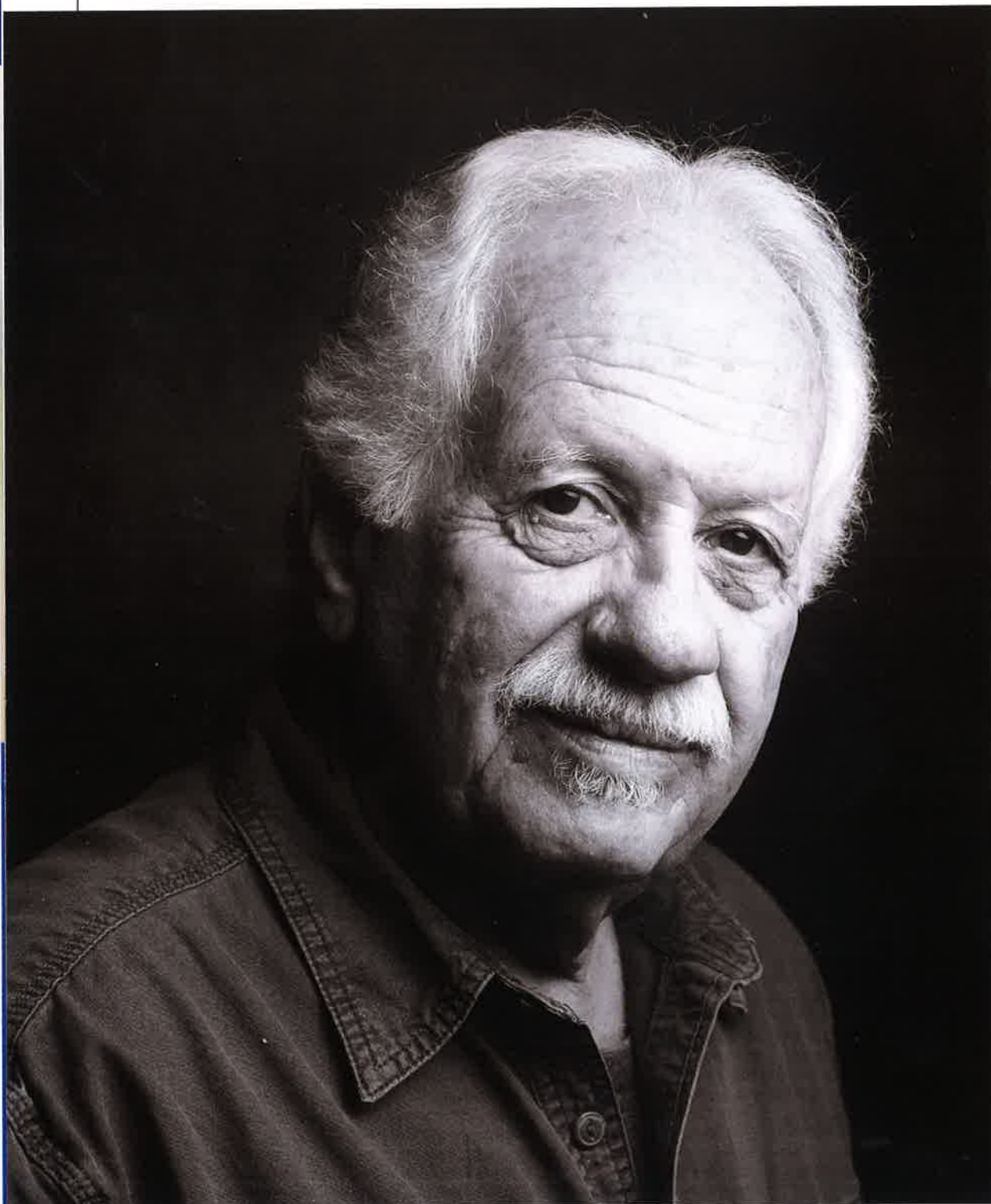


ISRAEL FILM FUND FINDS GLORY UNDER KATRIEL SCHORY

Country's cinema output bloomed as topper championed diverse voices

STORY BY ALISSA SIMON



WHEN KATRIEL SCHORY took over as topper of the Israel Film Fund some 20 years ago, its domestic cinema was at a low point.

