

SUSAN



Film Title

Susam

Logline

A Turkish-Jewish family faces a series of dilemmas when their son, Susam, locks himself in his room and does not come out on the morning of his Bar-mitzvah ceremony. With the limitations of Shabbat day rules, each member tries to find the correct way to make Susam come out.

Contact Info

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Technical Info

Running Time: 17.53

Exhibition Format: DCP

Aspect Ratio: 1.85:1

audio format (5.1, stereo)

Film Color: Color

Turkish, Judeo-Spanish



Logline

A Turkish-Jewish family faces a series of dilemmas on the morning of Susam's Bar-mitzvah ceremony with the limitations of Shabbat day rules when Susam locks himself in his room and not get

Sinopsis

On the morning of the Bar-mitzvah ceremony, Susam locks himself in his room. Bahar Family, who abides by Shabbat rules, makes a great effort to convince Susam to get out of his room while he answers to none. Due to the Shabbat rules that prevent them from using any equipment or breaking the door to open it, the only tool that remains is to convince Susam. The dilemmas they face within their religious rules and the chaos in the house accelerates with the grandparents' arrival. Following a three different generation mindset, each member tries to find the correct way to make Susam come out.

Susam leads his family to complex questions regarding their religion, the expected manhood in their culture and, the relationship between the father and the son.

Director's Statement

The short film, Susam, is where I question the actions of a family in the heat of religious dilemmas. Exceptions exist wherever humans exist, and if it happens with religion, the opinions of all the humans involved in that scene increase vastly. With two significant concepts, Shabbat and Bar-mitzvah, and having them face each other is the most delicious way to examine a traditional family for me. I give high importance to the dark humor aspect in dramas where I tried to tailor these settings in detail. Because I believe there is an immense potential in dark comedy to think deeply about situations. The story occurs in one setting, that is the family house, which I believe gives me great fields to play around. When there are five different opinions and personal traits, finding the solution gets harder and harder with the complexity of the problem. Even though we see that the solution is just in front of their eyes, these characters lack these bright answers. Therefore, being stuck in this house, this close but alien to each other family creates an entangled story. I wanted to enhance the one-setting scheme with the one-take & one-sequence to improve the meaning of dilemmas the family faces. While each occasion generates new problems, the display of desperation will feed the one-take filming style and create a huge tension. Another reason for the decision is that I wanted to follow each family member's path, respectively. We watch each family member's communication with Susam at the door one by one whereas watching their arguments together in between door breaks.



Festivals & Awards

2021
Turkey

- 40th Istanbul International Film Festival National, National Short Film Competition, Turkey
- Diaspora International Short Film Festival, Films in Turkish Competition, Turkey
Second Best Film Award
- 9th Accessible Film Festival, National Short Film Competition, Turkey

International

- 27th JFBB Jewish Film Festival Berlin | Brandenburg, Short Films: Nosh Nosh, Germany
- 41st Gershman Philadelphia Jewish Film Festival, Short Film Competition, USA
- 25th UK Jewish Film Festival, UK
- 19th Warsaw Jewish Film Festival, Poland
- Twin Cities Jewish Film Festival, US

