



BAEFILM STUDIOS PRODUCTION PRESENTS CAESURA MEDIA PRESENTS DAVID HENRY GERSON "THE STORY WON'T DIE" WITH MESHAT ALDAABAL, TAMMAM AZZAM, DIALA BRISLY, ABU HAJAR, BANHA HAJZI, OMAR IHAM, AMAS MAGRIBI, MAH SAADOURA WITH CHRISTOPHER ROBIN BELL AND DAVID HENRY GERSON EDITED BY LUISE SCHRÖDER
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BY MARTIN MARQUET PRODUCED BY ABDALAZIZ ALHAMZA EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BY KATHYRINE EMBIRICUS LAFRAE PRODUCED BY ODESSA RAE DIRECTED BY DAVID HENRY GERSON

THE STORY WON'T DIE

A DOCUMENTARY FILM ON SYRIAN ARTISTS IN EXILE



THE STORY WON'T DIE: SYRIAN ARTISTS IN EXILE

A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY DAVID HENRY GERSON

"Simple and unadorned in construction, "The Story Won't Die" generously and compassionately observes its subjects' fevered creative flow without appropriating any of it as its own."

- Guy Lodge, VARIETY

"A film mixed from poetry, music, colors and dreams has created a new vision of the Syrian tragedy. Makes you believe that nothing will go in vain."

- Talal Derki, Academy-Award Nominated director of OF FATHERS AND SONS

"The Story Won't Die" will move audiences to greater awareness and understanding of the Syria crisis. We've all seen footage of bombed-out buildings in Syria and statistics, but it's the individual stories that will make everyone see themselves in the people in this film. Art humanizes - and this film humanizes."

- Shepard Fairey, artist and activist

TECHNICAL DETAILS

TRT 83 mins

Aspect Ratio: 1:77

Documentary Feature

Color / English + Arabic / USA + Denmark + Germany

SYNOPSIS

A Syrian rapper, tortured by Bashar Al-Assad for his lyrics, uses his music to survive one of our century's deadliest wars.

Together with other creative personalities of the Syrian uprising - a Post-Rock musician, a breakdancer, and visual artists - they show us their story of revolution and exile in a new documentary reflecting on a global battle for peace, justice and freedom of expression.

LOGLINE

A Syrian rapper, tortured by Bashar Al-Assad for his lyrics, and a group of Syrian artists in exile use their art to survive one of our century's deadliest wars.





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

My dad was born a refugee. His parents were survivors of the Holocaust. He watched this film shortly before he died. In his final email to me, he wrote: "Just finished watching it...the way that singer laments in a burned out structure could be a cantor of my youth lamenting the destruction of WWII. Begets words. I am so proud you did this."

I made this film, in part, to know my father better. What did it mean to live a life in exile? The question that most instigated me in making this film was how does one process horrors witnessed, horrors that induced fleeing of a homeland? My father was an international lawyer, but also a photographer. Inspired by his eye, I have always visually sought for the world's hidden connections - the links between past, present and future - between distant landscapes, nostalgia and dreams.

This film became an investigation into what it means to live a life in exile, internal or external, and how to turn grief into action - both of a political nature as well as a metaphysical one. Fortunately, what I found was what I desperately needed - brilliant, inspiring examples of creative resilience. In the characters of the film, I found urgently needed lessons on how to create in times of despair.

The Syrian Civil War has caused the largest human displacement since WWII. This spring is the 10 year anniversary of the uprising that induced that Civil War, and Assad is still in power. It is the spirit of the creative output, the documenting of humanity and these refugee artists' charge to ignite beauty in a world on the brink of collapse that gives me great hope. I hope it will do the same for you.

DAVID HENRY GERSON: Director

David is a filmmaker whose work has won prizes from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the Sundance Film Festival, and has been acquired into the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in NY. He is a graduate of Columbia University and the American Film Institute, where he was the recipient of the AFI Richard P. Rodgers Award for Creative Excellence. His film, ALL THESE VOICES, won the Student Academy Award®. David's spec screenplay, ABOVE KINGS, was nominated to the Tracking Board Hit List and was a semifinalist for the Academy's Nicholl Fellowship. His documentary film ULTRA VIOLET FOR SIXTEEN MINUTES ("Totally engaging" - Al Maysles), screened at festivals worldwide, the Pompidou Museum in Paris, and was acquired into the permanent collection of the MoMA. THE STORY WON'T DIE is his debut feature.

