

# P.S. JERUSALEM

a film by Danae Elon

PRESS KIT



Opening Night





## Synopsis

Filmmaker Danae Elon began to film her three young sons the moment she and her partner Philip decided to leave New York and return to Jerusalem. The decision was prompted by the death of her father, leading Israeli intellectual and writer Amos Elon. It was his dying wish that Danae not return, but her attachment to the place she always called home was stronger. On a journey back Danae's camera captures her three young boys growing up, asking endless questions and confronting the reality around them. The place she once saw as "home" challenges her relationship with her partner and the future of her kids. It is through the prism of parenthood, children and a family that the story of this film exposes a deep, complex and painful portrait of Jerusalem today.

## P.S. JERUSALEM

Director . . . . . **Danae Elon**  
 Producer . . . . . **Paul Cadieux**  
 Editor . . . . . **Sophie Farkas Bolla**  
 Cinematographer : . . . . . **Danae Elon**  
 Writer . . . . . **Sophie Farkas Bolla**  
 Original Music . . . . . **Olivier Alary**  
 Sound Design . . . . . **Benoît Dame**  
 Color . . . . . **Philippe Carbonneau**  
 Sound Mix . . . . . **Philippe Attié**

87 Minutes / DCP / HDCAM SR

[www.psjerusalem.com](http://www.psjerusalem.com)



## Directors Note

I pray for the day when I will stop cringing about my nationality. The day I will feel proud to say I am from Israel and not coil into a string of excuses and explanations about the country and the politics that do not represent who I am.

I wanted to make a film about the “occupiers” about the jail in which the Zionist narrative of Israel has mentally and emotionally imprisoned both Israelis and Jews. I wanted to make a film that would reflect the impossible contradictions of being born in Israel to a liberal Jewish family. I did not want to tell my story through the experience of Palestinians, nor tell another story of the occupation, I rather focused on how Israel’s narrative imprisoned my own identity.

The characters in the film all represent an amplification of my voice. A voice, that contains all the facets of what I feel and who I am. I use my camera to capture the complex fabric of daily life, one which express my single complete voice. My voice is my family and those I love and care for.

In the few years before my father died we often took walks together. He was the sort of father who challenged me to think about the times in which we lived. He drew his vast knowledge from the books he always referred to as “his best friends”. He once told me “we were cursed for being from Jerusalem.” His reason was that maybe there would never be an end to the strife in the place we called “home”, or that we would always care about a place even if we wanted to turn our backs on it. The sort of curse that falls upon those responsible for the destruction of the very place they want to belong to.

The “Jewish homeland” was never organic to our family experience - it was a choice. I was born into that choice and my father, was led there by his parents when escaping Europe. We believed in Peace yet lived in Arab homes deserted in 1948, we believed in co-existence yet never learned the language of the other. This very premise led to a basketful of contradictions that were to simultaneously exist within our daily lives. One people’s tragedy created the other people’s tragedy. These were not two stories but one.

Before my father died he sold his home in Jerusalem and made sure I understood his position against my ever returning there. He was so passionate and adamant about his feelings that it was almost impossible for me not to go back when he died. He tried to make a me a woman of the world, but something deep was missing in my life, and while I could intellectually justify his reasoning, I could never rid myself of my need to make a difference. When I chose to go back home, I knew what we were facing, and Philip my partner was far more positive than I was about the possibilities and importance of doing so. What happened over the course of the next three years became a complete unexpected attachment to a place I both loved and hated.

My need to return and remain in Jerusalem was really as simple as wanting to go home. Jerusalem is home, a home impossible to live in yet it captures us so that we never - I never - quite feel at home anywhere else. I would say this about Israel but in the film it is Jerusalem. In all this pain there is a very great deal of love, a situation, which makes our condition and that of so many like us a very sad and contradictory one.

The film in its entirety is not an intellectual political journey but a profoundly sincere emotional one. The moments of “grace” whether it is the snow fall, the ride on the train, the walk by the water, the way in which my family is photographed - all hold within them my love and attachment and deep desire to make our lives work.