Workshops & Competitions

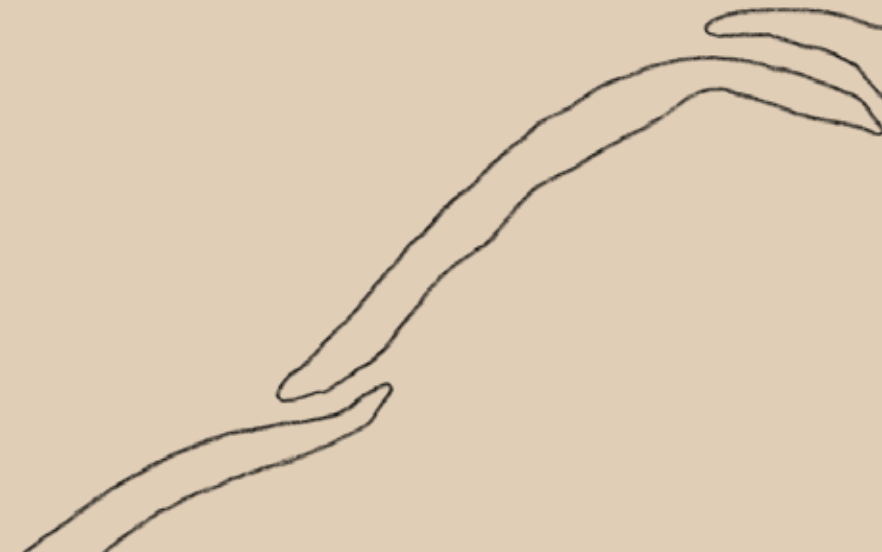
!f Producer's Lab 2018

4th IKSU Meetings on the Bridge Short Film Workshop

Akbank 17th Screenplay Competition Attendee

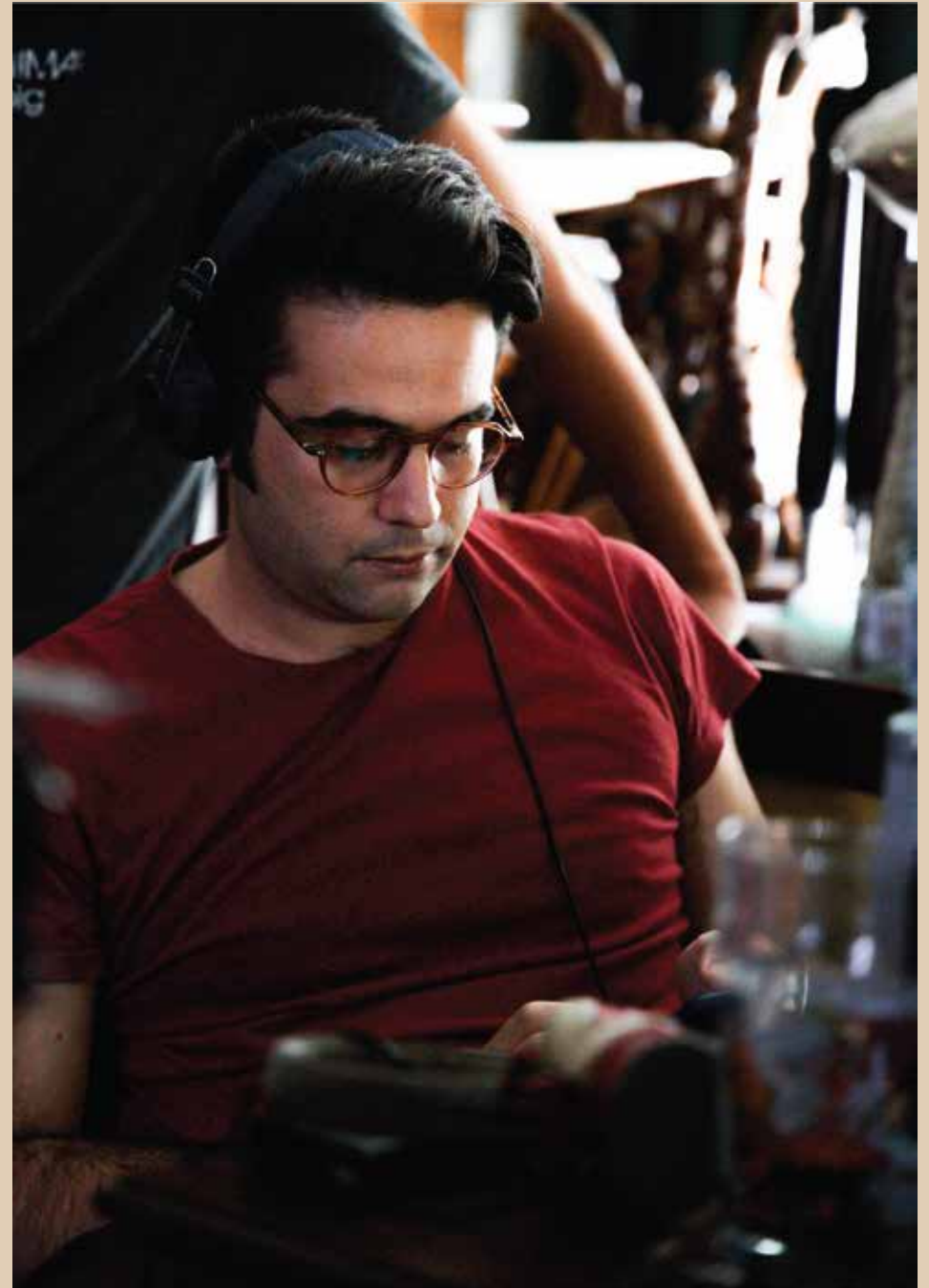
Funds

- Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Short Film Production Support
- Short by Short, Short Film Production Support



Sami Morhayim - Director & Scriptwriter

Sami Morhayim was born in 1993. Since 2012 he has been in director, editor, and producer roles in various projects. He graduated from Koç University with Media & Visual Arts and Psychology double major. His first short film as a director, "Meçhul", has been screened in both national and international film festivals. He worked as a film editor in the short film "Fahriyem". Recently, he produced his new short film "Ay Bulutta" where he is also in the film editor role. Ay Bulutta is planned to be completed in late 2021. He is currently working on his feature-length film. He is an attendee of 2021 Sarajevo Talents as a director.



Ayca Aluflu - Producer

After completing her bachelor's degree at the Department of Economics, in Boğaziçi University, she started to work at the production and coordination departments of Nar Film. She has served as co-ordination and marketing officer in the festival process of Özcan Alper's third feature, 'Memories of the Wind'.



Her first production experience was Kivanc Sezer's debut feature "My Father's Wings". In addition to being executive producer of and festival coordinator of this film, she has been involved in projects such as production, project development and funding for two years on freelance projects.

"Finish" is her first solo producer performance and with this project, she became the winner of 'If ProducerLab', which was a part of If Istanbul Independent Film Festival.

Aluflu is an alumna of Sarajevo Talents 2019.

She is still producing her cinema projects and also serves as an internal auditor in OGM Pictures.

Hilal Şenel - Producer

