

HOT8 GREEN PRODUCTIONS
& PLAYMOUNT PRODUCTIONS
PRESENTS

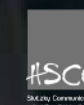
A FILM BY
TOM SHOVAL

 75th Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Berlinale Special

מכתב לדוד A LETTER TO DAVID

PRODUCERS ALONA REFUA, MAYA FISCHER, ROY BAREKET, NANCY SPIELBERG
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ROI KURLAND, GAL GREENSPAN, LEN BLAVATNIK, EMILY BLAVATNIK
JAY RUDERMAN, RINAT KLEIN MARON, DORIT HESSEL, MOSHE EDERY

ISRAEL / USA 2025
74 MIN.



LOGLINE

A cinematic letter to David Cunio, held in Gaza since his abduction on October 7th. A decade after David starred in Tom Shoval's first film, the director blends past and present footage resulting in a visual journey.

LONG SYNOPSIS

A Letter to David is a personal film, a cinematic letter from filmmaker Tom Shoval to David Cunio, who was abducted from Nir Oz to Gaza on October 7th and remains captive. David and his brother Eitan played the lead roles in Shoval's award-winning debut film, ‘Youth’, which centered around a kidnapping and depicted their strong bond. Shoval revisits that film's raw footage, unedited behind-the-scenes material, and auditions, weaving them together in a documentary that serves as both a personal letter and a multi-layered portrayal of the new reality in war-torn Kibbutz Nir Oz, where many were murdered or abducted. This affecting visual journey reflects on what was and never will be again, the cruel separation of the brothers, and the inexplicable connection between life and cinema, memory and reality. The film will not use footage from October 7th but will rely on existing materials to testify to the unimaginable.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

On the morning of October 7th, 2023, as news of the unfolding events began to surface, a profound anxiety gripped me – just as it did every citizen of the country as it was plunged into its most terrifying existential war yet.

As the hours and days wore on and the full scale of the horrors became clearer, I learned that Kibbutz Nir Oz – a community just 2 kilometers from the Gaza border – had been among the hardest hit. A quarter of its members had been either killed or kidnapped. Learning this, my dread deepened into sheer horror.

I know Kibbutz Nir Oz intimately. Ten years ago, I directed my first feature film, Youth, with two young twin brothers from the kibbutz, David and Eitan Cunio, as the lead actors. They were selected through a rigorous and lengthy casting process, during which I searched for two brothers who exemplified the central theme and essence of the film – a powerful physical and emotional connection; the inseparable bond between siblings. David and Eitan embodied this connection perfectly. They were two halves of one whole, both spiritually and physically – one person divided into two.

I was intensely excited about casting them, but I was also worried: Could I guide these two “non-actors,” who had no experience working in front of a camera, through the challenging, complex, and high-pressure process of portraying siblings in a hyper-dramatic scenario?

The work we did together was profoundly significant – for them and for me. To this day, I see it as the moment I was born as a filmmaker. The Cunio brothers’ dedication to the film, and their willingness to fully commit to their characters and give me exactly what I needed, remains one of the greatest and most generous gifts I have ever received.

When I learned that David Cunio had been kidnapped into Gaza along with his wife Sharon and their two baby daughters, Yuli and Emma, as well as his younger brother Ariel and Ariel’s

girlfriend, my heart broke. Since then, I have been closely following and actively participating in the calls and efforts for their release. David’s wife and daughters were freed in the first hostage exchange in November 2023, but David and his younger brother Ariel remain in captivity, their fate tied to the fragile and uncertain implementation of the current ceasefire agreement.

During this prolonged and cruel period, I returned to the raw footage of the film we made together, as well as to the behind-the-scenes materials filmed during the project’s preparations and my work with the brothers. I rediscovered them. I saw them speaking to me in their interviews, walking along the paths of the kibbutz, meeting friends – some of whom were murdered on October 7th, others who are now in captivity in Gaza. I saw Nir Oz as it once was, and as it is no more. I saw their lives in all of their irresistible vitality.

I began piecing together all of this raw material, guided by intuition and emotion, and it has evolved into a deeply personal documentary. Through it, I explore the complex, and at times mind-boggling relationship between reality and imagination, and between cinema and life itself.

I revisited Youth, and watched the film transform before my eyes. The rage at the social reality that once fueled its story has faded, replaced by an eerie resonance with today’s tragedy. In Youth, David Cunio played a kidnapper; today, he is a hostage.

Without using any harrowing footage from the October 7th attack, I created this work solely by editing scenes, raw materials, and behind-the-scenes footage from Youth. Through these fragments, the passage of time, the fragility of life, and the duality of existence come sharply into focus.

More than anything, this documentary is a cinematic letter to David – a letter to a friend and a creative partner. It speaks to the essential need for art and creation, and to the shared fate that binds us.

