

SCRIPT WRITERS

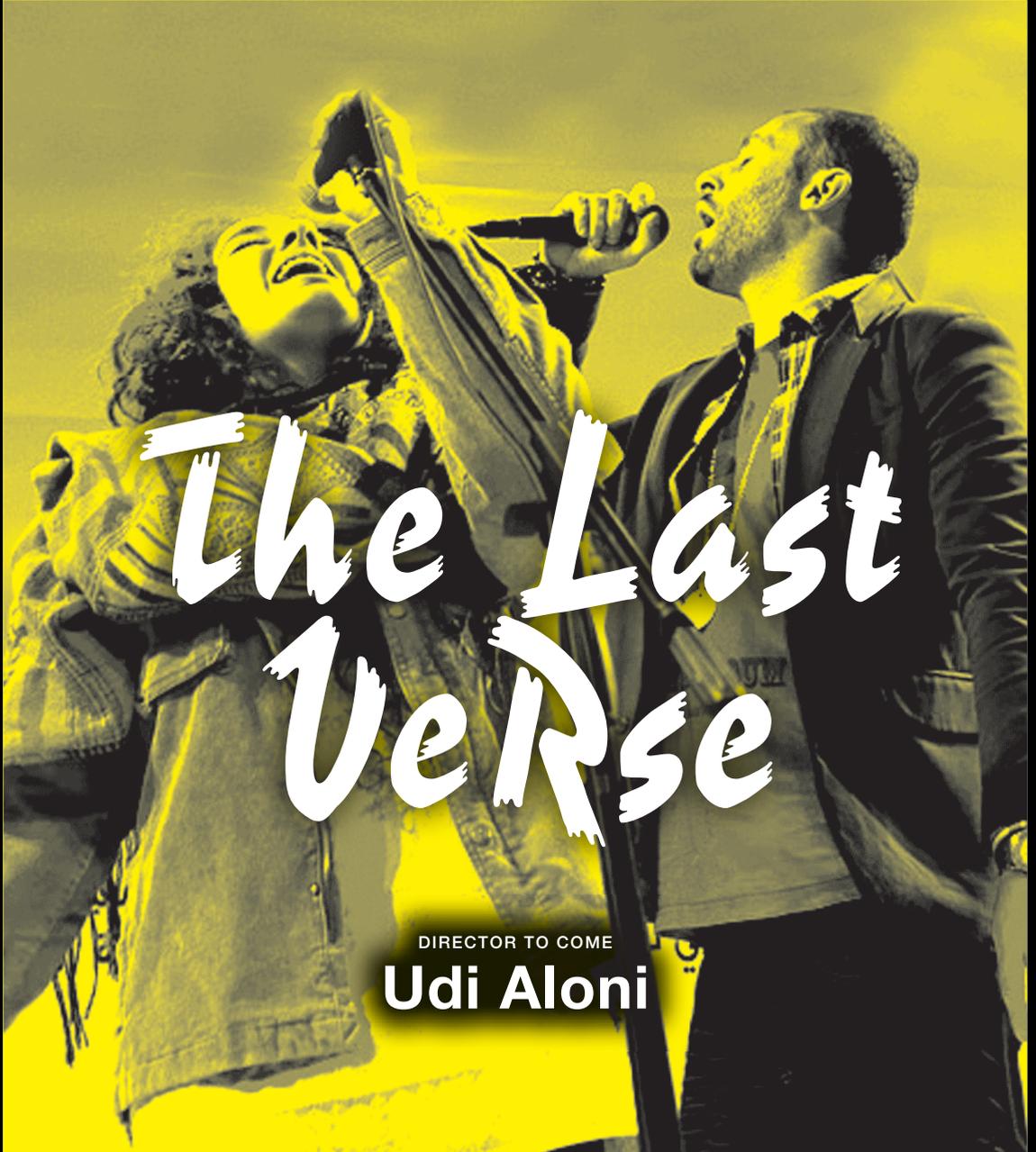
Tamer Nafar
Oren Moverman

PRODUCERS

David Silber
Lawrence Inglee
Jean-Charles Lévy
Stefan Arndt
Udi Aloni

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

James Schamus



The Last Verse

DIRECTOR TO COME

Udi Aloni

*"Not only did Tamer Nafar invent Arab hip-hop –
he also invented Arab-feminist hip-hop"*