FILMOGRAPHY:

ALL THESE VOICES - 15 mins - 2016

AMERICAN STANDARD - 15 mins - 2011

ULTRA VIOLET FOR SIXTEEN MINUTES - 16 mins - 2010

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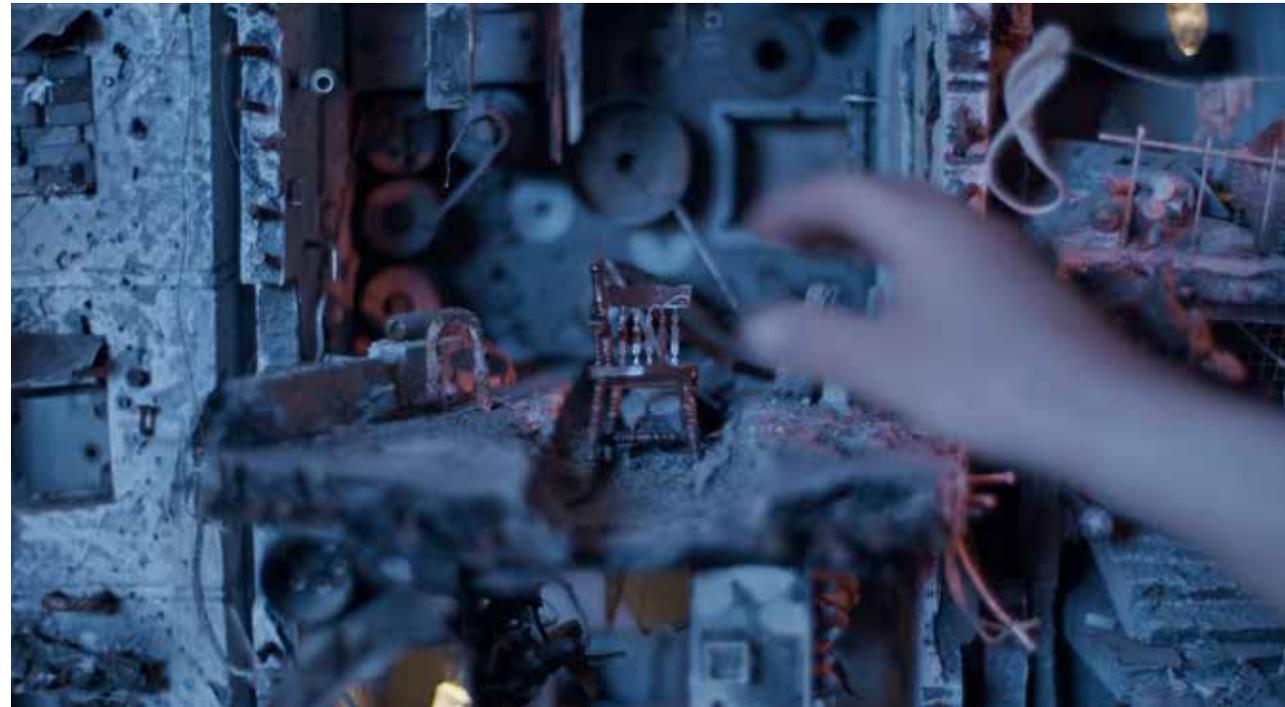
FEATURING:

ABU HAJAR is considered a fugitive in his homeland of Syria - a political rapper and musician who wore out his welcome. In response to his first hip hop songs, he was imprisoned and tortured. He fled Syria to pursue a master's degree in Political Science, and now performs as a rapper and educator across Europe. He is currently developing a new album while simultaneously getting a PhD in Post-Colonial Political Theory - a subject that weaves its way into the lyrics of his music.

DIALA BRISLY is an artist and activist who fled Syria in 2013, and has since painted murals and made publications for educating children. She became well known when a drawing she had done to support women hunger strikers in the prison of Adra went viral online. "People made it their profile picture on Facebook," she says. "It helped raise awareness of their protest." In the early days of the Syrian uprising, she designed and distributed posters that led to her getting caught and beaten at a protest, but managed to escape. "As artists and musicians, we expressed our solidarity with the demonstrators very early. But we were quickly targeted."

ANAS MAGHREBI is a Syrian musician/producer based in Berlin. He currently makes multi-genre music, mainly Post-Rock and Folktronica. In 2012, he founded the Syrian post-rock band **Khebez Dawle**, which performed to tens of thousands in sold out tours across Europe after landing via dingy on the island of Lesbos. He is currently working on his first solo album 'Daftar Layli.'

