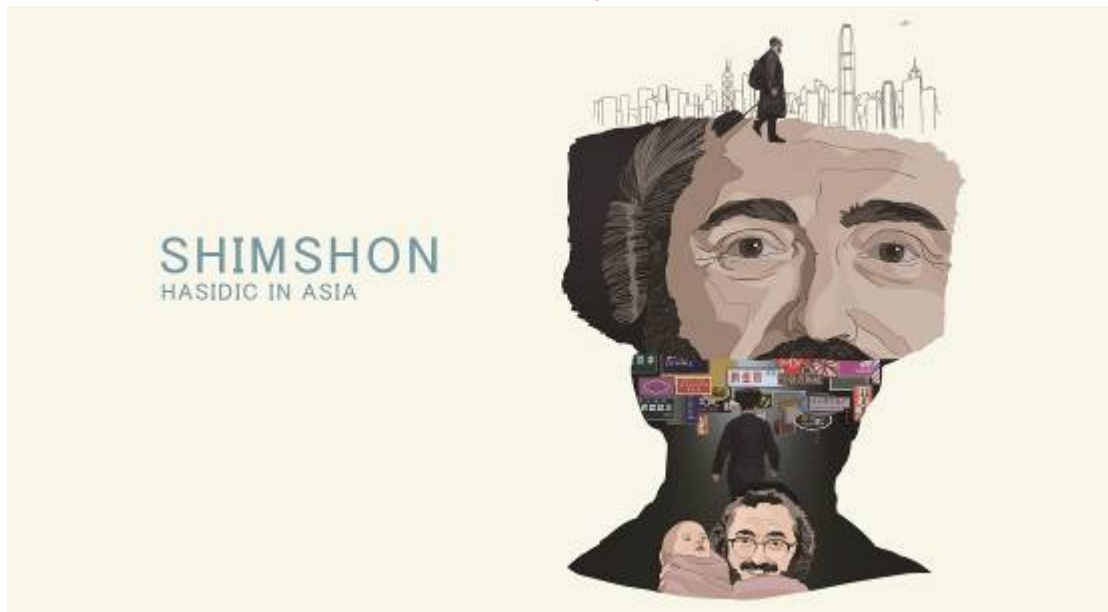


HAF 07 Shimshon, Hasidic in Asia



REGION: Hong Kong, Israel

GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME:

Documentary | Digital Format | English, Hebrew, Cantonese | 60mins

DIRECTOR:

Sadie GRANBERG

PRODUCER:

Shmuel JUNGER

HAF GOALS:

Funds, Co-producers, Sales agents, Pre-sales

BUDGET: US\$ 141,240

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

First Feature Director

ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

A divorced Hasidic rabbi, living alone in Hong Kong, attempts to find a Hasidic wife despite the odds while traveling the region practicing the age-old custom of circumcising Jewish babies.

SYNOPSIS

The Hasidim, an extremely strict Jewish sect, have managed to keep their way of living and style of dress alive for more than 300 years. Their traditions and over 600 rules date back 3,500 years.

Shimshon single-handedly follows these traditions while living in a tiny one-room apartment, 8,000km away from home.

These strict social codes call for understandings not shared by people in Hong Kong. Shimshon is not supposed to touch or look at women in the most crowded city in the world. There is only one restaurant where he can eat. While traveling, he often resorts to fruit and beer as a meal. Despite extraordinary challenges, living in Hong Kong means freedom and a livelihood: Shimshon provides Jewish families all over Asia with the ancient ritual of circumcision.

Shimshon's primary aspiration is to be happily married. Originally married at nineteen through an arranged marriage, he has now divorced twice and has grandchildren. Yet, he has not given up hope that he eventually will find a Hasidic wife and rejoin his social milieu. Nonetheless, the main difficulty he faces is the absence of Hasidic women in Hong Kong, and the lack of traditions for Hasidic dating itself.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Although I am not Jewish, I deeply relate to the feeling of being at home but simultaneously not at home, straddling several worlds but not truly belonging anywhere. As a Finnish-American kid speaking Chinese and growing up in Hong Kong, I relate to the feeling of being the only person living a particular experience of cultural conflict and integration. Even though Shimshon's life and culture and my own are separated by 300 years of tradition, I feel that telling this story is also a tiny bit my story.

The Hasidic Jewish community is notoriously private and this is where Shimshon is different. Allowing access to his life and story provides a vehicle for human connection and mutual understanding in a world that is increasingly showing an ugly resurfacing of anti-Semitism. What really surprises me is that what Shimshon is going through is akin to the ups and downs of the dating world of millennials today. On the face of things, this is not a paradigm-shifting documentary but offers a more subtle, relatable experience of human resilience, loneliness and the desire for deep connection and belonging as experienced through a Hasidic Jewish man living in Hong Kong.

DIRECTOR

Sadie GRANBERG

Sadie is a filmmaker born and bred in Hong Kong, and learning in Finland and London. After studying media, she returned to Hong Kong and threw herself into the industry. Her career path so far includes working as Director of Photography for Helmut Lang, Vice, and Louis Vuitton, and editing TVC's and videos for brands such as Anchor and SK-II/NatGeo. In the capacity as DOP, editor or director, she has worked on more than 100 videos, culminating in working as DOP for a documentary feature completed last year (2019) with over three million organic video views on content produced for YouTube.

PRODUCER

Shmuel JUNGER

Shmuel was born and raised in Israel and has traveled the world as a Jewish storyteller and entrepreneur. In his recent chapter as the Head of Jewish studies in the Jewish school of Hong Kong he started the journey for his first film project. Shmuel is the main connection and source of inspiration for this documentary, and the glue that holds both worlds together. He is the producer with all the connections and the ticket to getting access to shooting within a traditionally private context. Additionally, his Jewish expertise is integral to the cultural sensitivity of the project.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Pop-up Film Limited

Pop-up Film Limited is a boutique film and video production company founded by the director in 2016, providing planning, scripting, production and editing services.