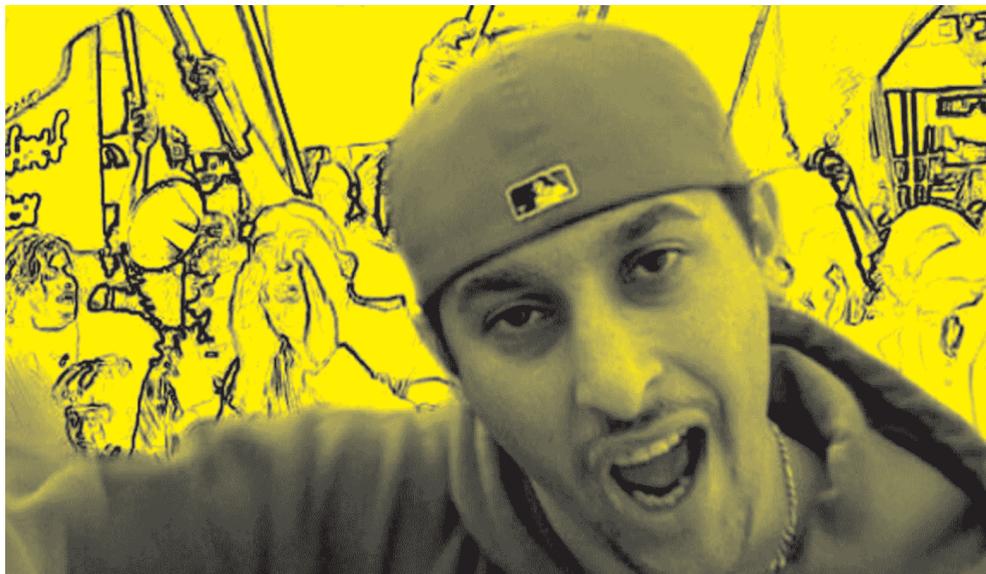
WWW.THELASTVERSE.COM

Tamer Nafar: His Ghetto and His Music

The Last Verse is based on the true life story of **Tamer Nafar**, who single-handedly created the Palestinian hip-hop scene from scratch. Tamer grew up in the crime-ridden 'hood of Lod, a cursed and impoverished Israeli city where poor Arabs and Jews live side-by-side. It's a place rife with violence, crime and drug-dealers, just twenty minutes from metropolitan Tel Aviv and right next to Ben Gurion airport – the only gateway to the State of Israel.

Tamer reinvented hip-hop in its purest form: rage without hate, social-political awareness without empty materialism, and large audiences without selling out. He imported the style of hip-hop into the Arab-Muslim ghetto and exported it back to the world with an Arabic flavor and a feminist message.

Today, millions of fans worldwide follow Tamer's rap group, DAM, which has released two albums and multiple music videos. Tamer serves as a role model for young Arabs across the globe – a generation searching for new meanings, both political and personal, in a world where the values of yesterday are quickly disappearing from right under their feet



UDI ALONI

DIRECTOR

Udi Aloni is an Israeli director and artist whose work frequently explores the interrelationships between art, theory, and activism. His films, including *Local Angel* (2002), *Forgiveness* (2006), *Kashmir: Journey to Freedom* (2009), and *Art/Violence* (2013), have been presented in the Berlinale and other major film festivals. His past awards include the Berlinale's CINEMA Fairbindet prize. Aloni's visual art has been presented in leading museums and galleries, including the Metropolitan in New York and the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. His most recent book is *What Does a Jew Want? On Binationalism and Other Specters* (Columbia University Press, 2011). In recent years, Aloni has mentored young actors from one of the harshest refugee camps in Palestine, helping them reach the world stage, where they have acted the main roles in films that received Oscar nominations (*Omar*) and prestigious Berlinale awards (*Art/Violence*). Aloni's work has been praised by the world's leading thinkers, among them Slavoj Žižek, Tony Kushner, and Naomi Klein.