"The late '90s were the worst in terms of audiences in Israel for Israeli films and they had mostly disappeared from festivals," he says. "There were zero co-productions."

Schory came in with a three-point plan: to help the Israeli film community regain their self-confidence; for the fund to completely revamp the way they read and select projects, i.e., to look for stories, projects and filmmakers from all walks of life and from all the regions and cultures comprising the country; and to divert a certain part of the budget for the marketing, distribution and release of films in Israel.

At that time, Israel had only a small number of co-production treaties. Over the years, Schory negotiated numerous others; now Israel has agreements with 20 countries. He takes pride in the fact that the amount of co-production money generated from overseas, some \$90 million, almost matches the amount invested by the fund during his time in office, and that approximately one-third of the films he greenlit were international co-productions. He believes that foreign investors were attracted by three factors that came

Tipsheet

WHAT: Katriel Schory receives *Variety* Creative Impact Producer Award

WHEN: May 20

WHERE: Cannes, France

WEB: variety.com

together during his tenure: the power of the stories, the number of directors who graduated from Israeli film schools and skilled producers who knew how to deliver their films on time and on budget.

Schory, who is now stepping down from the Israel Film Fund, will receive *Variety's* Creative Impact Award on May 20 at the Cannes Film Festival. Lisa Shiloach-Uzrad, a veteran TV producer, will take over as the CEO of the Israel Film Fund.

When Schory travels to big international film festivals, he always brings along filmmakers and producers with projects and he supports the Israeli films financed by other funds. At the Cannes, Berlin and Toronto festivals, the fund hosts annual receptions where Schory's networking skills are legendary.

Producer Adar Shafran ("Maktub") jokingly notes, "If you stand beside him, be ready for bruises on your arms because he grabs you firmly by the elbow and connects you with all the people in the room."

During his tenure at the fund, more than 300 full-length features have been approved for production, a number twice that of the fund's previous 20-year history, as he championed projects from every corner and culture in the country and in almost every genre. Meanwhile, the annual domestic audience for Israeli films has grown from 100,000 a year to more than 1.5 million. International audiences have also expanded, with fund-supported films regularly nabbing kudos at prestigious international festivals and selling widely abroad.

But the charismatic Schory, one of the most respected figures in the international film industry, will be remembered for much more than his success with the core activities of the fund. U.S. independent producer Jim Stark says, "The passion, intelligence and chutzpah that Katriel brings to the promotion and defense of Israeli films and filmmakers is absolutely unique. The entrepreneurial and innovative spirit that he brings to his job is in large measure the result of his training and experience as an independent film

"THE PASSION, INTELLIGENCE AND CHUTZPAH THAT KATRIEL BRINGS TO THE PROMOTION AND DEFENSE OF ISRAELI FILMS IS ... UNIQUE" — JIM STARK

producer. When there is no established way of accomplishing his goals for Israeli films, Katriel improvises."

Oscar-nominated Israeli helmer Joseph Cedar ("Footnote") says, "The job of the person running the Israel Film Fund has to be one of the most difficult jobs on the planet. It's not only the obvious tensions that exist when you are forced to say no to so many people who are competitive and ambitious, but on the other side, balancing government money and the policies that come with that government funding with the artistic community is an extremely thin line to walk. There's something about Katriel's personality that made him perfect for that job."

Schory, who also has a background as a professional mediator, credits his success at the fund to the way he established the tone of the organization vis-a-vis the industry and vis-a-vis the government.

"The filmmakers and the film community are our allies and partners, but they are also the people we are here to serve," he says.

Helmer Yaelle Kayam ("Mountain") makes note of Schory's responsiveness to his constituency.