TAMMAM AZZAM is a Syrian-born visual artist who has fled Syria to continue making his work. He juxtaposes Western masterpiece artworks against the backdrop of his destroyed nation. Other of his works take the form of fractured and wounded maps of Syria, stop signs covered with bullet holes, bleeding apples, fallen chess pawns and puzzle pieces, and symbols of peace reconfigured into targets, all symbolizing the violence the Syrians are facing. He has exhibited internationally, including beside Ai Wei Wei.





FEATURING (cont):

BBOY SHADOW (MHD SABBOURA) was born in Syria, but he fled to Lebanon where he became one of the most celebrated b-boy breakdancers in the region. He performed as an actor in films, Coca-Cola commercials, and performed as a breakdancer at the “Fast and Furious” Premiere in Lebanon. We interviewed him while he was living in Moria, the worst refugee camp in Greece. We follow him as he makes his way to Amsterdam to seek asylum and a chance to continue building his career as an actor and dancer.

MEDHAT ALDAABAL A contemporary Syrian dancer performing and choreographing today in Berlin. Through raw and powerful performances in Germany, in association with Sasha Waltz, he is helping show the diversity of people within the rich culture of his homeland, as opposed to the traditional media images of refugees and war. Through modern dance, Medhat transforms his memories of his journey across Europe (across the borders of Macedonia, through “the jungle” of Calais) and his memories of Syria into the abstractions of choreography.

OMAR IMAM is an Amsterdam-based, visual artist, and Rijksakademie alumni. In his sculptures, short films, and photographic works, Imam uses irony and a conceptual approach to respond to war, its consequences and causes. Imam’s photographs vacillate between mundane documents and utterly inconceivable dreams. His project “Live, Love, Refugee” has been shown in 16 countries around the world, and in 2017 Omar won the “Tim Hetherington” Visionary Award for his ongoing project ‘Syrialism’.

BAHILA HIJAZI is a Syrian musician based in Berlin. Bahila is a singer, songwriter and drummer who performs solo as well as with the band **The Last Postman**. She got her start, along with bassist **Lynn Mayya**, as a member of the first all-female rock group in Syria, known as **Karma Band**.





TEAM:

ODESSA RAE: Producer

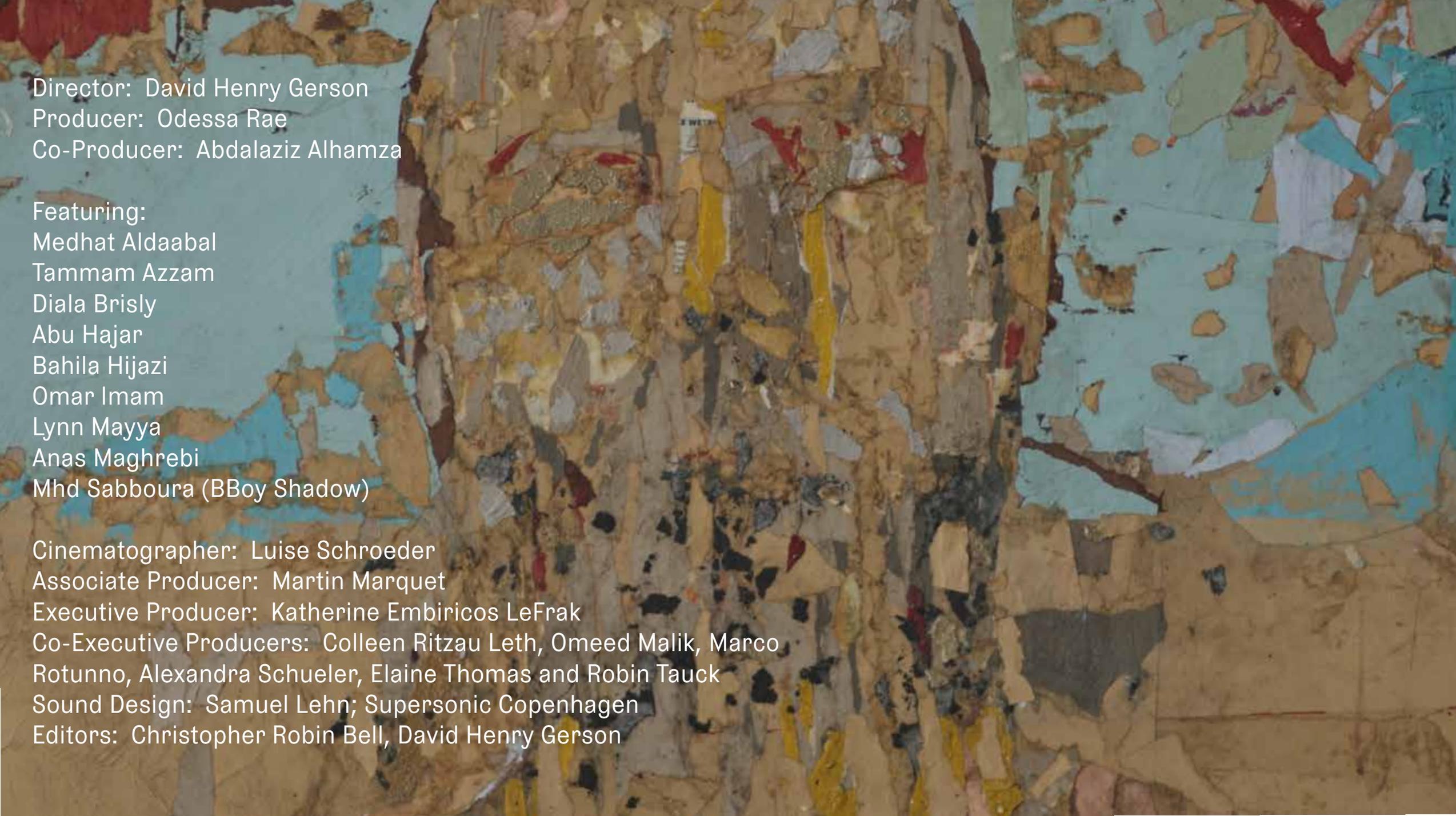
Odessa Rae was key in the formation and launch of Ivanhoe Pictures, which produced box office hit, *CRAZY RICH ASIANS*. Since finishing her multi-year First-Look deal at Ivanhoe Pictures in early 2019, Rae has been producing independently. Odessa started her producing career in Japan by writing, producing and starring in the full length feature film *JENIFA* which was distributed widely in theaters in Japan. In 2018 she produced and directed a short documentary for the UNHCR called *Clear Blue Skies*. Odessa's career hit new heights in 2020. She is currently producing two highly confidential documentaries with Diane Becker, Melanie Miller and Shane Boris. As well as a documentary series with Melanie Clark and Tiffany Haddish, inspired by Rae's trips to Saudi Arabia.