"Udi Aloni provides us with a measure of the distance between our capacity for understanding and the terrors we choose instead. His art is trembling the underground, indeed. Boundless admiration." — Tony Kushner

"The closest thing to an intellectual orgasm." — Slavoj Žižek

"One of the top five political films of all time." — Jarecki's Choice, Sundance Channel on *Local Angel*



OREN MOVERMAN

CO-WRITER

Oren Moverman is a preeminent scriptwriter and director based in New York. His past films include *I'm Not There* (2007), *The Messenger* (2009), *Rampart* (2011), and *Time Out of Mind* (currently in production with Richard Gere). His screenplay for *The Messenger* received multiple nominations and awards, among them the Berlinale award for Best Screenplay and the Academy Award Nomination for Best Screenplay.

The Last Verse tells the tragic love story of two young Palestinian rap artists, Kareem and his girlfriend Manar. Together, and against all odds, they create a new genre of Arab-feminist hip-hop. While the Arab Spring took a violent path in other Middle Eastern countries, the young Palestinian citizens of Israel follow the idea that the next intifada should be a cultural one. Through the story of Kareem and Manar, we witness this invisible generation trying to redefine itself against both the external oppression of Israeli society and the internal pressure of their own conservative community.

Synopsis

Against the background of airplanes landing and departing, we see Kareem (Tamer Nafar), a 24-year-old Palestinian citizen of Israel, huge headphones on his ears, crossing a dangerous railway track into a poor, mixed town of both Arabs and Jews. He raps and rhymes to himself as he enters the ghetto where his childhood friends make their living selling drugs through "ATMs" – infamous holes in the walls of burned-out buildings which change money into drugs. After Kareem arrives safely at his home, we see a brutal police raid on one of the drug stations where his childhood buddy Talal works. As always, Talal and friends outsmart the police, and they run to Kareem's house to brag about their escape, only to find Kareem completely absorbed in a conversation with Manar – a wild, young female rap artist who acts as his conscience and alter-ego.

This is an everyday scene in the life of Palestinians growing up in the 'hood of Lod, where Kareem leads an aimless life between boring office work, warehouses, and drug dealers. He's raised by blue-collar, Arab-communist parents – professional musicians who are constantly disappointed by their son's life choices. After a car crash takes the life of his beloved father, Kareem is overcome with guilt. His mother, who was paralyzed in the car crash, has a spiritual re-awakening and becomes a Quranic healer.

The family tragedy throws Kareem deep into the world of hip-hop and into the arms of Manar. As his talent as a rap artist develops, so does his political consciousness about the world of crime and drugs in which he was raised. At first, Kareem and his rap group struggle to make ends meet while performing at small neighborhood gigs and birthday parties. When Kareem finds his way to Tel Aviv, he quickly becomes a star, but as soon as he takes a proud stand as a Palestinian, he finds himself in a violent confrontation with a group of talented but racist Jewish rappers who control the local hip-hop scene.

The more Kareem and Manar manage to escape the crime of their 'hood, the



more they find themselves struggling against the larger oppression of both the Israeli government and their own traditional Islamic society. After the Israeli police demolish Talal's home, Talal's drugs are destroyed and he is murdered by drug lords whom he can't repay. The impossibility of life in the 'hood becomes the inspiration for the enraged hip-hop songs that take us through the film.

Before a big concert in Lod, Manar's uncles kidnap Kareem and threaten to harm their niece if she performs publicly, because they consider a female on stage to be a disgrace to the family's honor. Whereas Manar fears neither the Israeli secret service nor her own conservative family, Kareem decides that he doesn't want to put his girlfriend or his musical career at risk, and he refuses to let her go on stage with him. In order to assert her independence, Manar goes off and finds her own way to perform. On the eve of the big performance in Lod, Kareem's mother shows up at the concert and encourages him to invite Manar to sing, telling him she's got a bad feeling. At the same time, Manar's family is searching for Manar in order to punish her for disgracing them. As Manar's uncles climb the stairs to her apartment, Kareem sends Manar a text message: "There's a ton of people here and an extra mic for you..."

