

“Poignant and moody, the film recalls ‘Blow Up,’ the French New Wave and such indie American classics as ‘The King of Marvin Gardens.’”

—Colin Covert, *StarTribune*

“A handsomely shot psychological drama.”

—Chris Hewitt, *PioneerPress*

TRIUMPH 67

a Driftless Pictures production
Dan Tanz, Director



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LOGLINE

After his brother dies, a Palestinian-American man grapples with his past, and forges a bond with his newfound family. But not without a cost...

SYNOPSIS

London, 1987: the Super8 camera of fifteen-year-old Mohannad Aziz has captured the idyllic summer romance between his handsome older brother Sami and Flora, a lovely American student. Seventeen years later, much has changed. Mohannad has achieved prominence as a radio journalist while Sami's photography career hasn't quite taken off. As for Flora? She now seems to be just a face in a photograph. Then — in the aftermath of Sami's death, Mohannad finds the past is closer than he guesses, and that its secrets rarely remain hidden. Conflicted memories of his beloved brother vie uneasily with his still-potent attraction to Flora — who herself must come to terms with long-buried resentments — and Mohannad must grapple with the past, the present and his own secrets from that long ago summer.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

My vision for this film was to evoke the transience of life, the importance of family and one's self-perception and identity. Make no mistake, this is more than just a great story... It is a cohesive artistic vision with layers of depth that can be appreciated and interpreted on multiple levels, and across borders.

I want to appeal on a more personal level as well... Raised in a Jewish household, I grew up exposed to negative images and, frankly, a lot of misinformation when it came to our relationship to the Middle East. As a Jewish film maker, it is my personal responsibility to do my part to reject the negative stereotypes that have been forced onto Arabs in film throughout the history of cinema. Though ultimately Arab directors can and will tell their own story on film, I want to stand in solidarity with the growing international struggle for the Arab voice to be represented, and *TRIUMPH67* is where I'll begin. It is an absolutely beautiful picture, and I can't wait for it to reach its audience.

TEN QUESTIONS WITH TRIUMPH67'S WRITER/DIRECTOR DAN TANZ

What motivated you to sit down and write TRIUMPH67?

The inception of *Triumph67* came from a drive I took with my brother through the Driftless Area in the summer of 2008. It was a rainy day, and we drove aimlessly into Wisconsin, along the Mississippi. Searching for roads to nowhere and listening to some favorite bands like Joe Henry and Karate, the rain had trapped us in the car, and we were compelled forward by determination to not let the adventure die. At one point we drove through a town called Maiden Rock. I drove the car right up to the edge of the water until the front tires were touching Lake Pepin. Behind us, a train thundered by, and before long it was just the car, the lake, and a train filled with a hundred tons of taconite. In that moment all the things that had led us to that point came together as we were absolutely trapped in a space. As the rain pelted the lake in front of us, and the train rattled endlessly behind my thoughts moved past the day trip, and I saw my life. I thought about my brother beside me, and the admiration we had for each other. Though our professional paths had gone in fairly different directions, we were spending the afternoon together, searching for something we couldn't define. When I got home I wrote a page-long treatment, and titled it *Triumph*. I think it captured the feeling in that moment, in particular, the sense of being immobilized, even if by ones' self, and what it means to have a brother.

Triumph67 is a Jewish-Arab production. Why?

As a person who is Jewish, my contribution is only a drop in the bucket of the glorious history of Jewish filmmakers. What separates *Triumph67* is our treatment of Palestinians in the film. Over the last several years I have become increasingly uneasy about my relationship as a person who is Jewish with Palestinian people. As the first generation son of a Holocaust survivor, I became particularly uneasy with the prison state and ethnic cleansing that is being inflicted on Palestinians. This awareness, coupled with my own history as the son of a survivor influenced my decision to explore a story of displaced people, loss, and survival away from home.

What made you believe you could direct a feature film?

