

mitosfilm

Presents



DOL

In the Valley of Tambourines
Love, Flight and Passion



A film by
HINER SALEEM

35mm, 90 Min.

Autonomous Region of Kurdistan/France/Germany 2006
Produced by HS Productions and mitosfilm

Distribution

mitosfilm

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CREW

Writer and Director	Hiner SALEEM
Production	HS PRODUCTIONS
Co Production	mîtosfilm – Mehmet Aktaş
Producer	Sivan SALIM
Director of Photography	Andreas SINANOS
Sound Designer	Behmen ERDELANI
Art Director	Saman SABUNCI
Costume Designer	Belçim BILGIN
Special Effects	Haji TAJIK
Editor	Dora MANTZOROS / Bonita PAPASTATHI
Sound Editor	Emmanuelle LALANDE
Music	Vedat YILDIRIM / Özgür AKGÜL Mehmet ERDEM

CAST

Azad	Nazmî KIRIK
Taman	Belçim BILGIN
Ahmed	Omer ÇIAW ŞIN
Jekaf	Rojîn ULKER
Cheto	Abdullah KESKÎN
Nazenin	Sipel Dogu Lesar ERDOGAN
Ciwan	Ciwan HACO

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SYNOPSIS

It is the year of 2005 in the small Turkish-Kurdish village Balliova at the border of Iran and Iraq. The area, shattered by boundary disputes, is controlled by the Turkish military. After frequent armed hostilities with Kurdish guerrilla fighters, the Turkish military is now repressing the villagers.

Despite the difficult circumstances in the village Azad and his Fiancée Nazenin want to marry. During the wedding ceremony a fight with the Turkish military takes place. Azad shoots at the Turkish commandant and escapes from the village Balliova, leaving his fiancé behind.

Azad reaches the Autonomous Region of Iraqi-Kurdistan by hiding in the back of a truck. Here his path crosses other destinies from the different regions of the divided Kurdistan.

He meets Cheto, who is coming back to his homeland from Paris because the corpse of his sister were found in an Iraqi common grave, and he meets Jekaf who as a little girl was kidnapped by Iraqi solders.

Azad also comes to know Taman who brings him along to a guerrilla camp in the Kurdish mountains. There, Kurds are fighting the Iranian government. Just like Azad, Taman wants to marry his fiancé, but the wedding ceremony is interrupted by a bombing raid.

Azad decides to bring Nazenin from their home village to the mountains, but he is ambushed by the Turkish army. At the village square Azad and Nazenin are being shot at. Like dancers, the two lovers are swaying to the sound of Dol (a Kurdish tambourine), falling slowly to the ground, dead.

About DOL

The title of the film “DOL” refers to a traditional Kurdish tambourine which is used for festivities as well as for funerals in the Middle East. This direct intimacy between happiness and sadness is a leading thread throughout the movie.

Once again the Kurdish director Hiner Saleem makes the viewers pay attention to his people, the Kurds, who are living between borders.

Even if Hiner Saleem throws a fierce gaze at the political reality, the filmmaker never forgets his artistic style. In teamwork with Andreas Sinanos, the long-time director of photography of Theo Angelopolus, Hiner Saleem manages to capture minimalist and nearly choreographic pictures of a wounded earth. DOL is not only a journey through the fascinating landscape of the Kurdish mountains, but also a portrait of how war influences the life of uncomplicated people.

Background Information on Iraqi Kurdistan

- 1919** After the defeat and collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurds are given self-autonomy, granted in the Treaty of Sevres. This treaty, however, is never ratified.
- 1923** Kurdistan is divided by the Treaty of Lausanne. This treaty specified the new power relations between Turkey and the colonial powers England and France. The promises for the Kurds, as stated in the Treaty of Sevres, were no longer mentioned. Kurdistan is divided in four parts: Turkey (20 million Kurds), Iran (9 million), Iraq (6 million) and Syria (2 million).
- 1980** Begin of the Iran-Iraqi War. Many Iraqi Kurds side with the Iranian army. The regime of Saddam Hussein increases its violent activities against the Kurdish minority.
- 1988** **February – September:** the period known as the „Al-Anfal Campaign” (operation Anfal) - a reference to Surat Al-Anfal in the Qur’an - legitimates the use of violence and cruelty against so-called “infidels”. Ali Hassan al-Mahjid, the cousin of Saddam Hussein and also known as «Chemical Ali», is given complete power. “Arabization” of the Kurdish population, and strategies of elimination and deportation did not bring the wished ‘success’ for Hussein’s regime. Ali Hassan turns to more radical methods and makes use of chemical weapons against the Kurdish population.
- 16th of March `88** At this day the Halabja poison gas attack takes place. Iraqi forces used chemical weapons against Halabja, a Iraqi Kurdish town. More than 5,000 people die. The date has become a day of commemoration for the Kurdish people.