THE DIRECTOR



TOM SHOVAL

Israeli film-maker and screenwriter Tom Shoval has won rave reviews for his sharp visual style and storytelling abilities. His debut feature, Youth (2013), a social drama and thriller, premiered at the Berlinale and was, among other awards, named Best Film at the Jerusalem Film Festival. Alejandro González Iñárritu, two times Academy Award® winner, has personally chosen Shoval as his protégé and produced Shoval’s feature film Shake Your Cares Away, starring Berenice Bejo which won the main award at the Jerusalem Film Festival 2021. He wrote and directed a ten-episode TV series – A music drama, The Echo of Your Voice for the Israeli Kan 11 channel. The series was selected in official competition in the “Series Mania” festival and won the prestigious Acting award. Shoval penned June Zero for director Jake Paltrow to be released in the US in 2024. Tom is currently in post-production on the third feature-length film he wrote and directed- Life without Credit, to be delivered during 2025.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

AYA	(39 min, Co-Writer, (Academy Award® for “Best Live Action Short”, 2012)
YOUTH	(107 min, premiered at the Berlinale 2013, official selection: Karlovy Vary FF, Taipei FF, BFI London FF)
SHAKE YOUR CARES AWAY	(95 min, Best Film Award at the Jerusalem FF, 2021)
JUNE ZERO	(105 min, Writer, Directed by Jake Paltrow, 2022)
THE ECHO OF YOUR VOICE	(Drama TV Series, 10 Ep. x 45 min, Best Actors - Series Mania Int. Competition, 2021)
KATYA’S HAND	(24 min, Best Narrative Short, Jerusalem FF, 2023)
LIFE WITHOUT CREDIT	(104 min, 2025)
DEAD LANGUAGE	(Co-Writer, Feature, In post-production, 2025)

PRODUCERS

GREEN PRODUCTIONS

Green Productions is a boutique television motion picture production company specializing in high-end storytelling.

Based in Israel with branches in Australia and NZ, the company has extensive experience in international co-productions. We look to bring emotionally charged stories to the screen, told with a unique and authentic voice.

The company has produced award-winning series and films such as: The Milky Way (Tallinn Black Nights 2023, Best Screenplay - Israeli Academy awards & JFF 2024), Full Support (Tallinn Black Nights 2024, Best Debut Film - Docaviv International FF 2024), A Room of His Own (Warsaw International FF & JFF 2023), Cinema Sabaya (Winner of 5 Israeli Academy awards including Best Film, Israel’s official Oscars Entry 2023), the 2021 hit comedy Saving Shuli (the most successful Israeli movie in the last 20 years), Menashe (Berlinale & Sundance 2017, distributed by A24), Scaffolding (Cannes & TIFF, Best Film JFF 2017), the TV Series One on One starring Tomer Capon (The Boys), and many others.



NANCY SPIELBERG /
PLAYMOUNT PRODUCTIONS

Nancy Spielberg is an award-winning producer and passionate advocate for films on the Jewish experience. An accomplished businesswoman and philanthropist, she shifted her focus to producing films in 2010 and has steered more than a dozen projects to completion since then.

Spielberg grew up immersed in filmmaking, working on her brother’s early films as cast and crew. She recently served as a consultant on his film The Fablemans. She was a consultant on the Oscar®-winning documentary, Chernobyl Heart, and executive produced Elusive Justice: The Search for Nazi War Criminals (aired nationally on PBS. in 2015). She produced Above and Beyond (won the audience award at more than twenty film festivals), and executive produced Sophie Sartain’s documentary Mimi and Dona, (broadcast nationally on PBS in 2015), Dani Menkin’s films, On the Map (2016), Picture of His Life (2019) and Aulcie (2022). She produced Closed Circuit (2022), directed by Tal Inbar, and is currently on the festival circuit. She executive produced Laura Bialis’ documentary, Vishniac, which premiered at the Santa Barbara International FF 2023.