My background as an Art major at Macalester College provided me with formal training on perspective and composition, but I don't think that had much to do with making this film. My lifelong interest in movies had more to do with it. To some extent I'm a cinephile. I have always been drawn to movies. In high school I started the South High Film Society, which teamed with Discount Video to bring classics to the projector in Rosebaums' Chemistry classroom after school. I remember the first film was *Menace II Society*. We had to have people bring signed permission slips from home since it was rated R. I didn't end up applying to film school. I think common sense kicked in, and I decided on pursuing a liberal arts education. Common sense is so often the assassin of dreams, and I ended up getting a job as a teacher. I love teaching, and in part, teaching gave me many of the skills from which I drew to be organized and patient enough to make a film. Still, even when I knew that I wanted to make a film, I didn't expect to direct it. After meeting with my co-writer/producer, she pointed out that no one would know what I was going for with the story and visual ideas that kept coming up as well as me. Her confidence gave me confidence, and I resolved to become a director. When I was a child, my mom asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. My answer was 'a duck.' I know now that I meant to say, director.

What was it like working with non-professional actors?

The decision to use non-professional actors came out of necessity for keeping the budget indie-sized, and availability of people who looked right for the parts. I didn't feel bad about setting these limitations. Many great directors used non-actors for their films. So I had high hopes. Very early on, the casting director, Kitty Aal found Mohannad Ghawanmeh (who quickly became a producer). Kitty felt that Mohannad would look great on film. I think she discovered him running around Lake Calhoun wearing funny

shoes. Then later, he turned up at a party, and they got to talking. Mohannad was wonderful to work with as an actor because he truly put everything into the role. It was his chance to be part of cinema (he teaches cinema at Dunwoody) and he rose to the occasion. I wanted the role of Sami Aziz to be given to Kareem Aal, and though Kitty was skeptical of her younger brother playing the part of Mohannad's older brother, I thought his natural charm (not often displayed to Kitty) would suit the part well. After he met with Mohannad and we did some early test rehearsals, we all agreed that they had chemistry as brothers. Kareem threw himself into the part completely. It was mesmerizing to watch him work. We were also very lucky to get Sarah Martens to play Flora. She was so positive and hard working, and it rubbed off on the cast and crew. Ultimately, if something an actor is doing doesn't work, it can be manipulated in post, and after my experience with *Triumph67* I would certainly call on non-pros again in future work. But I wouldn't mind having a star or three help out, either.

What did you learn about producing films?

Everything! *Triumph67* was my film school, from inception to mailing the DVD to festivals. I learned how to find the right people to work with, I learned about the process of writing a screenplay, what it takes to manage a large group on a limited budget, how to motivate people to give you their best work, and how to make a film work with the resources that are available, while maintaining the original vision of the film. My co-producer Jeremy Wilker suggested that I write a book about everything I learned from the process. From how many people you need to achieve proper lighting, to what is required to get the sound up to snuff. It is something that can only be learned through experience. If I had known how much ADR we would record in postproduction for example, I wouldn't have worried so much about the incessant airplane noise. I learned about what shots come out looking the best after color correction, and just how far you can get away with shooting after the sun goes down. I learned about the importance of leadership and morale, and how much food and coffee it takes to keep the cast and crew coming back and ready to work. I learned the do's and don'ts of wardrobe, and the do's and don'ts of wrangling antique motorcycles. I learned about editing, and just how much could be salvaged through creative thinking and what is implied and not seen. I learned about starting my own company, and how to promote my work. I learned that conflict-resolution isn't something I would just do in my teaching career, and that if your goals aren't in alignment with someone you are working with, you have problems. The experience was among the most trying times of my life, but it was worth it. And the next time, I'll know what to expect.

What was the biggest obstacle you overcame during filming?

What seemed unfathomable at the time was where the money would come from to make a feature film. I remember early on in the meetings with the producers when we were looking into the cost of shooting on 35mm film. We quickly realized this was out of our range financially, and so we were talking about shooting on HD video. In a way we compromised, using film lenses for depth of field, and supplementing the project with Super8 footage, but had we not made the decision to shoot digitally, we wouldn't have been able to raise the funds given the economy at the time. What seemed overwhelming at the time was scheduling the cast and crew into the intensive three-week window of production. There were so many risky endeavors, including teaching the actors how to ride a rickety old motorcycle, shooting on a sailboat, and taking over the real homes of some of our cast and crew for days on end to shoot in their houses. I had to learn the roles and expectations of the crew, and move the process forward continuously without compromising the integrity of the picture. If there were only one seemingly insurmountable obstacle, it wouldn't have been movie making!