- 2003** On 9th of April, Saddam Hussein and his regime are overthrown.
- 2004** The new constitution of Iraq accepts the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan, assuring its' full sovereignty.
- 2005** After the elections on January 30th, a new parliament is convened in Arbil. Masud Barzani is elected as the new president of the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan.
- 2006** On January the 21st, the two large Kurdish parties PUK and KDP reach an agreement on consolidating the regional governments to one common government with head office in Arbil.

Background Information on the Turkish – Kurdish - Conflict

- 1923 Proclamation of the Republic of Turkey. The existence, language and culture of the Kurds are prohibited. During the 1920s and 30s several Kurdish rebellions are bloodily crushed.
- 1978 Foundation of the PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* – Kurdistan Labour Party).
- 1984 -1999 Civil war between the Turkish army and the Kurdish guerrilla, the latter under the guidance of Abdullah Öcalan. 5000 villages are destroyed and more than 50.000 people die or are injured. About 5 million people become refugees.
- 1999/2002 Detention of Abdullah Öcalan in Kenya. Öcalan is condemned to death by the Turkish state security court. Until today he still is in prison.
- Today PKK advocates for a cultural autonomy of the Kurdish people and for a political federalism. This can be initiated in the course of Turkey's application to join the European Community. There is still no resolution for the Kurdish question.

BIOGRAPHY



Hiner Saleem was born 1964 in Iraqi Kurdistan – in north Iraq.

At the age of 17, he escaped via Syria to Italy. In Italy he continued his education and studied later political science in Milan.

Today Hiner Saleem lives as filmmaker, painter and author in Paris. In April 2004 his autobiographical book “*My Father's Rifle – a childhood in Kurdistan*” was published, and has already been translated to several languages.

In frame of *Festival de Cannes* in 2005 Hiner Saleem was awarded with the "Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres" by the French minister for education Renaud Donnedieu de

Vabres. For his last two films *KILOMETRE ZERO* and *DOL* Hiner Saleem returned to his Kurdish homeland.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2006** **Sous les toits de Paris**
(Under the roofs of Paris) in post-production, France
- 2006** **Dol**
Autonomous Region of Kurdistan / France / Germany
- 2005** **Kilometre Zero**
France / Autonomous Region of Kurdistan
Official selection in competition - Cannes 2005
- 2003** **Vodka Lemon**
France / Armenia / Italy
San Marco Award - Venice 2003
Official Selection - Toronto 2003
- 2001** **Absolitude**
(TV-movie for ARTE) France
- 1999** **Passeur de rêves**
(Beyond our dreams) France / Armenia
- 1997** **Vive la mariée...et la libération du Kurdistan**
(Long live the bride...and the liberation of Kurdistan), France
Best Script - Angers Film Festival (France)
Best European Film - Viareggio Film Festival
International Critics Grand Prize
Audience Award - Mannheim-Heidelberg Film Festival

INTERVIEW WITH HINER SALEEM

Silence tells often much more than words

Why is your film called DOL?

"To us Kurds music is like nourishment which is necessary both with birth and death. DOL means 'drum/drums' in Kurdish, but has also another meaning. It can also mean 'valley'. Thus DOL refers to the musical life in a hilly country."

You are sharply criticising the political system of Turkey in DOL. How did you decide to make this film?

"In Turkey the official state ideology is Kemalism. This means that only one nation, one language and one religion are allowed to exist. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish republic, oriented himself very much towards the western life, forbade however the multi-cultural and multinational reality of the country.

Therefore, until today there are conflicts between the Kurds and the Turkish state. This 'dirty war' which has lasted for more than 20 years between the Turkish Military and the Kurdish population, is not enough considered in the world civic community.

I was familiar with the situation of the Kurdish people in Turkey and knew some about the principles of Kemalism. But when I for the first time visited North Kurdistan (southeast of Turkey) I saw with own eyes 'happy are those, who can call themselves Turks' written in the cities and also on the mountains. That was for me a reason for laughter, a laughter connected with tears.