BROADCASTER

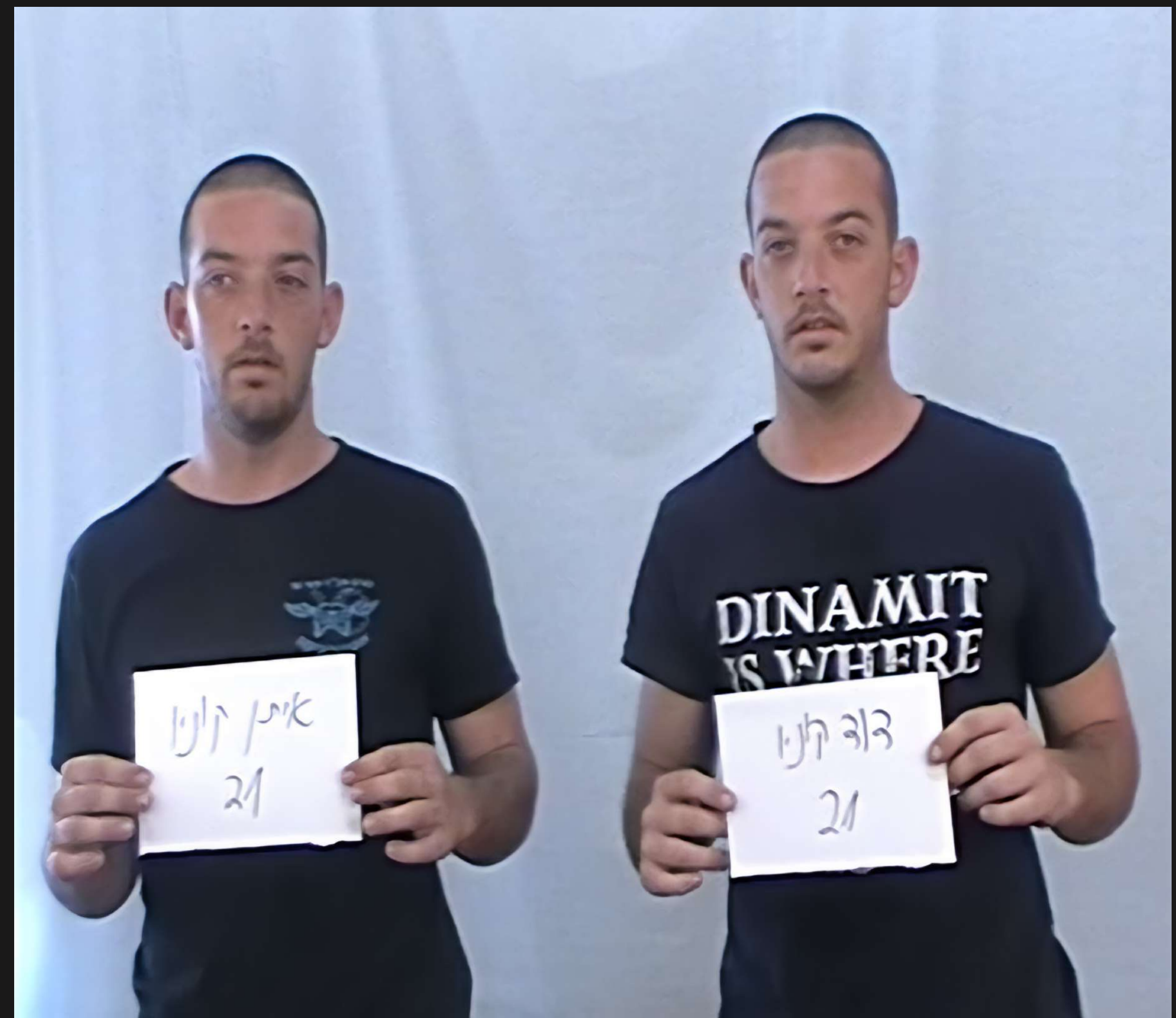
HOT8 –
DOCUMENTARY CHANNEL

The leading Israeli documentary channel – focusing on original Israeli content along with acquisition of successful international series and movies. Its original productions constantly receives raving reviews, wins academy awards and generates a public social-activist dialogue. Broadcasts exclusively on HOT, the largest Israeli broadcasting platform.



CREDITS

DIRECTOR WRITER	TOM SHOVAL
PRODUCERS	ALONA REFUA, MAYA FISCHER, ROY BAREKET, NANCY SPIELBERG
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS	ROI KURLAND, GAL GREENSPAN, LEN BLAVATNIK, EMILY BLAVATNIK, JAY RUDERMAN, RINAT KLEIN MARON, DORIT HESSEL, MOSHE EDERY
EDITORS	MARGARITA LINTON, MAYA KENIG
EDITORIAL ADVISOR	NOIT GEVA, JOËLLE ALEXIS
CINEMATOGRAPHER	YANIV LINTON
SOUND DESIGNER	ITZIK COHEN
ORIGINAL SCORE	ASHER GOLDSCHMIDT
PRODUCTION COMPANIES	GREEN PRODUCTIONS, PLAYMOUNT PRODUCTIONS
PRODUCTION COUNTRIES	ISRAEL USA
FINANCED BY	HOT8, THE RABINOVICH FOUNDATION, THE NEW FUND FOR CINEMA AND TELEVISION, THE BLAVATNIK FAMILY FOUNDATION, BOSTON ROSE, JEWISH STORY PARTNERS
IMAGE FORMAT	DCP PRORES
LANGUAGES	HEBREW
SUBTITLES	ENGLISH
CONTACT PERSON	ALONA REFUA, PRODUCER, GREEN PRODUCTIONS +972 54-2131668 ALONA@GREENPRODUCTIONS.CO.IL ROY BAREKET, PRODUCER, GREEN PRODUCTIONS +972 54-6818297 ROYB@GREENPRODUCTIONS.CO.IL



Credit: Orit Azoulay