



Presents

S#X ACTS

Directed by Jonathan Gurfinkel

Written by Rona Segal

Select theatrical release begins December 6, 2013.

Available on VOD, iTunes, and other on demand platforms December 3, 2013.

Run Time: 96 minutes

Rating: Not Rated

Press Materials: <http://tribecafilm.com/press-center/tribeca-film/films/51eef576c07f5d6c13000001>

Distributor: Tribeca Film
375 Greenwich Street
New York, NY 10011

TRIBECA FILM:

Brandon Rohwer

212-941-2038

brohwer@tribecafilm.com

ID PR:

Lafilm@id-pr.com

Nyfilm@id-pr.com

SYNOPSIS

Naïve teen Gili (Sivan Levy) changes schools and is determined to improve her social status by hooking up with the most popular guys. But as she pushes her own limits with every new encounter — offering a succession of sexual favors and allowing herself to be photographed and filmed — the line of consent begins to blur. Israeli filmmaker Jonathan Gurfinkel's provocative debut is raw, racy, and immediately recognizable.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR JONATHAN GURFINKEL

***S#x Acts* is an affecting coming of age drama about a young girl who mistakes sexual favors for love and friendship. What made you want to tell this story?**

A few years after I graduated from high school, a similar incident occurred and made quite an impact on me. The circumstances were made public, and a lot of people heard about it. That was the first connection I had to this kind of story.

I met Rona Segal, the screenwriter, while we were both working on a television series. Soon after that, we decided we wanted to make a feature film together—which would be the first one for the both of us. We were pitching each other some ideas during our first project meeting, and we came up with the idea for *S#x Acts* about a half hour into the session. We immediately decided that the film would be very minimalistic and would feature only the hangouts between the girl and this group of boys. We decided that the audience would never see where they go to school or have their parents factor in.

There were always the six main things we wanted to focus on, and even after four years of working on the script, it stayed that way. Those six acts—which range from about 12-15 minutes each—are the base of the story. What we found out during our research was that for every one story of this type of sexual abuse that you hear about, there are ten thousands you don't hear about. The internet is filled with anonymous blogs of teenage girls who were sexually abused or, at least, feeling that they are having sex not totally out of free will.

It was also important for us not to show any physical violence. While most of the public automatically assumes that violence goes along with rape, this film also shows emotional rape that does not necessarily involve violence. Statistics show that in Israel and America that 90% of the sexual abuse victims know the people who assault them. Stories like that of Gili are becoming more and more the norm.

Even though the setting of the film is in Israel, the story is universal. Were you trying to raise awareness about sexual misconduct that many girls engage in and are the victims of in their quest to be accepted in those difficult teenage years?

The story we tell is incredibly common, no matter where you are. When we were at the Tribeca Film Festival, the audience commented on the film like the events happened in Malibu or Brooklyn or wherever. Everybody knew that this could happen in their own neighborhood. So, I also have a social agenda. We need to educate our young men and women about healthy relationships and mutual respect for themselves to avoid the same pitfalls.

While Gili's not fully in control of what's happening to her, and while she is being exploited, there are times when she's not entirely the victim. Were you and Rona at all hesitant to explore this gray area?

Rona and I did extensive research on the matter. In stories like this, the guys are usually portrayed as monsters and the girls are complete victims. However, people are not just one thing or the other. These boys are not total monsters and she is not a total victim. The gray area is much more difficult to talk about and explore. Unfortunately, it's also much more common.

I've found at screenings that women tend to get angry with Gili first and not at the guys. The best example of this is during Act 5 when she is in Shabbot's bedroom. I've been asked, "why didn't she say 'no?'" If you watch the movie, you clearly see her tell him no about 12 times, which I told them. And they said, "Well, why didn't she say it louder?" Volume is not the problem. She said no!

I think for people, it's very hard to get used to a story that isn't just black and white. She isn't purely the victim. She's active, she's calling the boys herself, she's coming to them through her own free will. Plus, the characters in this film are just kids. They are young and stupid and full of hormones and only thinking of themselves. Why do we expect them to know any better? They are victims of access. The first time they have sex, they want it to look like what they saw in porn. They see no connection between sex and romance.