If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently?

Most of the lessons learned came in retrospect, in the editing room. As I worked with Jeremy Wilker to cut the picture together, it was clear what worked well and what we had to finagle to make passable. This probably happens in most editing situations, but through working on the postproduction side I realized

time and again what I would have done differently to save time, energy, and have more options in the editing room. I would certainly have made a point to get more coverage of the actors, because in editing, when something doesn't work as well as you had planned when shooting, it is always nice to have lots of backup material to work with. When I make my next film, I won't worry so much about authenticity of locations. I realized in editing that many of the shots that we spent hours setting up might as well have been in a much simpler or controlled environment. These realizations only come with experience.

Triumph67 has a unique look. What led you to this aesthetic?

Triumph67 is often a very still film, with shots locked off on tripod, and some lasting more than a minute in length. This goes contrary to what you see in most films these days, but has always been something that I have appreciated in older films. The only shots that really move at all are the sequences that depict memory, all shot on Super8 film. The Super8 gave the picture a lush look, and the motion that often accompanies the memory sequences felt appropriate, as memories are often hard to pin down with any precision. I also wanted the memory sequences to have a ephemeral look, whereas the bulk of the film, shot with the unmoving camera was a reflection of the main character's emotional immobility.

Who are your influences?

Over the past several years I have been deeply moved by the classic works of Ozu, Lubitsch, Bresson, Kurosawa, Melville, Hitchcock, Bergman, McCarey, and Tarkovsky. I'm a big fan of Brando, The Marx Brothers, Bogie, Woody Allen... I grew up on the science fiction/horror films of the Reagan era. There are others. When I was a student at Macalester College, Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner came to speak to a group at the chapel. I don't remember much about the experience, other than being somewhat shocked at how old Mel Brooks looked, and that was over a decade ago. I do remember clearly that after the event, Mel Brooks was shaking hands, so I stood in line. When I walked up to him I took his hand, and found the courage to look him in the eye. My anxiety melted. It was like shaking hands with a loving grandfather. I told him that my family and I have always loved his films. There was a wonderful twinkle in his eye, and he said, "Say hi to your family for me."

Where is independent filmmaking going in the future?

It seems to me that indie-film making is about to become much more accessible to aspiring filmmakers with the revolution of affordable DSLR cameras that are just now starting to sweep the world. The cost of shooting HD video on professional cameras is also coming down every 6-12 months, as newer and better cameras are released. As the cost comes down, thousands of independent films will start happening that never could have happened before. It is an exciting time for filmmakers. Brando said that everyone is an actor. I think that eventually everyone will be a filmmaker, but that is down the road a ways.

CAST

Mohannad Aziz	.....	Mohannad Ghawanmeh
Sami Aziz	.....	Kareem Aal
Flora Mur	.....	Sarah Martens
Adam Mur	.....	Adam Elsafy
Dr. El-Fouley	.....	Dina Gad
Charles	.....	Doug Larison
Randa	.....	Emilia Aghamirzai
Sasha	.....	Sara Abdelaal
Marc	.....	Benton Wagner
Ben	.....	William Charleston
Kelly	.....	Bridget O'Brien
Jason	.....	Nabil Amra
Mrs. Aziz	.....	Nadia Phelps
Mr. Aziz	.....	Esam Aal
Young Mohannad	.....	Ali Al-Arahawi
Waitress	.....	Kim Sundeen
Expecting Couple	.....	Grayce Backstrom
	.....	Mathew Thiel
Women on Street	.....	Karen Watson
	.....	Stephanie Watson
Party Attendees	.....	Bryan Bredahl
	.....	Ericka Glenn
	.....	Fatima Abu Rayyan
	.....	Aman Ghawanmeh
	.....	James Janicelli
	.....	Ben Holt
	.....	Julie Gaynin
	.....	Julian Ouanes
	.....	Rami Azzazi
	.....	Darren Kenneth Whitby
Running Boy	.....	Emray Aal
Soccer Kids	.....	Gus Forseth
	.....	Greta Forseth
	.....	Peter Forseth
Cafe Cleaner	.....	James Janicelli

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Shot completely in Minnesota, in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Richfield, and Lake City, filming of *TRIUMPH67* lasted nineteen days during the months of July and August 2009.

