



SCAFFOLDING

BY MATAN YAIR
ISRAEL, POLAND 2017



LOGLINE

17-year-old Asher is split between his charismatic teacher and his brash father, who wants him to take over his scaffolding business.

SYNOPSIS

17-year – old Asher has always been the impulsive troublemaker, from primary school, all through junior high and high school. It's hard for him to concentrate in class, and he is compelled by a lot of rage and violence; yet he is also endowed with a considerable amount of charm and street wisdom. While his strict father sees him as a natural successor to the family's scaffolding business, Asher finds a different masculine role model in his gentle literature teacher Rami and forges a special connection with him. Torn between the two worlds, Asher looks for a chance for a new life and new identity. When a sudden tragedy occurs, he has to take the ultimate test of maturity.





INTERVIEW
WITH THE DIRECTOR

The film is partially based on your personal experiences as a teacher. Can you tell more about them?

For the past nine years, I have been teaching literature in high school, mostly to classes of remedial students or students on probation. Almost without exception, these kids are from working class backgrounds. I have had students who were violent, charming, brutal, full of scars and primed with a certain survival instinct. For years I tried to believe that the lessons might be able to inspire the students to read, to love literature and to find its beauty. However, I was haunted by the more likely outcome: that when high school ended, so would their experience of literature; this would be the only time in their lives that they would be reading poems, short stories, plays and novels.

I began to wonder about the meaning of these classes. If someone asked the students what they learned here, what would they answer? What would remain from all the time we spent together? I needed to write something in order to cultivate hope, to believe again that my work had a purpose, that important connections can be forged in class, that the texts we read can have a lasting impact. I began to sketch the outlines of a story in my mind.

During that same period, I met a new student, Asher. I was intrigued by him and felt, immediately, that he would be a fascinating character because



he evoked such strong and varied emotional responses in me. I felt fear in response to his brutality and lack of limits, compassionate warmth because of his difficulties in reading, jealousy because of his unfettered ability to follow his impulses and desires. In spite of all differences, I was also aware that there was something important we had in common: we were both exposed in some way – we didn't seek to disguise our fundamental characters – and it was obvious we were both paying a certain price for this.

What is the area where the film is taking place? What is special about that place?

The film takes place mostly in the city of Herzliya, a small city just north of Tel Aviv where I grew up and lived until the age of 27. It is also where I work as a literature and history teacher, so all the kids who act in the film – former students of mine – are also from there. In order to achieve a certain authenticity and to support Asher, it was important to me that he would perform in his natural context – the scenes in his house are really shot in his family house, the school scenes take place in our real school, the scaffolding sites are authentic sites in which he had worked.

Herzliya does not have an urban look like Tel Aviv has. It hosts a uniquely diverse population of people from different cultural backgrounds and socio-economic situations.



How did you cast the main characters? Are they non-professional actors?

As for Asher, I knew from the beginning that I wanted him to play his part himself. During the audition process, we considered a few other options for the role, as we understood the risks of basing the film on the performance of a non-actor (Asher is in every single scene in the film). But of course, no one could embody or deliver these lines in quite the same way. But I felt that I would be able to guide him towards the right emotional posture. I was pretty confident that he would have no

problems expressing the explosive, angry shades, but I suspected that the more tender, nuanced moments would be more difficult for him. I was curious to see if Asher would be able to bring other sides of himself to the role.

I also had a real person in mind as a model for the father, a guy called Milo who moved his furniture when I changed apartments. Milo had a special life story and a unique way of speaking and moving. Though I wanted him for the role, I came to understand that working with two non-professional actors would be risky.

When considering my options, I thought of Jacob Cohen. He is similar in stature to the Milo I knew and had a similar kind of toughness. During his first audition, I felt that Jacob completely understood the role. When we brought Asher and Jacob Cohen together, I was afraid that Jacob would be too dominant and overshadow Asher. However, as it turned out, there was something entirely appropriate and right in this overshadowing effect – it reflected something true in the relationship.

Casting the role, the teacher was difficult for me. I had a strong desire to play this role myself, and it was hard for me to let this go. I enjoy acting and I thought being the teacher would also help me to elicit something authentic from the kids in the nuanced dynamics of the classroom, given the history of our relationships.

In the long audition process, I saw some interesting interpretations of the character, but nothing quite worked. At a certain point, Emmanuelle, the Casting Director, suggested that I should not attend the auditions but watch the footage afterwards. She also suggested we look for someone quite different from me, so that I would stop comparing the character to myself. When I saw the audition of Ami Smolarchik, I felt he was very natural and brought a certain and important warmth to the character.