## Featuring



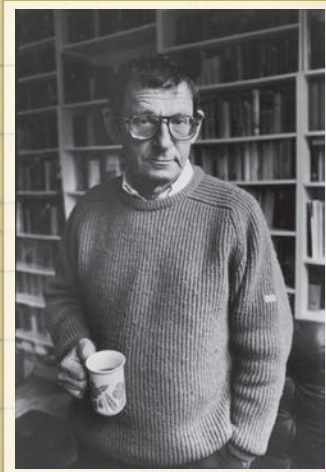
### *Philip Touitou*

**Philip Touitou** was born in Algeria. A month after the French withdrew from Algiers Philip and his family arrived on the shores of France, and moved to La Rochelle. Philip never felt at home in France; he left for Israel in 1982. When he realized that staying in Israel would require him to enlist in the army – he left. He made his way to New York and worked his way up in the demanding city, becoming manager in some of the most upscale restaurants in Manhattan. Ultimately he decided to follow a long forgotten dream to become a photographer and enlisted in the International Center of Photography in New

York. He soon began photographing for prestigious international companies such as Ceci Cela, Les Mandarain Oriental, Moma and LAFCO. When he decided to follow his partner Danae Elon to Israel he believed that his work as a photographer would only flourish and that the challenging encounters with the Middle East would bring out the best in him. The reality proved to be something else, and for the next three years he found it difficult to find the same opportunities that New York had afforded him. As a consequence he turned his lens on the reality of Israel/Palestine and completed a vast amount of stunning personal gallery work.

### *Amos Elon*

**Amos Elon**, was one of Israel's most celebrated intellectuals, renowned for his powers of observation and his scathing criticisms. In 1970 he was already a well-known correspondent for the newspaper Ha'aretz when he published his seminal book *The Israelis: Founders and Sons* a national bestseller. Throughout his life he published more than 10 books and was a frequent contributor to the *New York Review of Books*. His last, *The Pity of It All: A History of Jews in Germany, 1743-1933*, highlighted years of unequalled German Jewish success in the arts, science and enterprise, that all abruptly ended with the rise of Hitler. When he left Israel in 2002, nationalists and even some leftists condemned him. Yet Israel still remained in him; he continued to analyze current events and predicted future troubles with frightening accuracy.



### *Tristan, Andrei and Amos Touitou Elon*

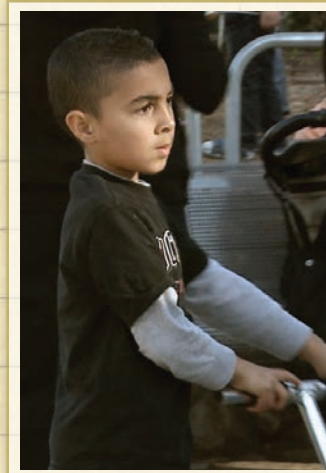
**Tristan** and **Andrei** were both born in New York. Tristan was born in 2005 and Andrei in 2007. The two boys were an indirect focus of Danae's documentary film "Partly Private", a film questioning the ritual of male circumcision. When the family moved to Jerusalem, Tristan was four and Andrei was almost three. Their younger

brother **Amos** was born in Jerusalem just 3 months after their arrival. Tristan and Andrei attended the Max Rayne bilingual, bi-cultural Hand-in-Hand school. When the family left Jerusalem, they moved to Montreal. The boys now attend FACE, school for music and art. The school is split between the English and French school boards. Ironically on their first day of school they came home claiming that the English and French sides hated each other.



### *Luai Musa Al Hatib*

**Luai Musa Al Hatib** was born in Jerusalem to Reem Al Hatib and Majd Musa. His mother Reem was born in Ashkelon, to one of the two remaining families in the pre-1948 town of Al Majdal Asqalan, which then became Hebrew Ashkelon. His father Majd was born in Acre. Reem's experience of being a sole Arab child in a town of Jews during a time of conflict gave her a confused identity. Her Hebrew is fluent. Today she is a top lawyer in Jerusalem, working for a Palestinian firm. Her husband Majd grew up in a totally Arab environment, and only learned Hebrew at University. Majd works as a senior accountant for an American company. The Hand-in-Hand school offers Luai a bridge between the world his mother grew up in and his father. Reem welcomes the idea that her boys would feel accepted by all. With the reality around them, this is the best option they have.



## Featuring

### *Danae Elon*

**Danae Elon**, was born in 1970. She grew up between Italy and Israel as the only child of Beth and Amos Elon. When Amos Elon was writing his biography on Theodor Herzl he relocated the family to a small farmhouse in Italy where Danae was cared for by the local nuns. Later she attended the village school in Italy. In third grade she returned to Jerusalem where she continued her education in Hebrew. The transition was devastating; To her parents' disbelief the prestigious Gymnasia secondary school in Jerusalem ultimately counseled them that their daughter had an unpromising capacity for intellectual learning and suggested she attend one of the many technical schools in the city. She was "saved" by a new experimental school for the arts that had just opened in Jerusalem. Some of the leading filmmakers in Israel who were unemployed at the time were teaching there. Upon graduating from high school Danae spent two years in compulsory military service as a non-commissioned officer to the United Nation forces in the area. At age 21 Danae left Israel to study at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. She lived in New York for 15 years where she met her partner Philip Touitou.