Started her undergraduate life with the Department of Chemical & Biological Engineering. Realizing what she wants to achieve in life lies somewhere else, she changed her major to Sociology and did a minor in Media & Visual Arts with a Film & Video track program. Made her first experimental short film in 2018 and ever since, has been producing and directing films, as well as creating video art. She is also a columnist, climate and women's rights activist, and circus acrobat (an aerialist).



As a producer, currently, she has been working on her first feature film, a docu-drama named Gold Fever which was accepted to Istanbul Film Festival's Film Market, Meetings on the Bridge's Film Development Workshop (2021). Also, she was one of the 5 Turkish producers who were granted accreditation to the Cannes Film Festival's film market Marché du Film (2021), through Meetings on the Bridge.





Crew

Director & Scriptwriter - Sami Morhayim
Producers - Aycan Aluçlu & Hilal Şenel
First Assistant Director - Hasan Ali Kılıçgün
Director of Photography - Kağan Kerimoğlu
Camera Operator - Bertan Özer
Art Director - Nilüfer Arlı
Costume - Yasemin Arslan
Composer - Batuhan Yalaz
Artworks - Serçin Çabuk "sercodelic"
Color Grading - Kağan Kerimoğlu "colorworks"
Script Consultant - Deniz Koray Yılmaz
Poster - Ege Uysal
Editing - Ami Mor
Sound Design - Yalın Özgencil & Taylan Geçit
Final Mix -Yalın Özgencil
Festival Director - Pınar Sevilmiş
Kids Acting Coach - Barış Yücedağ



**Hasan Ali Kılıçgün -
First Assistant Director**

Hasan Ali Kılıçgün graduated from Istanbul University's Radio, TV and Cinema Department. His short film "3, 5 Lira", which he completed while continuing his undergraduate education, had the chance to be screened in national and international festivals. After his undergraduate education, he worked as an assistant in the director's teams in the cinema and media sector and as an assistant director in short films. Currently, he is working on the scripts of his future projects.



