



## **BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL**

### **WAJIB (15)**

Director: Annemarie Jacir

Starring: Mohammad Bakri, Saleh Bakri, Maria Zreik, Leila Bakri

Palestine, 2017, 1 hour 37 minutes SUBTITLES

*Wajib* is a very particular form of road movie, the title translating roughly as ‘social duty’ and referring to the traditional Palestinian custom of father and son doing the rounds of the community to distribute wedding invitations in person. This device throws together old-fashioned patriarch Abu Shadi and his progressive ex-pat son Shadi (played by father and son actors Saleh and Mohammed Bakri) who embark on a wealth of telling social encounters in their home-city of Nazareth, the only Palestinian city that lies within Israeli borders

#### **Was there anything specific you saw or learned from accompanying your husband on his *wajib*, delivering family wedding invitations?**

I found something familiar to my own family – a family where the women do much of the talking. I sat in the backseat and tried to be an observer. I loved watching the small interactions between father and son, who very rarely spend time alone together. And in this specific context of going through a tradition which is all about community interaction, about who they are in front of the community, or who they might pretend to be.

#### **The film is beautifully balanced between the perspectives of Abu Shadi and Shadi. I’m interested in which aspects of belief or personality you feel you share with either character.**

I’m a little of both. Like Shadi, I detest plastic chairs and tarp. I understand Shadi’s anger and his rejection of injustice. I understand the freedom he has found in being on his own, in living in a country where you are just like everyone else and not subservient. But like Abu Shadi, I choose to live in my country, in Palestine.

#### **Your films are perhaps less explicitly political than some current Palestinian filmmakers, but are still imbued with a political sensibility. How would you describe your approach here, and to material in general?**

I think everything in life is political. I have never seen a film that is not political. Even the most stupid film is political. But I try to make films about human beings. What I am interested in is people, and the small ways they survive, find hope, find humour and resist disappearing.

#### **In a similar vein, does the fact that you are Palestinian – and that politics is the immediate, often contentious, connection many people make with Palestine – lead people to want to pigeonhole you as a ‘political filmmaker’?**

There is definitely the issue of being pigeonholed and people making assumptions about the film before seeing it. What I also find is that people have a great need to try to encourage films about Palestine which “are not political”. Journalists keep asking me: “When will you make a film that is not political?” I don’t understand the question at all. Even if I made a science fiction film about Palestine where everything was hearts and flowers, it would still be a political act to do such a film.

Extracts from interview with Annemarie Jacir by Leigh Singer, **Sight & Sound online**

Notes compiled by Jo Comino