

Mongrel Media
Presents

THE GREEN PRINCE

A Film by
Nadav Schirman

WINNER



101 min., Germany/Israel/UK, 2014

Distribution



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ABOUT THE FILM

In a world of lies and deceit, who can you trust?

Set against the chaotic backdrop of recent events in the Middle East, Nadav Schirman's THE GREEN PRINCE retraces the details of a highly unprecedented partnership that developed between sworn enemies. In the style of a tense psychological thriller, this extraordinary documentary recounts the true story of the son of a Hamas leader who emerged as one of Israel's prized informants, and the Shin Bet agent who risked his career to protect him.

As a defiant teenager growing up in Palestine, Mosab Hassan Yousef's fervor against Israel was unquestionable, ultimately landing him in prison. Shaken by Hamas's brutality within the prison's walls and a growing disgust for their methods, particularly suicide bombing, he had an unexpected change of heart and began to see Hamas as more of a problem than a solution. Recruited by the Shin Bet (Israel's internal security agency) and given the code name "Green Prince," he spied on the Hamas elite for over a decade, constantly risking exposure and certain death while grappling with the perception that he had betrayed his own family and people. Along the way, what started as a cautious alliance between Mosab and his Shin Bet handler Gonen Ben Yitzhak grew into an enduring loyalty that no one could have predicted.

Based on Mosab Hassan Yousef's bestselling memoir *Son of Hamas*, THE GREEN PRINCE exposes a complex world of terror, betrayal, and impossible choices. Through exclusive first-hand testimony, dramatic action sequences, and rare archival footage, decades of secrets come to light in this unflinching exploration of a profound spiritual transformation and the transcendent bonds of friendship. THE GREEN PRINCE will challenge much of what you know about the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

From the Academy Award® winning producers of MAN ON WIRE, SEARCHING FOR SUGAR MAN and ONE DAY IN SEPTEMBER.

A BRIEF HISTORY: HAMAS AND SHIN BET

HAMAS - the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement - an offshoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood - is the largest of several Palestinian militant Islamist groups. After a landslide victory in the 2006 Palestinian elections, Hamas now governs the Gaza Strip. The movement originated in 1987 after the beginning of the first Intifada, or Palestinian uprising, against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Originally created as a religious social-political movement, engaged in welfare, building schools and clinics, and spreading Islam in Gaza and the West Bank, Hamas is openly opposed to peace process.

In 1992, Hamas formed its secret military wing, the Al Q'assam Brigades, in an effort to heat the terrain and undermine the peace process. The Hamas Military wing's actions include kidnappings and attacks on military outposts, and, beginning in 1994, a wave of suicide bombings aimed at the Israeli civilian population. Per its charter, Hamas is committed to the destruction of Israel.

SHIN BET is Israel's internal security agency, operating under the motto: "The unseen shield." The agency's primary function is to safeguard state security. Its duties include exposing terrorist rings, interrogating terror suspects and providing intelligence for counter-terrorism operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The agency operates a sophisticated technological network of intelligence gathering but is particularly known for its strong HumInt (human intelligence) gathering capabilities.

After 9/11, most Western intelligence agencies turned to the Shin Bet in order to learn from its methods of recruiting and handling human sources (especially within terrorist organizations). The Shin Bet methods of recruitment and handling of sources are based on older KGB methods, which over the years have been adapted to the Arab population. The Shin Bet is believed to have played a key role in the Israeli targeted assassination policy against alleged Palestinian terrorists.

INTERVIEW WITH FILMMAKER NADAV SCHIRMAN

What motivated you to make this film?

Nadav Schirman: When I heard Mosab's story, I was immediately taken by his insider's depiction of Hamas. As an organization that is obscure to the world, its inner mechanism was never revealed until then, and that grabbed me. Then I met Gonen, his Israeli handler, and when I understood the unique nature of their relationship, I was so moved that I felt I had to channel this into a film. Both protagonists have dared to put their lives at risk to do what's right. They each have a very strong moral compass and they are not afraid to go against the tide in order to do what's right. This is so rare in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict where people tend to follow rather than lead. I found their connection so full of hope, in the sense of "see what happens when people dare trust one another and go against preconceived notions". And of course, their story had all the elements of a high-octane thriller, which I wanted to do in documentary form.

What is the film about?

Nadav Schirman: It's about this unique relationship between a handler and a source - a relationship ruled by lies and deceit on both ends, even self-deceit to some extent. But then it's also about the relationship between Mosab and Gonen, the individuals behind those functions of handler and source, and how their humanity defies all the rules and breaks all the boundaries.

What were the main challenges in making THE GREEN PRINCE?

