



Press Kit

Where are you going Moshé?

THE STORY

Shortly after Morocco obtained its independence from France in 1963, hundreds of thousands of Moroccan Jews, fearing the political uncertainty of the country, fled their birthplace in search of a better life in Israel and other countries.

When Mustapha, manager of the only bar in the small Moroccan town of Bejjad, learns that the Jews are all leaving, he panics. If all the non-Moslems leave town, he'll be forced to shut down his business. How will he keep the bar from closing? Stop a Jew from leaving! Easier said than done though... when all his machinations fail and his hopes begin to fade, he readies himself for the worst. That's when the perfect solution appears—a solution so simple that no one would have dreamed it possible... if only all problems were so easy to solve...

TECHNICAL DATA

35mm / colour
Dolby SRD Sound
In Arabic with English and French subtitles
90 minutes

Where are you going Moshé?

A Moroccan-Canadian Coproduction

Bentaqerla Productions, Morocco

Productions Jeux d'Ombres, Canada

a FILM BY Hassan Benjelloun

WITH Simon Elbaz, Rim Chemanou, Abdelkader Lotfi, Hassan Essakalli, Mohamed Tsouli

SCRIPT Hassan Benjelloun

DIALOG Abdellah Chakiri

CINEMATOGRAPHER Kamal Derkaoui

EDITOR Aube Foglia

MUSIC Ned Bouhalassa

PRODUCTION SOUND Fawzi Thabet

SOUND DESIGNER Philippe Attié, Tristan Bernier, Michel Lambert

SOUND MIXER Luc Boudrias

PRODUCTION MANAGER Rachida Saadi

PRODUCERS Hassan Benjelloun, Andrew Noble, Anne-Marie Gélinas



Where are you going Moshé?

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Where are you going Moshé? is an intimate tale that brings together Moslems, Christians and Jews—men and women who become players in the shifts and surprises that beset the small Moroccan town of Bejjad in the 1960s.

These original characters are a departure from the usual figures found in the region's historical archives—they are simple citizens, happy to coexist together in the same town.

I wanted to return to a moment in Moroccan history that is all but forgotten today: the clandestine departure of the Jewish community to Israel, and the destabilization that ensued in the country. The emigrants would discover an Israel whose welcome was not always what they were promised: the Maghrebi Jews would live there in a hermetic world, clinging to their memories—colourful, fragrant, emotional—of Morocco.

By following the story of Shlomo, I am choosing an enigmatic and comical point of view—that of a Moroccan Jew who resists emigration, anguished by the thought of leaving the Morocco he considers his home. This perspective allows me to avoid the trap of documentary and make a truly fictional film with a story unique to its genre.

With the departure of the entire Jewish community, Shlomo becomes the veritable last Jew in town. Shlomo is a complex and shrewd character torn by his own doubts as well as by the two clans of the Moslem community—those who want to see the bar closed down (and for that there must be no Jews left in town) and those who want to keep it open (and for that they must protect their last non-Moslem).

A gallery of personalities surround the principal role, Shlomo. Some are the issue of a social reality and anchor the film in its period: young Hassan emancipates himself from his paternal yoke; Mustapha is a man looking for financial success; Abdelwahad and Abdessamad are two men with political ambitions; the rabbi is the head of the community. Others, more like caricatures (Berbeq'ha, the madman; Rahim, the snitch; Sem, the transvestite; Hadj Bouchaib, the failed social climber) allow for a lightness that is rarely found in this type of story.

Women are not absent from this tale. Three of them, each bearing strong personalities, travel throughout the film and lend the narrative an important dynamism and dimension: Rachel is a young Jewish woman moved by the Zionist dream, who becomes confronted with a far more complex reality, revealed to us through her letters; Friha, a Jewish woman, follows the exodus and adapts herself to it; and, Zaina, an emancipated Moslem woman, is a fixture of the bar.

And, of course, the bar itself. I wanted also to film a place—a place of meeting, of cohabitation between communities, and always at the fringes of legality: where else, but a bar, a virtual metaphor for the society of the time. The bar provides the dramatic flashpoint in the film between those who want it closed down and others who would like to see it remain open.

Hassan Benjelloun

Where are you going Moshé?