Can you discuss your casting search and how you ultimately chose Sivan Levy?

I first met Sivan when I was the cinematographer on a television show she appeared on and I remembered her. Several years later, Rona and I finished the script and we wanted to shoot a scene to help us in our fundraising quest. We had to get something tangible to show potential investors. So I called Sivan and Eviatar Mor, who plays Ormi and who I also met while working on a television shoot. They came and we shot the pool scene one night and it turned out perfectly. It helped to raise a lot of money.

So we started auditions for actresses—I think we saw over 600 girls—but I never forgot about Sivan. Though Sivan is older than 16, we couldn't cast a 16 year old girl in the role. It would have just been too much. To tell you the truth, this story's almost nonrealistic, in a way, because today, the kids are 13 and 14, not 16 and 17, which seems almost unreal. I don't want a film like that with a 13-year-old actor.

How did Sivan help collaborate with you and Rona on the character of Gili?

It was very hard for her. She wasn't a teenager. She has a sense of dignity, not like Gili. It's very confusing in some points. While we were shooting the sexual scenes, we tried to make her feel comfortable. You have to choreograph those scenes like a dance. Of course, she was able to have input in the blocking. I think the kissing scenes were the most difficult. It's challenging to come to set almost every day and have to kiss a different guy. I would feel guilty that I had to ask this of her.

Were you able to have a rehearsal period, at all, with your actors?

We did. Though, we always stuck to the script. Rona can write dialogue better than myself or any of the actors. We had about two months of rehearsal during which we actually shot the movie beforehand in chronological order. Day one was scene one, and day 24 was the last scene. It was great and economical because we didn't have to go back to many scenes twice.

The actors were totally ready by the time we were ready to film for real. You could be in the room and say "Action" and they knew the script by heart and were totally ready. It's the only way to do it, I think. We edited the rehearsal footage together two days before the real production period began. I could see the whole film before we got to the set. It was very strange. I don't know that I'll do it again, but it was an incredible artistic experience.

How dangerous are common devices like cell phones in the hands of teenagers who don't really understand the concept of privacy?

It would be too easy to blame technology. Parents also have the same iPhone 5 and Facebook accounts. However, when you're 16, and you don't want your parents to know something, they will never know it. It doesn't matter how hard they try. Kids can just go into their rooms and shut the door. Stories like Gili's have occurred way before the age of the internet and technology.

You and Rona made a really interesting choice not to include the parents in the film.

The parents' stories aren't really relevant. You only need brief moments within the six acts to show Gili's troubled home life. All the film gurus tell you that less is more and it's true. I love the scene of Gili having a beer in front of her father; it's enough. You don't need any more than that.

You mention that some audiences perceive the boys as these monsters. Gili's interactions with Omri are the first indication that she's falling into some bad habits and that was in the first act. Was that difficult to write these male characters?

Throughout the writing process, Rona always said that it was much easier for her to write the boys because she really loved them. You have to love all your characters, faults and all. You know, these boys were in the cool crowd—the ones you would have wanted to hang out with in high school. We decided that it was my job to watch out for Gili. I had to protect her. Plus, it was my job to direct her. I think the only way this film could be made was for a woman to write the script and a man to direct. Because I would never understand the effect of these actions on a girl like Gili, it was easier for me to give her direction on set.

You chose to take an observational approach cinematically when dealing with these complex themes of exploitation, hyper sexuality, and the question of consent. How did you find that tonal balance? Can you talk about choosing that style?

In a way, I think it's a choice that was already clear in the script because we tried very much to be non-judgmental. In cinematic language, we tried not to say, "OK, this is sad. This is tragic. This is wrong." We tried not to point out how we thought the audience should react. We could have slowly zoomed into Gili's sad eyes with sad violins playing and all of that. This would be touching and rewarding, but it wouldn't be subtle. I never want to tell the audience what to feel. That's for the audience to decide. There's also no original score. There's plenty of music in the film, but it's what the characters are listening to, driving to, or dancing to.

We shot on two cameras, which allowed our actors a lot of freedom. We never had to stop to pick up different angles. Plus, the actors were able to talk over each other at times. In life, we don't always wait for people to finish their sentences. It's always a compliment, but I find it strange when people ask about improvisation. Nothing was improvised. It was all scripted. It just feels so real.