The cinematography was gorgeously realized in full HD with vintage 35mm Canon FD film lenses on the versatile Sony EX3, along with the rich film-texturing of color Super8 film for the stunning nostalgia sequences.

The production values were incredible:

- We shot on a gorgeous 40-foot Down Easter sailboat on Lake Pepin.
- We featured a vintage 1950's Leica camera that Dan's grandfather actually gave him as a child.
- We featured a beautiful vintage black Mercedes sedan.
- We worked with a motorcycle team to resurrect the midnight blue 1967 Triumph Bonneville that Mohannad Ghawanmeh and Kareem Aal are seen riding in the film.

We successfully raised almost \$12,000 in donations for post-production expenses via our Kickstarter.com campaign in October 2010.

OUR GENEROUS AND LOVELY KICKSTARTER.COM CREW

Phil Holbrook, Gabriel Cheifetz, Cheri Anderson, Rebecca Hermes, Justin Schell, Jennie Nelson, Lucas Rayala, Nancy Lyons, Kareem Aal, Molly Howard, Eric Damon Walters, Ilana and Mike Favero, Sam Wilhide, Kitty Aal, Dirka, Tim Crepeau, Wendy Bayer, Brian Okstad, Sandra Shaner, Hugh Harriss, Carolyn Fisk, Ericka Glenn, Melody Gilbert, Shannon Turner, Julie Keck & Jessica King, Jake Stetler, Pete Rivard, Barbara Shelton, Andy Wilhide, Valerie Ahn, Tim Olsen, Diane Whipkey, Amy Bledsoe, Miguel Drake-McLaughlin, Katie Kofoed, Michele Thompson, Dave Hancock, Seth Hayden, Brian Mojica, Julian Ouanes, Will Gosling, Robert Subiaga Jr., Lauri Svedberg/Svedberg Studio, Colleen Belmont, Mohammed Shahrour, Bruce A. Christianson, Matt Osterman, Gayani Siriwardena, Erin Sindberg Porter, Katie Ware, Wendy Amundson, Alex Barrett, David Rude, Erik Nelson, Lindsay Campbell, Yaneris & E Elsafy, Bill Bush, Nicky Stein-Grohs, Adam Rutkowski, Jens Hegg, Kaye McGehee, Jenny Dunlap Holman, Jake Nassif, Craig VanDerSchaegen, Michael Jensen, Andrea Carlson, Rev. Vincent Coffeen, Ginnie Hench, Stephanie, Robin Sedivy, Shelter Studios, Rick & Diana Vaicius, Becca W, Karen J Hermes, Alfonso Moreno, Nicole de Beaufort, Michael Mason, Kathryn Haddad, Zach Frush, Youcef Chekiri, Abdoosh Ghawanmeh, Kristi Rendahl, Diane McInerny, William J. Vander Kooi, Valerie Danielson, Amanda Hankerson, Kathleen Graham, Noam Grunes, Joshua Tanz, Merlin Jahn, Raoul Benavides, Steve and Karen Watson, Caren Hohenstein Abdelaal, Jane and Pat Mitchell, Suzanne and Salah Fattah, Leo H. Hermes, Matt Lee, Shari and Mitch Grunes, Erik Swenson, Janny and Alan Silver, Tim Radebach, Paula Aal, Bill Schuneman, Raed Abughazaleh, William Watson, Chad Holder, Mary Briggs/John Holland, Joseph Pettini, Angela Hermes, Adam Elsafy, Angie Kalea Ho, Michael Koppelman, Mark Vandermyde, Kate Wolf, Ben W. DeVries, Matthew Nagan, Jean-Paul Bierny and Chris Tanz, Mohammed Bamyeh, Mark Tanz... and many others.

