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CANCELLED FACES, The Stars of a Korean-Israeli Global Project

by NA Won-jung / Mar 09, 2015

Official selection of the 2015 Berlin International Film Festival, *Cancelled Faces* stand out among the Korean films. Director Lior Shamriz who is from Israel is bases his works in Berlin. Shamriz received the support from Seoul Art Space Geumcheon and was able to make a Korea-Germany co-production film with Korean crew and actors. In this regard, the project is quite a rare case of a global film. *Cancelled Faces* takes the story of the great revolt of the Jews against the Roman Empire, and puts in a queer melodramatic twist with contemporary Korean youth as the protagonists.



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Actors KIM Won-mok, Director Lior Shamriz, Production Manager KIM Kyeong-koo, Actors LEE Je-yeon

You're from Israel and finished film studies in Berlin. How did you come to cast Korean actors and work with Korean staff?

Lior Shamriz: My mother is from Iraq and my father is from Iran. Ever since I was young, I had to get used to the uncomfortable. However, new environment also gives freedom to try something new. *Cancelled Faces* deals with the revolt in Jerusalem which was applied to contemporary times. In history, the Jewish people were able to lead a comfortable and rich lifestyles with the establishment of the Roman empire. However, through it they lost their culture. With globalization, we're facing the same kind of dilemma in our current day society. If I was to cinematize this story with people from a different background, I thought it would be more interesting. With the recent spotlight on the Korean film industry and pop culture, I had a lot of interest in the country. Also, the support from Seoul Art Space Geumcheon allowed me to work with Korean staff to make the film.

Did the actors and staff find it hard to work with a director who came from a different background?

Yena GIM: Lior and I are actually alumnus of the same film school in Berlin. While we were attending the school we didn't know each other, but through *Cancelled Faces* we were introduced by a mutual friend. The protagonist's mother, YE Soojeong, is actually my mother.

KIM Kyeong-koo: I majored in advertisement in university, but I always had a longing to make movies. When I saw a posting about the production of *Cancelled Faces* on an online film community, I decided to join as a production manager. I was there from organizing casting auditions to the end of the production. The apartment in the film is my place.

Was it hard for you to film in Korea?

Lior Shamriz: A friend of mine told me that I must meet Yena in Seoul. It felt like a prophesy. Other staff members were also introduced to me through acquaintances. We were gathered naturally so the staffing process wasn't difficult. Upon meeting Kyeong-koo, I knew right away that he would be perfect. I got the impression that I could trust him. He became responsible for getting permission to shoot on location instead of me. I'm not sure if it's his likeable demeanour, but he was able to do everything smoothly. I'm glad we were able to work together.

In *Cancelled Faces*, a queer couple gets into a scooter accident which leads them to a bizarre situation. With such dreamlike concept, it must have been hard to perform.

KIM Won-mok: The audition itself was quite extraordinary. I had to improvise and assume that I might get killed. My English isn't perfect and the director doesn't know any Korean. So I had to express everything through my eyes and my facial expressions without being attached to my lines. It was something I've never done before, so it was that much more special.

LEE Je-yeon: Acting in an impromptu drama was unique and interesting. The character I created was based on the jazz music the director sent to us. As there were no lines and just the basic bones of the story intact, every day was determined by the circumstances of that day. At first I was a little insecure, but through the reversals I was able to understand the character. After finishing *Cancelled Faces* I became more interested in focusing my career on films.

What do you think you've gained from *Cancelled Faces*? What kind of projects do you want to do in the future?

Lior Shamriz: *Cancelled Faces* can be considered as a film that's like a fairy tale. The process of making it was similar as well. In my opinion, at the most dangerous times in my life, I end up meeting great people. No matter what kind of encounter it may be, I think it's important to have an open mind. Then great things happen. Just like our film. I hope I'll have another chance to work with this group of people again. I'm sure we'll be able to go far together. By making this film in Korea, I was able to implement a unique energy into the film. I'm planning to work on my next film in Korea again. But this time, I'll go back and forth between Taipei and Seoul.

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