ABDALAZIZ ALHAMZA: Co-Producer

Alhamza is an award-winning Syrian journalist and co-founder of Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently, a non-partisan, independent organization that exposes the atrocities committed by ISIS and the Bashar Al-Assad regime in Syria. Prior to this position, Alhamza organized non-violent protests and demonstrations against the Syrian regime. After escaping to Turkey in 2014, he used smuggled video footage and images to show the reality of life in Raqqa under ISIS rule to the rest of the world. Alhamza was the subject of the documentary *CITY OF GHOSTS* which was on the 2018 Oscar Documentary Feature shortlist.

MARTIN MARQUET: Associate Producer

Martin Marquet is an independent producer and publicity veteran. He has worked on the releases of over 200 audiovisual projects around the world. He has represented and worked with dozens of filmmakers, including Joel and Ethan Cohen, Harmony Korine, Gaspar Noé, Tim Sutton, Liv Ullman, Studio Ghibli and the Miyazaki Family, and Wim Wenders - to name a few. Marquet co-produced Tim Sutton's *DARK NIGHT* (Sundance/Venice). He is the producer of Marie Losier's *THE BALLAD OF GENESIS AND LADY JAYE*, Hubert Sauper's *EPICENTRO*, winner of a Grand Jury Prize at Sundance 2020, and producer of Kirsten Johnson's upcoming feature.