Nadav Schirman: Dramatically, we wanted to make a film that is gripping from minute one until the end. I always have Billy Wilder's adage in mind "grab the audience by the throat and don't let go until the end." More than a film about this character or that one, *it's a story of a relationship*. How the best of enemies become best of friends. It was very challenging to put together such a gripping narrative with only two characters. A "two hander," as Simon Chinn calls it.

THE GREEN PRINCE is a cinematic documentary, so we very much had the audience in mind at every step. I have a lot of respect for the cinema-going audience and wanted to create a viewing experience that is both extremely suspenseful and adrenaline-inducing, as it is touching and cathartic.

Visually, it was clear from the start that we would have two points-of-view: The POV of the machine, the system, seen through the drones and the surveillance cameras, perceiving humans as functions, blips on a map. And the POV of the human, which is fragile and emotional.

It was also very challenging to find rare footage that would give a sense of here and now. We were very fortunate to be able to unearth some real gems, such as footage of Mosab in Ramallah in the years he was still operating undercover.

The spy/special agent subject matter appears like a red line through the documentaries you have directed so far. Are you particularly intrigued by the world of secret agencies?

Nadav Schirman: I am intrigued by what happens to relationships that are put under great pressure. In my first documentary THE CHAMPAGNE SPY, it's the relationship between a boy and his father, a secret agent of the Mossad who is gradually becoming addicted to his false identity. In my second film, IN THE DARK ROOM, both the wife and the daughter of the most wanted man in the world, Carlos the Jackal, struggle to come to terms with their family relationships. In THE GREEN PRINCE, it's the relationship between a Palestinian source and his Israeli handler that is put to the test as the tables are turned in the most unexpected ways. But it's also the relationship between a son who is forced to betray his father and his family to do what's right in his mind.

Would you consider THE GREEN PRINCE a political film?

Nadav Schirman: Absolutely yes and no. The politics are the grounds from which this story sprouts. They dictated the events that precipitate the narrative; they are the backdrop. But they do not have any part in the narrative or thematic choices I made. It's a film about relationships put to the test, about humans and how they behave under intense pressures.

What kind of security measures did you anticipate and which did you have to respect during the shoot?

Nadav Schirman: When shooting with Mosab in Germany, we had to be very discreet about his travel and lodging arrangements. That's the best security, he always said. Then we had an armed guard on set for the first part of the shoot. When I first met Mosab a couple of years ago in New York, he was always sitting with his back to the wall and his eyes on the door. We had to move every couple of hours, not stay in the same place. Today it's more relaxed, I believe. When we shot visuals in the West Bank we also had to keep a very low profile and it was challenging at times, being a crew of international background, some of us Israelis. But those light tensions added flavor to the shoot and kept us alert as to the POV of our protagonist who endured much, much, much greater dangers. Real ones, not just imagined ones.

What are you hoping audiences will take from the film?

Nadav Schirman: Hope, for where politicians fail, individuals seem to succeed, even against all the odds. Encouragement to take more personal risks for what they believe is right. Awareness of the fact that things are never what they seem to be, and that one should look deeper behind the surface before formulating an opinion or passing fast judgment. And an appetite for more cinematic experiences that defy the boundaries of known genres.

Q&A WITH THE PRODUCERS JOHN BATTSEK AND SIMON CHINN

How did you first get on board the project?

JOHN BATTSEK: I was introduced to director Nadav Schirman by Rafael Marmor in LA two years ago. Nadav is an incredibly dynamic character and he pitched a great idea for a new film. Nadav followed up when I was back in London sending me more information. My Head of Development at Passion Pictures, Nicole Stott, and I really responded to Mosab Hassan Yousef's extraordinary true story. Once we'd watched Nadav's previous film *THE CHAMPAGNE SPY* we were convinced that Nadav was a director who had the vision to carry a narrative of this weight and complexity and, ultimately, a film that would deliver all the elements of a dramatic thriller with big screen ambition. Passion Pictures have a strategic alliance with Simon Chinn's Red Box Films, and it was a natural move to show Simon the project so we could produce together – I knew he would respond to the material and to Nadav.

SIMON CHINN: John Battsek and Nicole Stott first mentioned the project to me soon after Nadav Schirman had first approached them, and I was immediately intrigued. I had always wanted to make a film set in Israel-Palestine, and had a number of opportunities, but I'd always shied away for one reason or another. Mosab Hassan Yousef's riveting story offered a narrative of such epic, yet very human proportions that it felt like the perfect story to stray into the territory with. Nadav was so clearly the perfect director to bring this story to the screen - and it seemed the obvious next project for my company's ongoing collaboration with Passion Pictures.