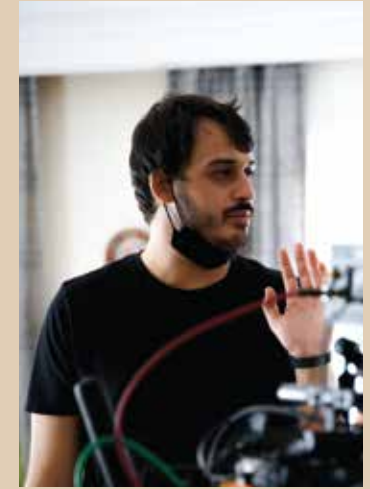
Nilüfer Arlı - Art Director

Nilüfer Arlı started her first industry experience with the film, My Father's Wings, by Kıvanç Sezer while she was continuing her undergraduate education at Istanbul University, Radio, TV and Cinema Department. She decided to move her career, which she started as an assistant director, to the art department later on. After completing her undergraduate education, she continued to work in the art department of the industry while working as an art director in various short films and commercials. Currently, she is the art director of the mini-series Fandom, which will be broadcast on a digital platform.



**Kağan Kerimoğlu -
Director of Photography**

In 2009, he started his bachelor's study with full scholarship in Cinema and Television at Kadir Has University. During his studies, he made several short films, which competed and awarded in various international and domestic film festivals, as director/ cinematographer. After completing his bachelor's study as the highest-ranking student in his department, he enrolled to the Master's Degree program in Cinematography at Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU). After granting his Master of Arts (MgA.) degree in 2018, he moved back to Istanbul where he started working with the prominent production companies of the country shooting commercials. Alongside his commercial career, he also shot a feature-length film and various short films.



Backstage



Photo: Deni Kori Yaloş

Cast

Fatih Al - Leading Actor

Feri Baycu Güler - Leading Actress

İzzet Bana - Supporting Actor

Forti Barokas - Supporting Actress

Eylül Aydın - Supporting Actress

Fatih Al

He was born in 1976, in Ankara. Since 1993, he has been working in theaters as an actor, director, scriptwriter, and musician. Entered Ankara University's Faculty of Languages and History-Geography Department in 1995, graduated in 2002.



Filmography

Films

A Fairground Attraction (Hazan Mevsimi - Bir Panayır Hikâyesi), 2007, as Cemal (İşçi)

Our Grand Despair (Bizim Büyük Çaresizliğimiz), 2011, as Çetin

Strangers In The House (Evdeki Yabancılar), 2013, as Yaşar

Circle (Daire), 2014, as Feramus

Uzaklarda Arama, 2015, as Bakkal Ömer

Sonsuz Aşk, 2017, as Tufan

Sofra Sırları, 2017, as Ethem

Smuggling Hendrix, 2018, as Hasan

Series

Rüzgarlı Bahçe, 2005, as İbrahim

Muhteşem Yüzyıl, 2011, as Matrakçı Nasuh

Not Defteri, 2014, as Mahir Soysal

Karadayı, 2014, as Sosyete Yusuf

Kanatsız Kuşlar, 2017, as Muzaffer

Atiye, 2019-2020, as Nazım Kurtiz

Kahraman Babam, 2021, as Yavuz

Menajerimi Ara, 2021, as Timur

Feri Baycu Güler

Born in 1976 in Istanbul, Feri Baycu Güler came from a family of Spanish origin. She completed her high school education at Notre Dame de Sion and then Nişantaşı Girls' High School. As she decided to become an actor, she took the exams of Istanbul University Theater Department and after completing her 4-year education, she stepped into her professional acting career in Dormen theatre. The actress, who took part in several television series and films during and after her school years, took a break from her acting career in 2001 and preferred to travel to many countries of the world and earn her living by working as a tourism guide. Speaking Spanish, English, Italian and French, the actress had the opportunity to travel to nearly seventy countries until she married Kayhan Güler, who is her tourism colleague, in 2007. After they got married in 2007, they took their daughter Dafne in their arms in 2009 and established their own company with her husband in the same period. Deciding to return to her acting career in 2012, the actress first worked in some TV series and then founded her own theater, Mam'Art Theater and Production. Feri Baycu Güler, who is still an active actress, also continues to exist in the sector as a theater and film producer and a theater director.