Director: David Henry Gerson
Producer: Odessa Rae
Co-Producer: Abdalaziz Alhamza

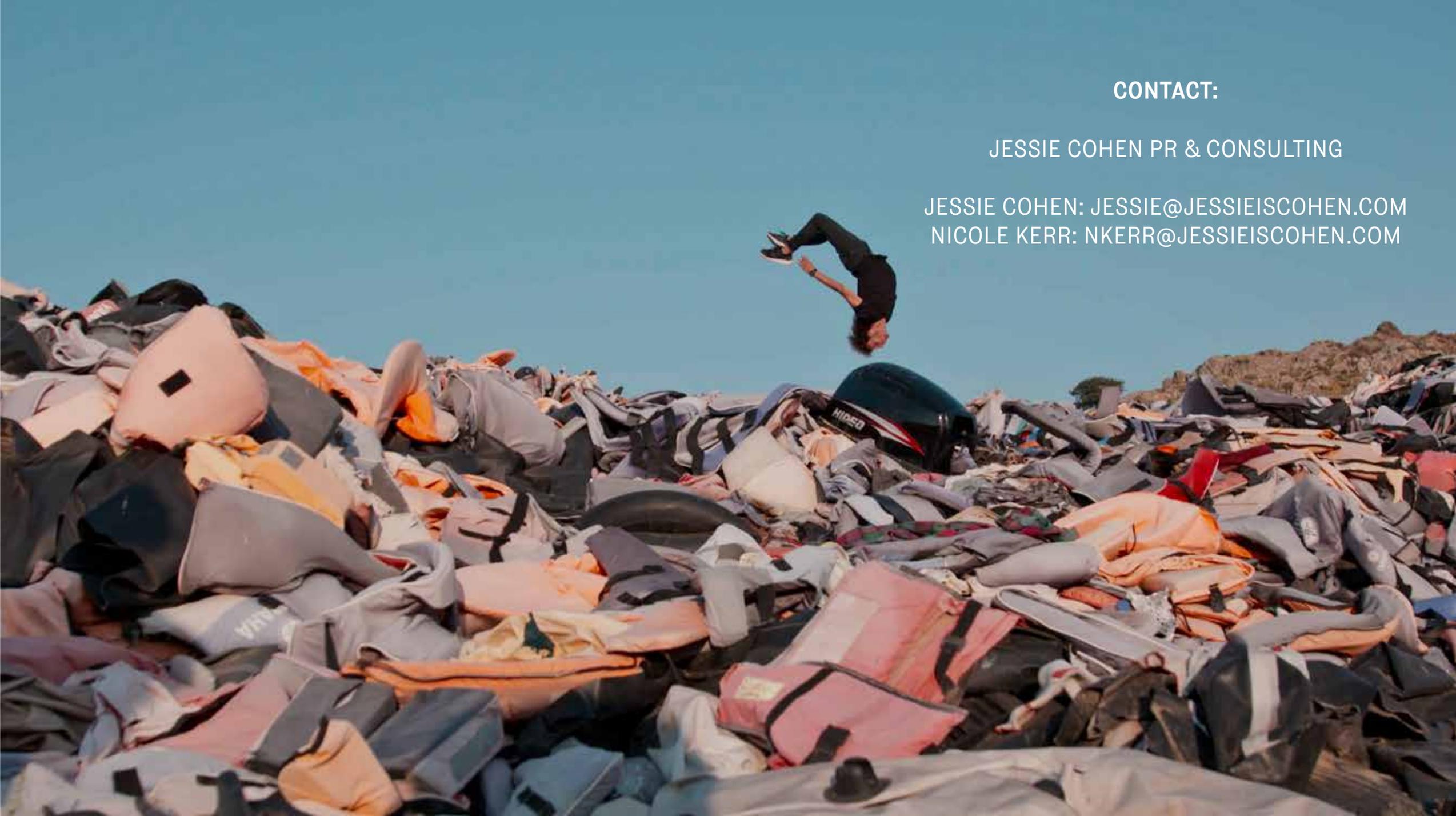
Featuring:
Medhat Aldaabal
Tammam Azzam
Diala Brisly
Abu Hajar
Bahila Hijazi
Omar Imam
Lynn Mayya
Anas Maghrebi
Mhd Sabboura (BBoy Shadow)

Cinematographer: Luise Schroeder
Associate Producer: Martin Marquet
Executive Producer: Katherine Embiricos LeFrak
Co-Executive Producers: Colleen Ritzau Leth, Omeed Malik, Marco Rotunno, Alexandra Schueler, Elaine Thomas and Robin Tauck
Sound Design: Samuel Lehn; Supersonic Copenhagen
Editors: Christopher Robin Bell, David Henry Gerson

Titles Design: Phil America
Additional Artwork: Mohamad Hafez
Sound Mixers: Tasos Karadedos, Kai Unger
Second Unit Camera: Leonardo DeDonno
Additional Footage: Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently, Talal Derki
Line Producers: Julian Dykman, Lou Andrea Savoir, Viktoria Stolpe
Assistant Editor: Aashish D'Mello
Colorist: Richard Garibaldi, Headquarters Post
Legal Services: Craig Kessler, Jordanna Thigpin, Marc Von Arx
Production Equipment: Vantage Lenses, MBF, Sony, Kodak Film
Sales Agent: David Koh; Curatorial

With Music By: Wael Alkak, Alaa Arsheed, Abu Hajar, Bahila Hijazi,
Khebez Dawle, The Last Postman and Anas Maghrebi





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