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NY
FF54

Official Selection 2016
sundance
film festival

THE SETTLERS

a Shimon Dotan film

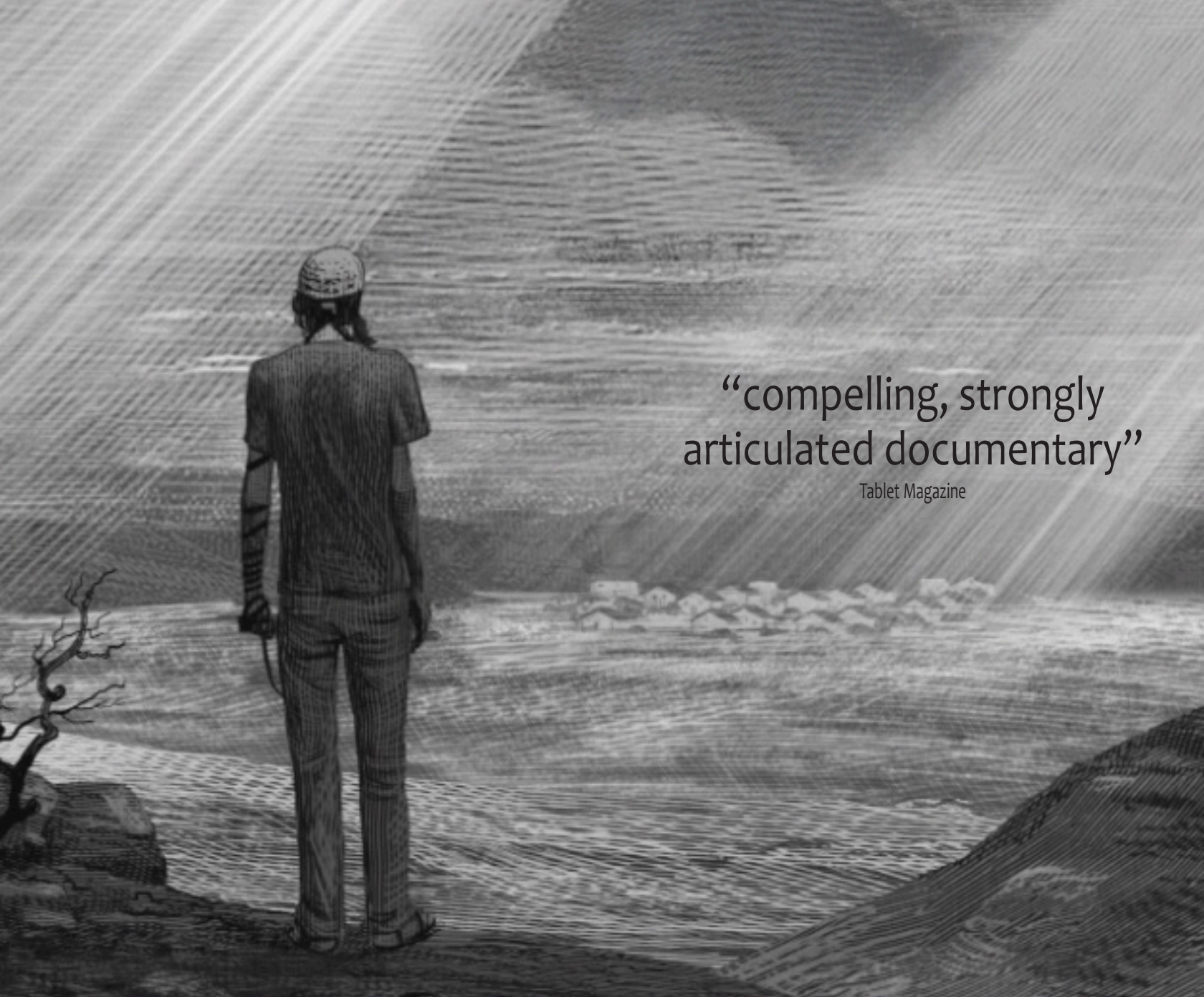
“...a compelling, must see, tour de force outline of the Israeli Settlement issue fueling the last 50 years of Middle East conflicts.”