BIOGRAPHIES



Dan Tanz, *Writer/Director/Producer*

Dan has worked with the award-winning show, *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, and with the Twin Cities Public Television show, *Tapes Rolling*. In 2006 and 2007, Dan worked on camera and audio on the video production team for Burning Spear Media at the African People's Solidarity Day conference in Philadelphia, and received an award for his outstanding contributions by the African People's Solidarity Committee. Dan is a composer and recording artist, and received his B.A. in Studio Arts from Macalester College in 2000.

After seven years as an educator in Minnesota, Dan Tanz created Driftless Pictures to make uncompromising feature dramas. *TRIUMPH67*, a collaboration between a Jewish director and a Palestinian producer, is Tanz's first feature film.



Mohannad Ghawanmeh, *Producer/Lead Actor*

A senior film instructor at Dunwoody College of Technology, Mohannad has been active in the Twin Cities film community since 2002. Besides teaching film, Mohannad also played male lead in the short film *Rhythm of Tides*. He had been involved in the Twin Cities Arab Film Festival since its inception and curated its 2007 and 2010 editions. Mohannad also co-coordinated Minnesota's first Italian film festival in March of 2009. Mohannad holds a Master's degree in multidisciplinary studies: international relations, business administration and technical communication.



Jeremy Wilker, *Cinematographer/Editor/Producer*

After spending years doing short documentary and corporate works (and one historical documentary still-in-progress about octogenarian speed skaters), Jeremy relished the idea of tackling a narrative feature film. Through a connection made while shooting on Kartemquin's *TYPEFACE* documentary, he met writer/director Dan Tanz and immediately fell completely and utterly in love with the idea and script to *TRIUMPH67*. Once cinematography was complete, his passion and problem-solving skills were put to use as the film's editor and

web/print lead. When Jeremy isn't behind the camera, he can sometimes be found on the set of commercial photo shoots as a digital tech (TWEAK Digital) or playing with his children.

Kitty Aal, *Associate Producer/Casting Director*

Kitty is a film curator and photographer. She is a graduate of the Communication Arts and Film Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin, Madison (B.A. 1998). She served 4 years on the Wisconsin Union Directorate's Film Committee as coordinator of various film series and festivals, including the Starlight Cinema underground series. She also inaugurated and curated the Blow Up Cinema series at the Elvehjem Museum. She held internships at the Walker Art Center's Film and Video Department (1998) and the Minnesota Film and T.V. Board (2001). In conjunction with Cinema Revolution, Kitty curated Cinema des Artistes, a monthly film and discussion series at the Varsity Theater (2005-2007). She has been a regular guest on TPT Channel 17's *Bel-Ahdan* program discussing film from the Middle East. She also served on Mizna's Fourth Arab Film Festival Selection and Planning Committee and was Co-Organizer of the Cinema and Society in the Arab World Conference at the University of Minnesota (2006). She helped translate passages from French into English for the Collectif Jeune Cinéma experimental film distribution catalog in Paris (2007).



Kareem Aal, *Lead Actor*

An educator in St. Paul, Minnesota, Egyptian-American Kareem Aal has studied with Theater of the Oppressed, travelled to Iran and lived in Costa Rica. *TRIUMPH67* is his first film.



Sarah Martens, *Lead Actor*

Sarah Martens is a model and educator in Minnesota. *TRIUMPH67* is her first film. She has subsequently starred in a short, *Bad Valentine*, slated for release in 2011.



Adam Elsafy, *Lead Actor*

Currently a student at the Perpich Center for the Arts in Golden Valley, Minnesota, Adam has starred in several plays, including *Bye Bye Birdie* and *Baseball Saved Us*. He was discovered in a casting call for an unrelated project. *TRIUMPH67* is his first film.



Waiel Safwat, *Assistant Director*

A director/assistant director in Minnesota, Waiel has worked on media productions and administration for nine years. He has been involved in production of films, animations, edited news segments, operated camera, and edited music & weddings videos.



Mohannad waits outside Sami's house



Flora finds a photograph



Mohannad and Adam in the garage



An uncomfortable dinner



Mohannad with Sami's necklace



Mohannad tries on Sami's jacket



Sami and Mohannad at the waterfall



Young Mohannad takes a call