CAST & CREW BIOS

SIVAN LEVY (Gili)

Sivan Levy is an Israeli-born multidisciplinary artist. The actress, director and singer-songwriter attended the Alon School of Arts, where she studied singing, composition and piano. After graduation, she completed her military service as the singer of the IDF Musical Ensemble.

In 2009, upon completing her service, Sivan launched her film career with her role in the movie *Burning Mooki*, directed by Lena and Slava Chaplin. In 2011, she played the lead role in Veronica Kedar's feature film *Joe and Belle*, and also acted in *Invisible*, directed by Michal Aviad. Her current work includes her first French-speaking role as 'Ava' in *Inch'Allah*, a French-Canadian feature film, directed by Anaïs Barbeau-Lavalette.

Her television work started in 2009, when she joined the cast of the renowned prime time TV series "Imalle" on Channel 2, directed by Ram Nehari. In the same year she also acted in *Room Service*, directed by Eitan Aner. In 2010, Sivan had the opportunity to once again work with directors Lena and Slava Chaplin and starred in the Channel 1 telemovie *In the Prime of Her Life*, a modern adaptation of the works of Israeli renowned author Shai Agnon. In 2011, Sivan acted in the TV series "Yechef", directed by Ori Sivan. Her upcoming work includes *House of Wishes*, directed by Haim Bouzaglo (2013)

Levy has also created and starred in multiple successful short films. 'Cherchez la femme' (2008), which she co-directed with Eyal Bromberg, featured on ARTE, and was presented at the 'Tel Aviv arts museum' and the "Berlinale-2009"-Panorama section. She also co-directed 'Water Wells' (2010) with Iyar Dyoman and composed the original soundtrack, achieving worldwide festival exposure. In 2012, she once again presented her short film, 'Dina & Noel' in "Berlinale"-Generation 14 plus. Sivan co-directed 'Dina & Noel' with Natalie Melamed, composed the soundtrack with Gil Lewis and starred with Glenn T. Perocho.

Currently Levy is working on her first album and directing her 4th short film.

JONATHAN GURFINKEL (Director)

Israeli filmmaker Jonathan Gurfinkel has worked in television, photography, advertising, and documentary film starting in 1994. After directing an array of skits for television programs in 1996, Gurfinkel went on to direct the TV drama "Choose Me." For five seasons he took on the role as director of skits for "Rak Belsrael."

Gurfinkel's family drama "My Son" was recognized for exploring the violent conflicts that swept through the Israeli society. The 2000 series broadcasted on numerous Israeli cables and was nominated as Best Drama in the Television Academy awards. In 2001 Gurfinkel began working as co-director and photographer on his first documentary film *Hazira*. The 2001 film, which is centered on Tel Aviv's historical Rabin Square, was broadcasted on Israeli television and has appeared at film festivals around the world.

Gurfinkel's work as director of "Eretz Nehederet" during the hit television series' first three seasons catapulted the show into the spotlight. The series went on to win three Television Academy awards as Best Entertainment Show. His directing credits also include the 2007 drama series "Masahim" that aired on Yes Network and countless commercials.

RONA SEGAL (Writer)

Rona Segal transitioned into film and television after a seven year journalism career. During that successful stint she covered human rights issues, art, and politics. Her work has been featured in countless magazines and newspapers, with her reporting becoming the subject of three documentary films

In 2005, Segal began taking on screenwriting roles for television. She worked as the head writer for Season 2 of "Hamaarechet," which aired throughout Israel on 'Hot' Network. The popular children's educational drama series was nominated for Best Israeli Drama at The Israeli Film and TV Academy. Her work as writer for the television series "Screenz" in 2007 also earned the series a nomination at the Israeli Film and TV Academy for Best Israeli Drama.

Once Segal broke out as a television writer, she went on to direct several commercials and videos for artists and clients. In 2008 she directed the short film "Oh Baby," which won the One Shot Competition at the Jerusalem International Film Festival. Her 2010 video art piece "Flesh and Blood" was shown at several Israeli museums. Segal is currently on pre-production as a writer for three feature films: *Barake* (Joseph and his brothers), *Bruna*, and *Jasmin*.