What differentiates this film from others tackling the subject of Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

SIMON CHINN: I'm not sure I've ever seen a film that offers such a remarkable insight into the inner workings of Israel's secret security service - or Hamas for that matter. Because they operate on the front lines of a brutal and ongoing conflict, the Shin Bet have become one of the most effective and ruthless intelligence agencies in the world - and this film lays bare its processes and philosophy like nothing I've ever seen before.

JOHN BATTSEK: The conflict is only the backdrop and subtext to *THE GREEN PRINCE*. At the core, this film is about the remarkable relationship built up by two people who should be enemies – in fact, they start out as enemies - and who are thrust together in the most unlikely circumstances. We don't attempt to tackle the complexities of the situation in the Middle East directly in the film, but we see it through the lens of this friendship. So, in some way, the film does inevitably shine a light on the conflict, but very deliberately does not embark on a deep analysis of the situation itself.

What kind of security measures did you have to respect during the shoot?

SIMON CHINN: We were careful not to announce Mosab's presence prior to or

during the shoot and there was security on set at all times. But Mosab himself is, outwardly at least, very relaxed and unworried about his security. He now travels frequently and freely in spite of the obvious dangers.

Would you consider THE GREEN PRINCE a political film?

SIMON CHINN: In spite of the highly charged political context in which the story unfolds, we were always very clear that the film should not betray a political point of view - this became almost a mantra for us. We therefore constantly interrogated ourselves during the process of making the film to ensure this guiding principle remained intact. Inevitably, people who come to the film with a particular political perspective or agenda may choose to perceive a bias in the filmmaking - but our hope is that, watching the film, audiences will see all the nuances and shades of grey that we were so fascinated by when we were making it.

JOHN BATTSEK: I wouldn't call this a political film, although politics drives the motivations of our key characters. This is an emotional human drama – a psychological thriller - with a political backdrop. It's the human story at the forefront and this is what drives the drama, with the politics providing only background contextualization.

What are you hoping audiences will take from the film?

JOHN BATTSEK: It's a film that carries huge themes: betrayal, lies, identity, and truth. It's also a film that forces the viewer to assess his or her own moral compass, and the nuanced lies we tell ourselves. But it's also a film about hope. Hope that humanity can and should transcend all barriers.

SIMON CHINN: This is a story about an extraordinary and unlikely relationship between an intelligence handler and his source - a relationship between former enemies built on lies but which was ultimately defined by trust and friendship. In the end, a profound relationship emerges based on truth - and in this I think there's a powerful message of hope in an apparently hopeless conflict.

BIOGRAPHIES

Writer, Director & Producer – NADAV SCHIRMAN

Schirman's first feature documentary, *THE CHAMPAGNE SPY* (Germany-Israel, 2008), won the Israeli Academy Award for Best Documentary, was shortlisted for the European Film Academy Award and won the John Schlesinger Award for Outstanding First Feature, as well as many other international awards and nominations. It is currently being adapted into a fiction film by Oscar-nominated producer Uli Limmer. *THE CHAMPAGNE SPY* centers on a son who discovers his father is a Mossad agent living undercover in Cairo. Shaped like a stylish 70's spy film and featuring first time ever on-camera interviews of senior Mossad operatives, the film exposes the heavy personal toll of espionage on both the agent and his family.

In Schirman's second feature doc, *IN THE DARK ROOM* (Germany-Finland-Israel-Italy-Romania-Hungary 2013), the wife and daughter of notorious terrorist Carlos "The Jackal" take a courageous journey beyond the shadows of his myth. Shot on 16mm film and adopting stylistic streaks of the new German cinema of the 80's, the film continues Schirman's exploration of family relations under pressure, that take us into dark and dangerous worlds, in this case the birth of international terrorism. With *THE GREEN PRINCE*, Schirman pushes the boundaries of the documentary genre by shaping a highly dramatic thriller. Collaborating with Oscar-winning producers Simon Chinn and John Battsek, Schirman and an A-list creative team have crafted an intensely suspenseful and emotionally gripping narrative that will turn everyone's preconceptions of the Middle East conflict on its head.

In 2012 Schirman launched A-List Films, a Frankfurt and Munich based production company that produced *NO PLACE ON EARTH* (USA-Germany-UK 2013), *THE GREEN PRINCE*, and is currently preparing two more international feature docs slated for 2014. For 2014 Schirman is now preparing an action-charged dramatic thriller set in the brutal world of illegal immigration in Southern Europe.