"In 2011, a group of female filmmakers formed a forum to achieve equal opportunities," she says. "At the time, women directors constituted only 10% of feature film directors and our aim was to change that. Katriel acknowledged the importance of the forum straight away. He met with us, and promised as a first step for equality to always keep the same amount of male and female readers in the fund. He kept his word. Since Katriel started to maintain

gender equality in the project readers, the number of female directors increased from 10% to 25%."

Although the Fund uses public money for its production investments, it was created as a fully licensed NGO in 1979. Schory notes diplomatically, "For people in the government and the Ministry of Culture, we're always seen as way too independent, but the number one thing is to safeguard the complete creative freedom of the filmmakers."

Many filmmakers regard Schory's constant struggle to maintain the full independence of the fund and its choices as his greatest contribution to the industry. Helmer Talya Lavie ("Zero Motivation") says, "He is one of the main figures to whom we Israeli filmmakers are indebted, for the exposure that Israeli film enjoys in the international arena and for our artistic freedom, for which Katriel fights fiercely and proudly whenever challenged."

Schory is also known for his generous advice to other film funds on ways to restructure their public funding systems. Edith Sepp, head of the Estonian Film Institute, says, "He always has good hints to make things happen and introduce better schemes. He never takes sides or is judgmental; he always sees the bigger picture. He is one of the wisest men I have come across."

And what does the future hold for Schory? He says, "I have agreed to stay on in the fund as a consultant and consult on international. This is something that will take time for someone else to step in because it is based so much on personal relationships developed over the years." ■



Katriel Schori In a word – Thank You

From The staff, the creators and all your friends
at the Haifa International Film Festival



HAIFA FILM FESTIVAL

35th Haifa International Film Festival
مهرجان الافلام الدولي حيفا

12-21.10.2019



A TIME OF FAVOR



LATE MARRIAGE



ZERO MOTIVATION



BROKEN WINGS

NOTABLE FIRST FEATURES SUPPORTED BY THE ISRAEL FILM FUND

● Fund chief Katriel Schory notes that more than one-third of all films the fund greenlighted came from first-time filmmakers. “My strong belief is that public money is all about taking risks and giving chances,” he says. “You can’t think like an American studio. This gave a great possibility for diversity.”

“TIME OF FAVOR” (2000)

Directed by Joseph Cedar
A thriller about warring philosophies within the Jewish community.

“LATE MARRIAGE” (2001)

Directed by Dover Kosashvili
The family of a Georgian bachelor tries to find him a wife, not knowing about his relationship with a divorcee.

“BROKEN WINGS” (2003)

Directed by Nir Bergman
A dysfunctional family tries to cope with the death of their patriarch.

“THE BAND’S VISIT” (2007)

Directed by Eran Kolirin
Popular dramedy about an Egyptian police band stranded in a small Israeli village.

“AJAMI” (2009)

Directed by Scandar Copti, Yaron Shani
Five stories about life in the mixed Jewish-Muslim quarter of Tel Aviv that capture the tinderbox nature of the Middle East.

“LEBANON” (2009)

Directed by Samuel Maoz
The first Israeli film to win the top prize at Venice is set almost entirely within a tank.

“FILL THE VOID” (2012)

Directed by Rama Burshtein
Dubbed “an ultra-Orthodox take on Jane Austen.”

“ZERO MOTIVATION” (2014)

Directed by Talya Lavie
This satire about young women competing

their army service was a competition winner in Tribeca.

“MOUNTAIN” (2015)

Directed by Yaelle Kayam
An Orthodox woman struggles with her husband’s lack of interest in her.

“IN BETWEEN” (2016)

Directed by Maysaloun Hamoud
An energetic dramedy featuring three Palestinian-Israeli protagonists.

“SCAFFOLDING” (2017)

Directed by Matan Yair
Coming out of Schory’s innovative “guerilla films” funding strand for low-budget productions, it follows a troubled student whose literature teacher aims to open his narrow worldview to other possibilities.

KUDOS TO KATRIEL!

Congratulations and thank you for

20 OUTSTANDING YEARS

helping to promote cultural diversity and understanding within the film industry!

You have truly made a

CREATIVE IMPACT

on us all!



german
●●●
films

Chapeau! from your friends at