UDI YERUSHALMY (Producer)

For more than twenty years, Udi Yerushalmy has been producing and co-producing remarkable works for several feature films and commercial spots productions in the U.S, Russia, Hungary, Romania, Italy, South-Africa, Namibia, Czech Republic, and Ukraine.

For four years Yerushalmy worked as a producer at P.O.V Ltd, an Israeli production company specializing in commercial spots and is responsible for over 400 spots productions for major Israeli companies such as El AL, Bezeq, Elit, Cellcom, Tnuva, Mei Eden, and Bank Leumi among others. Yerushalmy's production credentials include *Eretz Nehedert*, *Nevelot*, *Screenz*, *Ochelet Yoshveyha*, *I Didn't Promise you*, *Question Marks*, *Ingale*, *Rachamim*, *The Investigation*, *Army Reserve*, *Gift from Heaven*, *My Son*, and *Iron Eagle 2*.

The Israeli-French film *Late Marriage*, in which Yerushalmy worked as a line producer, appeared at Cannes Film Festival (2001), Jerusalem Film Festival (2001) and received the Volgin Award. His work on *The Holy Land American* earned the feature film "The Critics Award" and the "Best Film Avignon" at the Los Angeles Film Festival (2001) as well as the "Grand Jury Prize" Best Film at the Slamdance Film Festival, and an IFP Independent Spirit Award nomination.

Yerushalmy has also established himself as an assistant director for multiple Israeli films which include *3 weeks in Jerusalem*, *A Story That Begins in a Snack Funeral*, *Appointment with Death*, *The Place*, *American Citizen*, *Shur*, *Cup Final*, *Coffee With Lemon*, *One of Us*, *Life According to Agfa*, *Laura Adler Hafner*, *Green Fields*, and *The Order*.

CREDITS

CAST

Gili.....	Sivan Levy
Omri.....	Eviatar Mor
Tomer.....	Roy Nik
Shabat.....	Niv Zilberberg
Barel.....	Tal Grushka
Omri's Father.....	Eran Ivanir
Omri's Mother.....	Ronit Yudkevich
Gili's Mother.....	Meirav Gruber
Eyal.....	Asaf Hertz
Orel.....	Nitsan Levartovsky
Naama.....	Danielle Kitzis
Noa.....	Gita Amely
Mia.....	Gil Fishman
Alon.....	Ido Bartal
Yaniv.....	Moti Lugasi
Ilan.....	Alon Leshem
Tomer's Mother.....	Pazit Yaron Minkowski
Gadi.....	Omer Perelman Striks
Tomer's Sister.....	Maya Mitelpunkt
Guy at kiosk.....	Zvi Shemesh
Noa's Friend.....	Anna Muggia
Security Inspector.....	Shantih Gidron
Barel's Friend.....	Ruslan Labchuk
Barel 2nd Friend.....	Yair Shteren
Yoav.....	Matanel Laiany
Young Man At The Beach.....	Omri Lucas
Zumba Girl.....	Eti Amsalem
2nd Zumba Girl.....	Noy Azulay
Gili's Father.....	Hanoch Shaham
Boy In Taxi 1.....	Eyal Friedman
Boy In Taxi 2.....	Aviel Kogan
Boy In Taxi 3.....	Michael Ulinich
Boy In Taxi 4.....	Nizan Ziglman
Club Cashier.....	Tashmush Mangisto
DJ.....	Amir Egozy

CREW

Director.....	Jonathan Gurfinkel
Written by.....	Rona Segal
Producer.....	Udi Yerushalmy
Director of Photography.....	Shark De Mayo
Editing.....	Arik Lahav-Leibovich
Casting.....	Galit Eshkol
Sound Design & Mix.....	Itzik Cohen
.....	Tomer Koren
Production & Costume Designer.....	Adam Kalderon

Sound Recordist.....Moti Hefetz
Makeup Artist.....Vered Mevorach
Associate Producer.....Jonathan Gurkinfel
Music Consultants.....Amir Egozy
.....Opher Yisraeli
Music Supervision.....Media Men Group Ltd.