Michael Berkowitz, *The Huffington Post*

“Everyone who cares about Israel should see Shimon Dotan’s ‘The Settlers’.”

Hannah Brown, *The Jerusalem Post*





“compelling, strongly articulated documentary”

Tablet Magazine

Running Time: 114 minutes

Aspect: 1.78

Sound: 5.1

Format: DCP / HDCAM SR / BLURAY

Genre: Documentary

Country: Canada, France, Israel, Germany

Copyright Year: 2016

Language: English, Hebrew, Arabic

Les films du poisson - Talisman productions

8565686 Canada Inc. - ARTE France

SYNOPSIS

Following Israel's decisive victory in 1967's Six-Day War, hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens have settled the occupied territories of the West Bank. Filmmaker Shimon Dotan benefits from an unprecedented access to the pioneers of the colonization movement and to both religious and secular colonists. *The Settlers* is an in-depth exploration of these communities that have taken hostage of the socio-political future of Israel and Palestine today.

"The Settlers is one of the first close-up views of the motives and personalities in a group that rarely opens up to outsiders."

NY Times



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

On November 4, 1995, I was driving on the I-95 south towards Virginia. As I was searching for a decent signal on the radio, the sound of an NPR affiliate station came crackling through: A radical religious Jew had assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. I pulled to the right and stopped the car at once. It didn't sound real, yet it was.

Rabin's murder was a stake to the heart of a fragile peace process. It was promoted by a faction of extremist rabbis in order to prevent potential withdrawals from settlements in the West Bank. A new brand of religious and political extremism surfaced in Israel.

That day was poignant for me. Before I became a filmmaker and a student of conflict and violence, I was a participant in it. For six years I served as a Navy Seal in the Israeli Defense Forces. The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin crystallized in a moment many of the questions I have since asked myself and explored in my films. Questions about the nexus of faith and violence, and how personal identities and collective values shape what we believe is worth killing and dying for.

As the brutal clashes of the second intifada broke out, in September 2000, most Israelis viewed Palestinian terrorists as assassins and criminals but for most Palestinians they were heroes and freedom fighters. Intrigued by this discrepancy, which seemed to apply inversely to Israeli soldiers, I tried very hard to get into Israeli prisons and meet those Palestinians. In 2006 I was granted rare permission to talk to and film Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

The world I found between those walls was a complicated one, of rapprochement between guards and guarded, but also of profound political and religious radicalization. I was particularly struck by the individual stories of convicted terrorists, who spoke of killing as if it carried no moral substance. These conversations formed part of my latest documentary, *HOT HOUSE*, winner of Sundance jury prize for Best World Documentary (2007).



And yet, I felt that HOT HOUSE tells only one side of a vital story. Outside the prison walls, the phenomenon of Jewish extremism we glimpsed with feverish intensity when Rabin was assassinated is evolving. In West Bank settlements, a volatile brew of religion and politics, stirred in part by foreign elements, is starting to boil over.

I do believe that a crucial step in understanding an unresolved conflict is listening to the extremists on both sides, listening to those who are drawing the fault lines between the parties. Even if they are few in number the impact of their actions is often disproportionately high. As in HOT HOUSE I explored the world of Palestinian extremists, most of them prisoners in Israeli jails, in THE SETTLERS I will be crossing the 'fault lines' to explore the world of Jewish extremists, mostly those in West Bank settlements. Those will include settlers and the international support networks that have helped make the West Bank settlements into the short fuse of the Middle East conflict.