Producer – JOHN BATTSEK – PASSION PICTURES

John Battsek runs Passion Pictures' film department and is one of the most successful and prolific feature documentary producers in the industry. In 1999, Battsek conceived and produced the Academy Award-winning *ONE DAY IN SEPTEMBER* and he has since been involved with over thirty high profile feature documentaries, including: *SEARCHING FOR SUGAR MAN* (Academy Award winner 2013); *THE IMPOSTER* (BAFTA winner 2013); *RESTREPO* (Academy Award nominated 2011); *SERGIO* (Academy Award shortlisted 2010) and *THE TILLMAN STORY* (Academy Award shortlisted 2011). Battsek and Passion Pictures will launch four new feature films at the January 2014 Sundance Film Festival: Jeremiah Zagar's *CAPTIVATED: THE TRIALS OF PAMELA SMART*, produced by Hard Working Movies for HBO and Sky Atlantic; Amir Bar Lev's *HAPPY VALLEY* for A&E IndieFilms; Greg Barker's *WE ARE THE GIANT* a coproduction with Motto Pictures for Corniche, Bertha Foundation and Screen Pass Pictures. Nadav Schirman's *THE GREEN PRINCE* has been selected to open the festival. New projects include: Margaret Brown's *THE*

GREAT INVISIBLE for Participant Media - a longitudinal character driven film about the unfolding effects of the BP oil spill on the Gulf Coast; a new film about NATIONAL LAMPOON for A&E IndieFilms, directed by Doug Tirola. Battsek has been twice nominated for a PGA Award in 2010 and in 2011 for SERGIO and THE TILLMAN STORY respectively, and was the recipient of this year's prestigious Grierson Trustees Award for Outstanding Contribution to Documentary.

Producer – SIMON CHINN – RED BOX FILMS

Simon Chinn is a double Academy Award winning producer who has been responsible for some of the most successful feature documentaries of recent years, known for their high production values, powerful narratives and innovative blending of documentary and fiction techniques.

Chinn conceived and produced MAN ON WIRE, directed by James Marsh, which won over thirty international awards, including the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature, the BAFTA for Outstanding British Film, the Producers Guild of America (PGA) Award and the Sundance Grand Jury Prize and was named by The London Observer as one of the best British films of the past 25 years. It was released theatrically in over 25 territories around the world in 2008/9 and became one of the highest grossing documentaries of recent years.

His follow-up film, PROJECT NIM, also directed by James Marsh, opened the Sundance Film Festival, where it won the World Cinema Documentary Directing award. It was released theatrically around the world to great critical acclaim and won the Directors Guild of America's (DGA) Award, was nominated for a BAFTA and a PGA Award and shortlisted for an Academy Award.

Chinn launched three new films in 2012: SEARCHING FOR SUGAR MAN, THE IMPOSTER, and EVERYTHING OR NOTHING – a feature documentary directed by Stevan Riley to mark fifty years of the Bond film franchise. SEARCHING FOR SUGAR MAN, directed by first time filmmaker Malik Bendjelloul, opened the Sundance Film Festival, where it won the World Cinema Documentary Special Jury and Audience Awards and was the very first acquisition of the festival. It was released around the world in 2012 and has made over \$8M at the box office internationally. It went on to win more than thirty international awards including the PGA, DGA and WGA awards, the BAFTA and the Academy Award for best documentary.

THE IMPOSTER, which also launched at Sundance in 2012, won the Grand Jury Prize at the Miami Film Festival, best documentary at the Zurich Film Festival, the Filmmaker Award at Hotdocs, two British Independent Film Awards, was shortlisted for an Academy Award and won the BAFTA for best debut for its director Bart Layton. It also became the eighth highest grossing (non-concert) documentary of all time in the UK.

THE GREEN PRINCE is one of several feature documentaries Chinn is launching in 2014 through his company Red Box Films. He has also recently launched Lightbox, a new multi-platform media company aimed at producing high-end non-fiction content for the small screen.

FILM CREDITS

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY
NADAV SCHIRMAN

FEATURING
MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF & GONEN BEN YITZHAK

PRODUCED BY
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SIMON CHINN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
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ORIGINAL MUSIC
MAX RICHTER

LINE PRODUCER
RALF ZIMMERMANN

BASED ON THE BOOK
'SON OF HAMAS'
BY MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF

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**LEAD COLORIST
FLORIAN "UTSI" MARTIN**

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About Music Box Films

Music Box Films is a leading distributor of international, American independent, and documentary content in North America.

Past releases include Guillaume Canet's hit thriller TELL NO ONE and the film adaptations of Stieg Larsson's trilogy of international mega-selling novels. The first in the series, THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO with over \$10 million in US box office, was one of the most popular foreign-language releases of recent years.

Recent titles include Roger Michell's LE WEEK-END, written by Hanif Kureishi and starring Jim Broadbent; five-time Academy Award® nominee Jan Troell's THE LAST SENTENCE; and Pawel Pawlikowski's IDA, winner of the FIPRESCI Prize at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates The Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premiere venue for independent and foreign films.