocAviv), *Mimon* (best family film - world film festival, best television film - Israeli film and television Academy Award, best film - Eilat IFF).

Bleiberg Entertainment - USA

Bleiberg Entertainment is a Beverly Hills based production and international sales company formed in September 2005 by veteran producer Ehud Bleiberg. The company operates on a proved and successful business plan with respect to the production, acquisition, financing and distribution of filmed entertainment to the worldwide marketplace with a slate of projects geared toward the theatrical, DVD and TV markets. The company is currently in production on a number of projects including the Holocaust drama *Adam Resurrected*, directed by Paul Schrader and starring Jeff Goldblum, Willem Dafoe and Derek Jacobi; and the zombie action film *Dance of the Dead*, directed by Gregg Bishop. Also coming up is Danny Lerner's sophomore project, the action thriller *Kirot*. Last year, Bleiberg co-produced the family drama *Love and Dance* with July-August productions. Ehud Bleiberg also served as executive producer on the critically-lauded *Frozen Days*. Past credits include: action spoof *Disaster! The Movie*, released by Universal/ScreenMedia, *Monster Man* a slick horror film that was co-produced with Lionsgate, the hit film *100 Girls* and its follow-up *100 Women*, the comedy *According to Spencer* starring Jesse Bradford, Mia Kirshner, Adam Goldberg and Giovanni Ribisi; and Official Selections at 1990 Cannes Film Festival *The Appointed*. Bleiberg's also represents the international sales of a wide array of films including: *He was a Quiet Man*, starring Christian Slater, Elisha Cuthbert and William H Macy; *Stephanie Daley* with Tilda Swinton, Amber Tamblyn and Timothy Hutton; the Steve Buscemi directed comedy *Lonesome Jim* with Casey Affleck and Liv Tyler; and *Erik the Viking* starring Tim Robbins and John Cleese.

Sophie Dulac Productions - France

Sophie Dulac Production as founded in 1999. Its objective is to develop, produce and co-produce feature films, documentary films and short films mainly in the field of arthouse movies and first films. Having mainly produced French films, the company is now developing French and international co-productions. In 2005, Sophie Dulac Productions produced the Argentinean film *El Cielito (The Little Sky)* by Maria Victoria Menis. Currently, the company is producing the Argentinean director's next film, *La Camera Oscura (the Darkroom)*. Sophie Dulac Production has also just completed *La Question Humaine Heartbeat Detector* by Nicolas Klotz, starring Mathieu Amalric and Michael Lonsdale, selected by the Director's Fortnight at the 2007 Cannes Festival, as well as a first film *The Band's Visit* directed by Eran Kolirin, starring Sasson Gabai and Ronit Elkabetz, also at the 2007 Cannes Festival, in the "Un Certain Regard" official selection. In 2003, Sophie Dulac Production as well as other films, thanks to its special relationship with "Les Ecrans de Paris," a network of six theaters in Paris. To date, SD Distribution has disturbed more than ten films including *To Take a Wife* by Ronit and Shlomi Elkabetz, *Avanim* by Raphael Nadjari, *El Cielito* by M.V. Menis, and more recently *El Custodio (The Minder)* by Rodrigo Moreno.