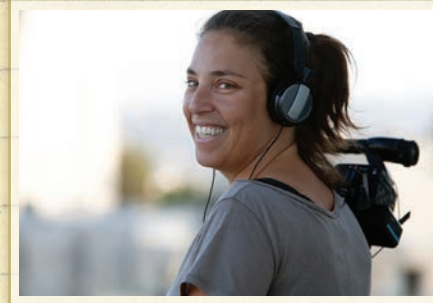
### *Hand in Hand, The Max Rayne School Jerusalem*

**The Hand in Hand school** in Jerusalem is the only school in the city where Arab and Jewish children study together, learning each others language and different narratives, cultures and religions. Christian, Jewish and Muslim children all study together in a highly stimulating environment of community and social political discourse. All

religious holidays are observed and learned by students in a respectful and equal manner. Each class has two teachers – one teaches in Arabic and the other simultaneously teaches in Hebrew. The students learn to understand and challenge differences and opposing narratives. The school is located on the border of the Arab village Beit-Zafafa and the Jewish neighborhood Pat.

## Team

### *Danae Elon* - Director

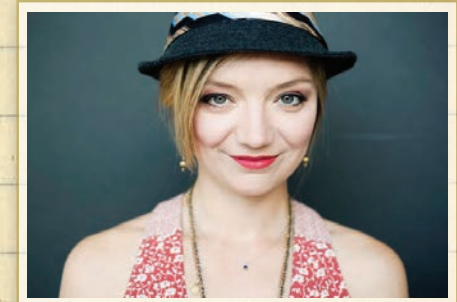


**Danae Elon** graduated from NYU Tisch School of the Arts in 1995. Her graduation film *Never Again, Forever* earned her a National Kodak award in cinematography as well as a Golden Spire award and a special mention at the Chicago International film festival of 1996. The film participated in many international film festivals. Her first feature length documentary film was ***Another Road Home*** in 2004, which premiered at the Tribeca film festival, and was theatrically released in the US. The film screened

in many international film festivals including IDFA, LA film festival, Hot Docs and others. It was broadcast on the BBC, Al Jazeera, TV2, Channel 8, YLE and more. Her second feature documentary film ***Partly Private*** won the best NY film at the Tribeca film festival 2007. It was broadcast on ARTE France, Channel 8, Vision TV, TV Ontario and CANAL VIE. In 2009 Danae was the recipient of the prestigious Guggenheim fellowship in Film. Over the years she has received various grants from the Sundance Institute as well the Israeli New Foundation for film and television, the Hartley Film Foundation, the Rothschild Foundation and others.

### *Sophie Farkas Bolla* - Editor

Filmmaker and editor, **Sophie Farkas Bolla** was born in Montreal and became involved in both visual and performing arts at a very young age. She attended Concordia University in Film Production and graduated in 2006. Soon after, she began working as a film editor while continuing to develop her own films. In 2009, she directed *Chronicles by the Other*, which enjoyed a good festival run and in 2012 she completed her second short entitled, *Istvan and the Fur Trout*, a cinematic tale about



growing up and disillusionment. When monsters were Real is her third film and explores our fears from childhood. She is also writing her first feature, *Nagypapa*, a dramatic comedy evolving in a charming, yet particular family. Among the films she has edited are the award winning, *Antoine* (2009) by Laura Bari, *United States of Africa* (2011) by Yanick Létourneau and *L'Autisme au gré du vent* (2012) by Françoise Lavoie-Pilote.

## Team

### **Paul Cadieux** - Producer



**Paul Cadieux** is one of Canada's leading and most active film and television producers. Among numerous other awards, he has won a Genie Award for Best Motion Picture for the Oscar-nominated *Les Triplettes de Belleville*. Paul also produced Danae's previous film *Partly Private*. In his more than three decades as a producer, co-producer, executive producer and distributor, Paul often prefers to operate out of the limelight yet has been centrally involved in dozens of major Canadian and

international projects and hundreds of television episodes ranging from children's animation series to thriller feature films, romantic comedies, travel shows, reality programming, international co-productions, feature documentaries and TV series of pretty much every stripe in both English and French.

### ***Entre Deux Mondes Productions***

**Entre Deux Mondes Productions** is a film/TV production company based in Montreal dedicated to the making of POV documentary films with compelling stories and characters that challenge our perception of the world we live in. Both in form and in content, we believe in challenging the ways in which we tell stories and they way we tell them. Our team nurtures international productions and co-productions of stories that engage audiences on challenging political and social levels.

## Contacts

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