Eylül Aydın

Eylül Aydın was born in Istanbul in 2009. She started ballet training at the age of 4, then did gymnastics and now she is interested in modern dance. She will start 7th grade in secondary school this year.



Filmography

Films

Dört Köşeli Üçgen, 2018

Hilal, Feza and Other Planets (Hilal, Feza ve Diğer Gezegenler)

Short Films

Susam, 2021

TV Series

States of Love (Aşkın Halleri)

Altınsoylar

Double Happiness (Çifte Saadet)

Hayati and th Others (Hayati ve Diğerleri)

Early Bird (Erkenci Kuş)

Mr. Wrong (Bay Yanlış)

The Dam (Baraj)

The Girl at the Window (Camdaki Kız) (ongoing)



İzzet Bana

İzzet Bana was born in Istanbul, in 1950. After having graduated from II. Karma Elementary School, he continued his education in the Italian School and later on in Tarhan College. He started his theatrical studies in 1972. In 1980-1986 he continued his Sephardic musical studies with Karen Gershon, Izi Eli and Rifat Özkohen; in 1986, he formed with Selim Hubeş, Yavuz Hubeş and Karen Sharhon a musical group called "Los Pasharos Sepharadis". La Romansa de Rika Kuriyel, Kanti- kas Para Siempre, Zemiroto, Las Puertas, Tangos Sefaradis del dip del Baul are some of the albums he made during these years. With the children's chorus "Estrayikas d'Estambul" he formed in 2004, he made two albums called, Un Kavretiko and Kantikas i dichas Infantiles Sefaradis. İzzet Bana is also continuing to work with a choir called "Nes" which has been formed in the same period and consists of adults.



Filmography

Talihsiz talihli - Ulus School - Shirli Sisa
Susam - Sami Morhayim
Club - O3 Productions (Netflix)

Fortune Barokas

Born in 1948 in Istanbul. She has put on some work on literature and philosophy. She attended the theater courses of Beşiktaş Municipality for 2 years to take drama and improvisation lessons. She has written and directed many plays. Fortune Barokas writes articles in the Ladino language for the Ladino page of the newspaper ŞALOM and for the magazine El Amaneser. Also she sings to the Nes Sefarad Songs choir directed by İzzet Bana. She played numerous characters in her 37 years of stage life.



Filmography

The Club (Netflix)



Letterboxd Reviews

Reygadasfan ★★★

“...I was curious to see how Jewish culture in Turkey is depicted in Turkish language.

Without spoiling the ending - it is the strongest moment of the film. Just the way images of God as the Absolute are forbidden in Judaism we get a taste of this metaphysical experience in the last shot...”

Ademsenturk ★★★★★

“A film that tells beautifully how modern times break conservative religious traditions and how parents try to reflect their own defeats in the face of change to their children through a conservative Jewish family...”

ZeynepK16 ★★★★★

“...Moving camera, chaos, family; reminded me of Romanian new wave cinema...”



FAQ

• *How long did it take to complete the writing, preparation, shooting and post-production of the film?*

Sami: It's actually a story I've had in mind since 2012. Throughout these years, the story constantly changed form. However, in 2018, I started to work seriously on Susam as a short film, as my graduation project. At that time, I finished the first draft. Then with Susam, I was selected to !f Yapimlab. I had the chance to attend Zeynep Atakan's workshop for a year. After gaining valuable experience and knowledge, I was concerned a lot about how I could fund the film. My dear friend Ayca Aluçlu, whom I met at the workshop, started my journey as a producer and we started the funding process of the film.

The final versions of my script never satisfied me. At some point, I forgot the number of the drafts I had written. While dealing with scenario revisions and funding processes, we were selected for IKSU's Meetings on the Bridge Film Development Workshop. In that process, my dear friend Hilal Şenel, with whom we produced works at the university, joined the team as a producer. At the Meetings on the Bridge workshop, I was reinforced to discover what I want to reveal by telling this story. Right after that, we made our ministry application. When the ministry support came out in 2020, we were ready to complete the movie, but this time the pandemic process started.