I could not believe it before I had seen it with my own eyes - a state which publicly says that its humans are better than other humans. It is obvious that it refers to the Kurds. That is also the reason why these slogans are written in Diyarbakir and in other Kurdish cities.

I felt it as dishonour for mankind, but at the same time, it is also a kind of comedy. Because for the world, such ideas disappeared for more than 50 years ago. It was somewhat a visual and simultaneously a bitter truth of our people and a very bitter truth about the Turkish state. I could not understand how a state with such philosophies can go into the 3rd millennium. I had all of these concerns in my head and slowly they developed to a film script."

You shoot the film in the north of Iraq. Did you have difficulties during the shooting work?

"Kurdistan is not Iraq, meaning, that there you don't have the security problems as in the rest of Iraq. It is a peaceful country which tries to reconstruct itself. There is a kind of rebirth and reconstruction there. We have a government and an elected parliament. In this Kurdistan we have a total liberty to film, to write, to create. Thus, the autonomous government of Kurdistan also supported us financially and materially.

One can say that I shot DOL not far away from the "Bermuda triangle", at the border to the Iranian, Iraqi and Turkish Kurdistan.

My decor was a real village. When we arrived we first built a Turkish flag for the shooting. By daybreak I walked to the scene and gazed to the mountains: my flag was no longer there! The village inhabitants had destroyed it during the night. Fortunately I succeeded in persuading them that the flag is only a requisite for my film and that it will be removed the day after the shooting. They accepted this on the condition that after the end of shooting the Turkish flag would be replaced by a Kurdish flag. I left that one there finally as a gift. Nevertheless, there are some specific characteristics for producing films in Kurdistan. The countries which brought Kurdistan under their rule with force have hindered a development of a cinema culture in Kurdistan. This concerns in particular south Kurdistan (Iraq). There are a lack of film education and technical equipment. That was an enormous problem for us. I was forced to bring with me a part of the film team from Europe."

You have worked together with the cameraman Andreas Sinanos. How did this collaboration take place?

"Andreas is a good friend of me, and 'DOL' is the fourth film which I make with him. Before I came to know him, I knew his work which he created with the great director Theodoros Angelopoulos. I particularly value how Andreas work with the light. Like that our collaboration was very good and harmonious."

DOL is a quiet film with few dialogues. Is that part of your film language?

"That is a characteristic of me. I like to let the pictures speak. Silence tells often much more than words. Except for in my first film, there are few dialogues in my films. I recently ended the shooting of a French film - in the whole film there are only 4 to 5 sentences to be heard."

The casting in DOL does not differ strongly from your previous film "Kilometre Zero"... However, this time a well-known Kurdish musician also plays.

"I believed particularly in the artistic abilities of the actors. That was the crucial reason for their partaking. Nazmi Kirik is really very charismatic; and Belcim Bilgin is also a very good actress. Both had already played along in my film *Kilometre Zero*. In casting of the singer in the film, I thought of Ciwan Haco immediately. He is an outstanding singer and his music influenced young Kurds although his songs for a long time were forbidden in Turkey. In the selection of my actors I did not pay attention from which part of Kurdistan they come."

Today one often hears something about the Kurdish cinema. What can you say about that?

"Kurdish cinema strives to go in the direction of the sun and the spring. Not only for me, but for all Kurdish filmmakers it is a big challenge to work in this industry. Governments dominating Kurdistan have always expressed themselves against the cinema and the establishment of the Kurdish culture in general. Like that cinema reached Kurdistan very late. The outdated conceptions in the Kurdish society play here also a negative role. Therefore it is not yet self-evident, for example, for women to play in films. But I am happy that the Kurdish cinema becomes more important every day."

PRESSCOMMENTS

In addition to the touching but never sentimental stories, the film fascinates by its careful and artful composed pictures - no traces of shaky hand camera. Multilayered and impressing.

Petra Wille in: zitty, 30.01.2007

Openly taking sides and for the Kurds a surely important identity donating work, it can for other viewers be read as a sad film poem, formed by deep beauty and emotional clarity.

Eberhard von Elterlein in: Berliner Morgenpost, 16. 02. 2007

One cannot make a narration more mythological than this. Saleem breaks with Azad's Odyssey and his potential pathos, however, by use of an extreme calmness in his movie, and by continuous introducing grotesque scenes, peculiarly positions of the persons and in particular by use of a laconic humour.

Peter Uehling in: Berliner Zeitung, 16.02.2007