You are talking about a very masculine world. Where are the women in this story?

Although there is no focus on female characters, I believe the film deals with both the feminine and masculine elements within human beings. Interestingly, social identities and gender roles such as woman-man; married-not married; homosexual-heterosexual are categories which preoccupy my students and they try to apply them to me, as their teacher. Every new class I stand in front of is curious how I fit into these categories. Incidentally, that

is also true for my political views and my relation to the State of Israel. It's important to me to resist any easy classification, and to remain 'ambiguous' or 'undefined' to them.

You placed Asher between the values of his father and his teacher. What was interesting for you in that contrast?

The juxtaposition really emerged from the characters' biographies. Naturally there is a difference between a single father who spent time in jail and is

running his own scaffolding business, and a childless literature teacher.

Incidentally, I see reason and good measure in both Milo and Rami's aspirations for Asher. Milo knows his son and understands that physical work is a good valve for channeling his energy and aggression and managing his short temper. Naturally, Milo is worried for his son and wants to steer him away from the potentially troublesome path which he himself travelled. At the same time, though, as Rami is going through his own process of soul searching and crisis he recognizes something in Asher and wants to let this flourish, helping Asher to believe in himself and to develop elements in himself that not fully realized.





DIRECTOR

MATAN YAIR
DIRECTOR

Matan Yair (b. 1977) is a filmmaker, an author and a high school history and literature teacher. He's a graduate of the screenwriting program at the Sam Spiegel Film & Television School in Jerusalem, as well as of the MFA directing program at Tel Aviv University. Matan's literary and artistic work derives from his personal experiences and biography. His



documentary film *It is written in your I.D. that I am your Father* (2008) describes a process of growing intimacy between himself and his father, Mordechai, who left home when he was thirteen. The film participated in Haifa International Film Festival's competitive section as well as other film festivals. Matan's drama *Unseen* focuses on his experience working as a teacher in a class for kids who were rejected from the regular school system. In 2009, Matan published his first novel, which is built as a diary of a teenager who documents one dramatic year of his adolescence. The novel was awarded from the National Library of Israel, described by the jury as a groundbreaking work. *Scaffolding* is his first feature film.

FILMOGRAPHY

It is written in your I.D. that I am your Father, 2008, Documentary feature film
Unseen, 2016, Drama



BARTOSZ BIENIEK
DOP

Cinematographer with a wide range of experience including music videos, commercials, documentaries and feature films as a DOP and camera operator. He graduated from the Faculty of Cinematography at Lodz Film School (BA, 2006) and from the Faculty of Radio and Television – Cinematography Department at University of Silesia (MA, 2014). In 2012 he was awarded at Camerimage International Film Festival with the Special Prize of Polish Film Institute and Mastershot for the cinematography for the short film *All Souls' Day* directed by Aleksandra Terpinska. In 2014 won an award for the best cinematography at the Watersprite Student Film Festival in Cambridge. In 2015 awarded with Laslo Kovac's Golden Tadpole Award at Camerimage International Film Festival. Personally believes that without passion life would have no meaning. *Scaffolding* is his first feature film.

DOP



ASHER LAX
ACTOR

Asher Lax, 22 years old, Lives in Herzliya, Israel. Asher studied in Hayovel high school in Herzliya, where Matan, the film's director was his teacher, and where *Scaffolding* was shot. Asher is currently working in his family's scaffolding business, Lax Scaffolding. *Scaffolding* was his first cinematic appearance, and his first professional acting experience.



AMI SMOLARCHIK
ACTOR

Ami Smolarchik born in 1970 in Haifa is an Israeli theater television and film actor. His first big role was Hanan in the Israeli Television show *Florentine* from 1997-2000. Some other Television Shows he has acted in include *Without Socks* in 2008, *Sabri Maranan* in 2011-2014 and *Mikmak* in 2011-2015. He has appeared in many films including *Mehakim Le Surkin* in 2012, *Kicking Out Shoshana* in 2014, *Jeruzalem* in 2015 and *Atomic Falafel* in 2015, among many more. In 2016 he began to play Ano Kluga in the play *Alone* in Berlin in Habima in Tel Aviv.



YAACOV COHEN
ACTOR

Yaacov Cohen is an Israeli theater, Television and film actor. He was born in 1958 in Meknes, Morocco and immigrated to Israel in 1964. In 1984 he graduated in the 22nd graduating class of the School of Performing Arts Beit Tzvi. He started as a theater actor in plays, musicals and operas, getting leading roles in numerous productions across Israel. Won the Award for Outstanding Actor at the Acco Festival fro Alternative Israeli Theater. While still performing in the theater he started acting in Television and films. His first Television role was in 1986 in the TV show *Krovim Krovim*. In 1987 he played Bever in *Abba Ganuv* and in 1989 *Abba Ganuv II*, Shlomo in *Sh'Chur* in 1994, Reuven in *The Marzipan Woman* in 1997 and Yacov in *Encirclements* in 2014, among many others. Today he performs in his comedy act called *Yaacov Cohen Hachadash*.



