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FAREWELL HERR SCHWARZ

A FILM BY YAEL REUVENY

Winner Best Documentary Haifa International Film Festival 2013
DEFA Award for Outstanding Documentary, DOK Leipzig 2013

Germany/Israel | 96 minutes | 2013 | In German, Hebrew and English with
English Subtitles

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Synopsis

Winner of the Best Documentary Prize at the Haifa International Film Festival, director Yael Reuveny's *Farewell Herr Schwarz* is a cinematic journey about buried family secrets, the Holocaust (from a third generation perspective) and how it is never too late to reclaim your heritage. Siblings Michla and Feiv'ke Schwarz survived the Holocaust but never reunited after the war. Michla moved to the soon-to-be-founded Jewish state in the Middle East and started a family there. Her brother Feiv'ke considered dead returned to East Germany, married a German woman and inexplicably lived amidst the concentration camp ruins where he was once a prisoner. The Israeli and German sides to the family lived unaware of each other for half a century until first time filmmaker Yael Reuveny probed exactly what happened to her family in 1945.

Director's Statement by Yael Reuveny

As a child, I was fascinated by one moment in our family story. One day, in post-war Lodz, when my grandmother thought that something had managed to escape the cruel jaws of history. My grandmother took that one day, unearthed it and examined it, like an artifact at an archaeological site. These banal moments were broken down and reconstructed again, until they became the backbone of our family story. What kind of family would we have been if the world had allowed her that tiny miracle? If Feiv'ke had shown up? With this question I started working on *Farewell Herr Schwarz* more than seven years ago.

I had the idea to make Feiv'ke reappear in my family story with the amazing power of cinema. And I did. But when that finally happened, I realized that wasn't enough. I wanted to tell the story of the war and what it did to my family, to say something personal and unique. But sixty-five years after the end of the war, I felt like I had already heard too many stories. Each family that war passed through, victims or victimizers, has at least one story – amazing, painful, tragic, almost unbelievable. We know these stories, we have heard them before and I felt that it doesn't help. It doesn't bring me closer to understanding what happened there. Somewhere in between all the small, personal stories there is a core that I cannot touch.

For that reason, *Farewell Herr Schwarz* is not a film about the Holocaust or about Peter or Feiv'ke or my grandmother - but about us, their children and grandchildren. My line of torchbearers started over sixty years ago, but I guess that's how it always works. Every war is a 'Big Bang' for somebody; a moment in time from which a family will start counting: first generation to second generation to... And storytelling will be their survival method. It will explain to them how they got to the point where they are, it will locate them in the big flow of big historic events, it will put order into the catastrophe. In this film I did what we all do: we take our family stories, we disassemble them and put them together again, lie to ourselves sometimes, until we reclaim them – so we can deal with what we have inherited.



Credits

Writer and Director.....Yael Reuveny

Producer.....Melanie Andernach, Made in Germany Filmproduktion GmbH

Co-Producer.....Naomi Levari, Saar Yogev, Black Sheep Film Productions Ltd

Line Producer.....Knut Losen, Rotem Faran

Director of Photography.....Andreas Kohler

Editor.....Nicole Kortluke, Assaf Lapid

Sound.....Cesar Fernandez Borrás, Alfred Tesler, Nilly Kalmar,
Idan Shemesh, Dovilas Meilus

Sound Design.....Emil Klotzsch

Music Composer.....Volker "Hauschka" Bertelmann