We waited and waited patiently and cautiously, and finally, we started the preparation process around August 2020. After we set up our team, we completed

our shooting -including 1 day of reading rehearsal, 1 day of rehearsal at the venue, 1 day for the art department to remake the house and 1 day of shooting. Since we shot the movie in one shot, we only had color and sound editing. This process took about a month, working extensively.

• *Is it a real story or a total made-up?*

Sami: I don't think there is a film in the world that was produced entirely as fiction. Susam story is an alternative reality lived in the past rather than lived realities. The process of my bar-mitzvah ceremony was not very pleasant for me. Learning a new alphabet, a new language and performing it in front of people was making me nervous. I didn't put much effort into memorizing the prayers for the ceremony either. Over the years, this process has stuck with me.

Of course, there is also the case that this version of the short film Susam is very different from the one I first started with. When I started this story, my main concern was completely the character of Susam. His experiences, his tensions, his troubles. Then, in the process, it evolved into the problem at the point where I first met with my project consultant, Ali Vatansever, for the film: My father, fathers, and being a man in the Middle East. After the movie's main concern had settled, it was actually just to add salt and pepper to it.

• ***What are the main themes and the pressing issues of the film?***

Sami: In essence, I wanted to describe a father-son relationship and conflict. The roles and behavior of the father in Middle Eastern societies and our culture have always interested me. I was quite intrigued by an order where showing love and taking care of their children was a weakness. Although the short film captures a single location and a moment of approximately 17 minutes, when we look at the father's past in the film, we can understand that he did not give enough support for the bar-mitzvah ceremony. I hope it touches all of us, that we can all understand, regardless of the culture it comes from.

Aycan & Hilal: Added to the father-son relationship, we can see the pressure of society on the father, as well as the issue of a religious ritual that has turned into a matter of pride. These are some of the reasons why we hope everyone can find something for themselves regardless of their country or religion.

• ***Why does the whole film take place in one shot and one location?***

Sami: There is a closed door at the far end of the synagogues. After the prayer, people who want can go to that door and say their prayers and wishes -at least that's how I know. And by that door, sometimes, tiny lines occur. The number of people who come into contact with that door is usually 2 or 3. After each person completes their prayers, the next person puts their hands on that door and performs their prayer. This uninterrupted and respectful ritual was an important factor in my choice.

When I decided that the film would take place in this form in a single location, I believed that shooting as a one-shot would serve the film in the best way. In the film, there are some problems among the family and the main character is not there. For this reason, each member of the family actually lives their own journey in this story. The fact that each character's relationship with the door is uninterrupted and in order was one of the biggest reasons for me to use this method.

• ***What kind of hardships did one-shot bring about, and how did you deal with them?***

Sami: In a very short time -we had 2 days- you have to build a family with all its dynamics. It is not at all easy. Luckily, most of our actors and actresses worked with each other before, such as Feri (mother) and Fatih (father) or Forti (grandmother) and İzzet (grandfather). When they know each other, or better yet, if they worked together before, the synergy reveals more quickly.

Added to that, everything has to work together and should be on time. For instance, the camera should know where to look throughout the shot, it becomes a dance-like performance for the operator. Within the very limited period of time, however, you need a bit of luck as well. In my case, happily, I trusted my whole crew and it all worked out in the end.

Aycan & Hilal: We had a very limited budget and Sami had a specific house in his mind with very legitimate reasons. Because of the pandemic, people stopped renting their houses to film crews at that time and the ones who were renting were over our budget. Then we found the place in the film through our beloved friend and a

production supervisor Uğur. But it was a very old house in terms of art and it needed serious lighting, meaning, a lot of money which we did not have.

What we did was to risk the post-production and use its money + find more money for the production to make it as good as it can be and not leave people in peace until we find enough. And we did!

• *Is it the first short film from Turkey that deals with Judaism, made by a Jewish filmmaker?*

Aycan & Hilal: Unfortunately, yes, although we still hope to be wrong.

Even though we didn't start the project knowing that it was the "first of something", we like to state it now to put a light on the issue of lack of representation in the film industry. It also adds a sociological and archival value to the film.

• *How can we reach you?*

Through our emails would be the best.