KEREN BERGER
ACTRESS

Keren Berger is an Israeli film, theater and television actress. She has a BA in Art History and is fluent in Hebrew, English, French and Italian. She has acted in feature films, TV dramas and Yiddish theater among others. Keren won the Best Actress Award at Odessa International Film Festival for her role in *2 Night* and was nominated for an Ophir. Her works include *Ulai Hapa'am* as Roni in 2006-2008, *The Other War* as Elli in 2008, *Yehefem* as Neta in 2011, *Cupcake* as Keren in 2013, *The Jews* as Marie in 2016 and many more.

GREEN PRODUCTIONS
PRODUCER

Green Productions is a film production company dedicated to the creation of quality films by Israeli and International

writers/directors, and specializes in International co-productions. The company was founded in 2009 by the producers Gal Greenspan and Roi Kurland, and in its 8 years of existence it has earned itself a name for producing cutting edge creative International cinema that is unafraid to make a bold statement. The company has a wide range of productions in development, has released films such as *A Quiet Heart* (written and directed by Eitan Anner, Grand-prix prize 2016 Tallin Black Nights Film Festival), *Youth* (written and directed by Tom Shoval, 2013 Berlin Film Festival,) *Summer Vacation* (written and directed by Tal Granit and Sharon Maymon, Sundance 2013, shortlisted for the 2015 Oscars®) and has several films set to be released in 2017. Green Productions also engages in the development of innovative and exciting 'Special Projects' embracing distribution, education and partnership initiatives.

FILM PRODUKCJA
CO-PRODUCER

Film Produkcja is a production company based in Warsaw, Poland. For years it has been involved in production of numerous feature and short films, commercial and social campaign production. Its recent productions include *Ilegitim* (directed by Adrian Sitaru), *Chemo* (directed by Bartek Prokopowicz), *Sweet Home* (directed by

Rafa Martinez) and documentary *Czech Swan* (directed by Aleksander Terpińska). Film Produkcja was also involved in production of a number of animated films including the multi-award-winning *The Lost Town of Świtez* (directed by Kamil Polak), a feature film *George the Hedgehog* (directed by W. Wawszczyk, J. Tarkowski, T. Leśniak) and a popular kid series *Casparade* (directed by Wojciech Wawszczyk, Kamil Polak), which is regularly broadcasted on Canal+ Poland. Film Produkcja also supports young talents, such as young Polish Aleksandra Terpinska whose short film *America* won multiple international film awards, including the Golden Tadpole for cinematography at Camerimage Film Festival and whose new short *The Best Fireworks Ever* will world-premiere in 2017 Cannes Semaine de la Critique competition. Our 2017 production slate includes Israeli debut *Scaffolding* by Matan Yair will be presented in Cannes in ACID section, *Radiogram* by the Bulgarian director Rouzie Hassanova to be released in 2017. Projects in production and development include *Painted Bird* directed by Vaclav Marhouf and a big scale English-language production *Gareth Jones* directed by Agnieszka Holland.

SCAFFOLDING

FESTIVALS

World Premiere:
Cannes Film Festival 2017 – ACID

FILM INFORMATION

Original title: Pigumim
English title: Scaffolding
Genre: drama
Country: Israel, Poland
Language: Hebrew
Year: 2017
Duration: 93 min.
Picture: color
Aspect ratio: 1:2
Sound: 5.1
Available format: DCP

CAST

Asher Lax	Asher
Ami Smolarchik	Rami
Yaacov Cohen	Milo
Keren Berger	Shira

CREW

Director: Matan Yair
Screenplay: Matan Yair
Cinematography: Bartosz Bieniek
Editing: Dov Steuer
Production Design: Nitzan Zifrut
Sound Design: Mateusz Adamczyk
Sebastian Witkowski
Music: Yishai Adar
Production companies: Green Productions
Film Produkcja
United King Films
Producers: Gal Greenspan
Roi Kurland
Stanisław Dziedzic
Moshe Edery
Leon Edery
Associate producers: Maya Fischer
Adi Bar Yossef
With support of: Israeli Film Fund
Polish Film Institute
Gesher Multicultural
Film Fund

PRESS

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