Hassan Benjelloun – Biography

Born in Settat, Morocco on April 12, 1950, scriptwriter, director and producer Hassan Bejelloun finished his first feature film, "*La Fête des autres*", in 1990. This film would be followed by "*Yarit*" in 1994, "*Les amis d'hier*" in 1997, "*Les lèvres du silence*" in 2000, and finally, "*Jugement d'une femme*" in 2001. This last film, which speaks to the situation of women in Morocco, was honoured in many international festivals. In 2004, "*La chambre noire*", which addresses the dark years of Morocco during the 1970s, earned him the top prize at the Khouribga African Film Festival, the Silver Yennenga Prize at the Fespaco Festival, and received a Special Mention from the jury at the Carthage International Festival in Tunisia. Hassan's latest film "*Where are you going Moshé?*" (*Où vas-tu Moshé?*) explores the exodus of Jewish Moroccans towards Israel in the 1960s.

Productions Jeux d'Ombres

Founded in 1990 by Anne-Marie Gélinas and Andrew Noble, Productions Jeux d'Ombres has become one of Quebec's most dynamic independent film production companies. The company, led by Anne-Marie Gélinas and Andrew Noble, brings to the screen film projects, documentaries and multimedia productions that explore new ideas and tell compelling stories. Working together with some of Canada's most promising new talent, Productions Jeux d'Ombres is dedicated to the development of new cinema. Over the years, Jeux d'Ombres has, in addition to many other projects, produced the feature films *Zigrail* by André Turpin (1995); *Burnt Eden* by Eugene Garcia (1997); *Méchant Party* by Mario Chabot (2000); *Ne dis rien* by Simon Lacombe (2001); *Le goût des jeunes filles*, based on a screenplay by Dany Laférière and directed by John L'Écuyer (2004) and *These Girls* by John Hazlett (2005).

DISTRIBUTION

Filmoption International

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Where are you going Moshé?

Simon Elbaz

(Shlomo)

Born in Morocco, in the town of Boujaad, Simon Elbaz is the synthesis of three cultures: French, Jewish and Moroccan. Ever faithful to his origins, he has dedicated many years to the art of Matrouz, a Judeo-Arabian tradition that fuses music, theatre, poetry and storytelling. While pursuing his studies in Human Sciences at university, Simon developed his talents as an actor under the tutelage of renowned professors. At the same time, he followed training in singing and music. A fixture on the artistic scene for many years now, he has interpreted roles in the plays of Liliane Atlan, Tahar Ben-Jelloun, Edmond Amran El Maleh, Amadou Hampaté Ba, Abdellatif Laabi, Henri Meschonnic, Juan Rulfo, Kateb Yacine, as well as in his own creations. He has participated in a number of film, and television and radio productions. His own work has been produced in France and abroad, notably within the context of numerous festivals, such as Avignon, Bourges, Cannes, Casablanca, Edimbourg, Limoges and Montréal. As both an actor and a musician of Judeo-Moroccan origin, he is perfectly suited to the role of Shlomo in *Where are you going Moshé?*

Abdelkader LOTFI

(Mustapha)

A graduate of the Municipal Conservatory in Casablanca, Abdelkader has played in several national and international productions, including *La Compromission* by Latif Lahlou, *Maktoube* by Nabil Ayouch, *Soif* by Saad Chraïbi, *Jarate abi moussa* by Mohamed Abderrahmane Tazi and *Tresses* by Jilali Farhati. On the international scene, he has acted opposite renowned actors such as Kate Winslet, Line Renaud, Vittorio Gammone, Sofia Loren, Gérard Jugnot, Gérard Depardieu, and Arte Malik, among others. His latest productions include, *Whatever Lola Wants* by Nabil Ayouch, the German film *Dekker Dertruckers*, *Ali Baba et les 40 voleurs*, *Iznogoud* by Parick Braoudé and *Astérix et Obélix*.

Rim Chemaou

(Rachel)

A graduate of the Institute of Drama and Cultural Animation (ISADAC), Rim has played numerous roles in theatre and cinema, notably in the plays *Dide Mocarare*, directed by Zakaria; *Hécubé* directed by Abdlomoula Mohtarim; and *Sans titre*, directed by Roberto Serda. In the cinema, she has played in the made-for-TV movies *Wahda men bzaf* by Tarik Benbrahim, *Orange amère* by Bouchra Ijork and *Nouara be batoul* by Jaml Souissi, as well as the feature films *Tissée de main et d'étoffe* by Omar Chraïbi and Hassan Benjelloun's *Where are you going Moshé?*