**DAVID SILBER**

PRODUCER (ISRAEL)

The producer of *Forgiveness* (2006), *Beaufort* (2007), and *Lebanon* (2009), among other leading Israeli films. His past awards and nominations include the Venice Golden Lion award and an Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign Language Film.

**LAWRENCE INGLEE**

PRODUCER (USA)

One of *Variety's* "10 producers to watch." Inglee's films include *The Messenger* (2009), *Rampart* (2011), and the upcoming *Time Out of Mind* with Richard Gere. He won both the AFI Movie of the Year and the Independent Spirit Award for Best First Feature for *The Messenger*.

**JEAN-CHARLES LÉVY**

PRODUCER (FRANCE)

French producer whose many films include *The Tall Man* (2012), *Love Punch* (2013), and *Race* (in production).

**STEFAN ARNDT**

PRODUCER (GERMANY)

The founder of X Filme and producer of multiple award-winning films, among them *Run Lola Run* (1998), *The White Ribbon* (2009), *Cloud Atlas* (2012), and *Amour* (2012). His many awards and nominations include a European Film Award and a Best Motion Picture nomination at the Academy Awards for *Amour*.

**JAMES SCHAMUS**

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER (USA)

One of the most preeminent producers and scriptwriters in the USA. His many films include *The Ice Storm* (1997), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), *Hulk* (2003), and *Brokeback Mountain* (2005). He has numerous awards and nominations, among them three Academy Award nominations, the Best Screenplay award at Cannes, and a Writers Guild of America award.

Director's Vision

By Udi Aloni

Over a decade ago, I moved from visual arts to making documentary and fiction films that expose the relationship between art, theory and activism, mostly in relation to the complexity of the Middle East. Perhaps in order to escape the mainstream world of advertising, where I had led a successful career (eventually selling my company to a big player), my previous films had an esoteric flavor that captured a very elite audience but didn't reach the wider public. While using my skills behind the scenes to help others capture larger audiences, I realized that the story of my good friend, Tamer Nafar, is an excellent site where artistic values can reach a wide audience without sacrificing either. It's also a perfect reflection of universal conflicts in local problems.

With the understanding that we have an incredibly important and rare story in our hands, Tamer and I introduced the idea for a film to the preeminent scriptwriter Oren Moverman. Impressed by Tamer and his authenticity, Oren enthusiastically joined our team as co-writer. The well-crafted script by Tamer and Oren led to the formation of a prestigious production team that includes James Schamus, Stefan Arndt, Lawrence Inglee, and David Silber. No director could ask for a better team of producers for the realization of his vision.

Words on a page cannot express the power and creativity of Tamer's original musical score—a captivating mix of hip-hop beats and traditional Arabic melodies—which runs throughout the film. Tamer's charisma, apparent to all who see him perform on stage and in his music videos, left us with no doubt that he will capture audiences by acting in the lead role. The film's setting is the mixed Palestinian-Jewish ghetto of Lod, with its tragic character. The camerawork will reveal the tension between the beauty of the music and the hard-core realism and rhythm of Lod's ghetto. With this gritty musical and aesthetic backdrop, the mood of the film will be reminiscent of a hybrid between *8 Mile* and *Ghost Dog*.

Last but not least, I believe that the deep friendship between Tamer and me—between a Palestinian Arab and an Israeli Jew—is much more than a dialogue. It is a collaboration aimed at creating a new language for art and freedom in the Middle East – a language that could echo in the hearts of all.

"Ask young rappers in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip whom they look up to and they will name Nafar – and then start shouting his rhymes."

– Los Angeles Times

"...the pioneers of Arab hip-hop" – MTV Iggy

"...the first-ever Palestinian rappers... the energy around DAM has the excitement of artists just finding their footing and the seasoned wisdom of players who invented a whole new game." – XXL

"Leading the movement" – Time Magazine

"DAM represents what hip hop was started for – to be a voice for the voiceless" – Invincible, Israeli Emcee



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www.thelastverse.com

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info@thelastverse.com