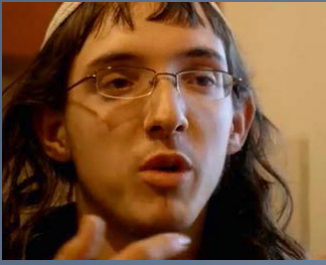
“Provocative”

International Film Journal

Shimon Dotan, Director

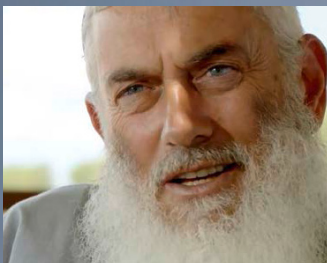
Shimon Dotan, a Fellow of the New York Institute of the Humanities, is an award-winning filmmaker with thirteen feature films to his credit. His films have been the recipients of the Silver Bear Award at the Berlin Film Festival (*The Smile of the Lamb*), numerous Israeli Academy Awards, including Best Film and Best Director (*Repeat Dive*; *The Smile of the Lamb*), Best Film at the Newport Beach Film Festival (*You Can Thank Me Later*) and the Special Jury Prize at Sundance (*Hot House*). Dotan is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship Award and of a Cullman Fellowship for scholars and writers at the New York Public Library. He has taught filmmaking and film studies at Tel Aviv University in Israel and at Concordia University in Montreal. Since 2003 he is teaching at NYU and at New School University.

THE SETTLERS



HANAMEL DORFMAN : 22-year old Hanamel Dorfman, is one of the leaders of the Hilltop Youth. He represents the next generation of settlers, setting up illegal outposts on “barren” hilltops across the West Bank. Hanamel belongs to a new trend of extremists, which are in conflict with the secular State of Israel and aspire to reestablish a Jewish kingdom, based on biblical law.

YEHUDA ETZION : A founder of Gush Emunim, Etzion is now one of the movement’s leading ideologues. A munitions expert by training, he was a key figure in the Jewish Underground, who planned to blow up the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount. Since his release from prison, he has been active in the movement to allow Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount.



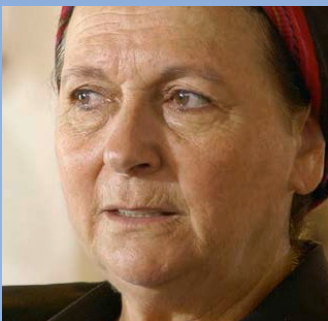
MOTTI KARPEL : A former career soldier who found religion, Karpel is an ideologue of the settler movement, who believes that Zionism has run its course and must be replaced by a new movement centered around the settlements. Karpel was editor of the settler magazine, Nekuda. He was a founder of the settlement of Bat Ayin, which consists of mainly Jews who found religion later in life.





BENNY KATZOVER : A founder of the Gush Emunim movement. Katzover was one of the original participants in the Passover seder at the Park Hotel in Hebron, which led to the founding of Kiryat Arba. After the Yom Kippur War, he and his friend MENACHEM FELIX (also featured in the film) founded a group that attempted to settle in Samaria. A public figure who served for 12 years as head of the Samaria Regional Council, he openly advocates for the elimination of democracy in Israel.

SARAH NACHSHON : Nachshon played a seminal role in establishing the Jewish settlement in Hebron proper. Her son, Avraham Yedidiah, was the first child to be circumcised in the Cave of the Patriarch. When the child died of SIDS five months later, she insisted that he be buried in the old Jewish cemetery in the city. When her request was denied, she carried the corpse there on foot, while Israeli troops looked on aghast. Finally, Defense Minister Shimon Peres gave the order allowing her to bury her child there.



DANIELLA WEISS : One of the first Jewish settlers in Samaria, Weiss assumed a leadership role in the formal settler movement, even serving as mayor of the West Bank town of Kedumim. She later broke with the movement over its willingness to compromise with the government over settlement activity and helped found Nahala, which supports a more active settlement approach, including the seizure of land for outposts. She is known as the “Grandmother of the Hilltop Youth”.



“this documentary has the power to provoke strong reactions.”

Variety

“[An] incisive, disturbing documentary”

Cineaste



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