

THE INFIDEL

STARRING
OMID DJALILI & RICHARD SCHIFF
WRITTEN BY DAVID BADDIEL
DIRECTED BY JOSH APPIGNANESI

A COMEDY OF
EPIC ETHNIC
PROPORTIONS



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SLINGSHOT AND OMBADSMAN PRESENT
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE SALT COMPANY
A SLINGSHOT/MET FILM/OMBADSMAN PRODUCTION

THE INFIDEL

CAST	OMID DJALILI, RICHARD SCHIFF, ARCHIE PANJABI, IGAL NAOR, AMIT SHAH
ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS	JEREMY AMIAS, SHAHIN SHOBHANI, JONATHAN MAGID
LINE PRODUCER	CINDY IRVING
CASTING DIRECTOR	JULIE HARKIN CDG
MAKE UP & HAIR DESIGN	SARITA ALLISON
COSTUME DESIGNER	MARIANNE AGERTOFT
ORIGINAL SONGS BY	DAVID GAVURIN
MUSIC	ERRAN BARON COHEN
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	ERIK REHL
EDITOR	KIM GASTER
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	NATASHA BRAIER
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS	OMID DJALILI, CAVAN ASH, LUKE MONTAGU
PRODUCERS	STEWART LE MARECHAL, UZMA HASAN, DAVID BADDIEL
PRODUCED BY	ARVIND ETHAN DAVID
WRITTEN BY	DAVID BADDIEL
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introduction

An original screenplay by **David Baddiel** and directed by **Josh Appignanesi** (*Song of Songs, Ex Memoria*), ***The Infidel*** is a timely, irreverent, comedy centred on Mahmud Nasir, a loving husband, doting father, and something of a 'relaxed' Muslim who discovers he's adopted and Jewish.

Baddiel wrote the script for British-Iranian actor and comedian **Omid Djalili** (*The Mummy, Gladiator* and the BBC's *The Omid Djalili Show*) who plays our culturally confused hero, Mahmud.

David Baddiel, also a former stand-up comedian, is best known for his television shows *The Mary Whitehouse Experience* and *Fantasy Football League*. He is also a successful novelist with best-selling titles including *Time for Bed*, *Whatever Love Means* and *The Secret Purposes* and a regular columnist for *Esquire*, *Psychologies* and *The Times*. ***The Infidel*** is his first feature.

Omid Djalili's comedy career spans two decades, performing stand-up across the globe. Referring to himself as the "perfect ethnic everyman bit-part specialist", Djalili has become a familiar face in big budget Hollywood.

The Infidel also stars Emmy award winner **Richard Schiff** (*The West Wing's "Toby", I Am Sam*) playing Jewish cabbie Lenny, **Igal Naor** (*Greenzone, Munich, Rendition*, Saddam Hussein in HBO's *House of Saddam*) as fanatical Muslim cleric Arshad Al-Masri and Emmy® award winner **Archie Panjabi** (*The Good Wife's "Kalinda", A Mighty Heart, The Constant Gardener*,) as Saamiya, Mahmud's long-suffering wife. The cast includes cameos from **Matt Lucas** (*Little Britain*), **David Schneider** (*Alan Partridge*), **Miranda Hart** from hit comedy *Miranda* and **Paul Kaye** (actor and *Dennis Pennis* creator).

The team behind ***The Infidel*** - those who shaped the story and made the film - are from Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Atheist, Buddhist and Baha'i backgrounds. Producers Arvind Ethan David (CEO and Producer, *Slingshot*) and Uzma Hasan (Development Producer, *Slingshot*) worked closely with writer David Baddiel since he first conceived the idea for ***The Infidel*** making sure that it celebrates religious diversity whilst deriding the 'Fatwa Fanatics' that have so often hijacked the headlines.



tagline

A comedy of ethnic proportions

short synopsis

Meet MAHMUD NASIR (**Omid Djalili**), loving husband, doting father and something of a “relaxed” Muslim.

Does the “F” word occasionally pass his lips? It’s hardly worth mentioning. Does he say his prayers five times a day? Of course! Well, usually... Does he fast every day of Ramadan? Who’s counting anyway?

He may not be the most observant, but in his heart he is as Muslim as it gets. But after his mother’s death a discovery turns Mahmud’s world upside down. He finds his birth certificate which reveals that not only was he adopted at birth...but he’s Jewish, and his real name is Solly Shimshillewitz!

As Mahmud tumbles headlong into a full scale identity crisis, the only person he can turn to is LENNY (**Richard Schiff**), a drunken Jewish cabbie who agrees to give him lessons in Jewishness, which start with how to dance like Topol. Oy vey.



long synopsis

Mahmud Nasir (**Omid Djalili**) lives a charmed life. He has a beautiful wife, two loving children and he owns a successful mini cab business. He might be somewhat of a 'relaxed' Muslim but he knows how devoted he is inside. That is, until a chance discovery changes his comfortable life forever....

Mahmud's son Rashid (**Amit Shah**) is getting married and this should be a time for rejoicing but his fiancée Uzma (**Soraya Radford**) has a new stepfather - the fanatical Muslim cleric Arshad Al-Masri (**Igal Naor**). If Arshad doesn't think the Nasirs are 'proper Muslims' he won't allow Uzma to marry Rashid. But why would Mahmud be worried? He knows he is a 'proper Muslim' and has no qualms about acting devout in front of Arshad. But just as he is allaying Rashid's fears, he finds an adoption certificate in his dead mother's papers...

Mahmud rushes to the local registry office where the officious Mrs Keyes (**Miranda Hart**) confirms that he was adopted but refuses to give him his birth name. After tussling and negotiating with her, he is stunned to find out that his birth name is Solly Shimshillewitz... and that he was born Jewish!



Shaken up by the discovery, Mahmud wanders out into the bustling colourful streets of East London trying to make sense of what he has just found out. Amidst the cacophony of sounds and images, he hears the soothing Adhaan (Muslim call to prayer) from the local mosque. As he approaches the mosque, a crowd of Hassidic Jews rush past him - Mahmud sees that they all look exactly like him. At the mosque, Mahmud immediately bows down in prayer but it isn't long before he falls asleep...

Rudely awakened in the morning and desperate to speak to someone, Mahmud tries to confide in Imam Fahad (**Ravin Ganatra**) but only succeeds in convincing him that he's gay.

Meanwhile, Mahmud's wife Saamiya (**Archie Panjabi**) is starting to worry; she confides to her friend Muna (**Mina Anwar**) that Mahmud didn't come home last night and her suspicions are aroused even further when he walks in and goes straight to the shower.

Returning to clear his mother's house, Mahmud runs into Lenny (**Richard Schiff**), the Jewish black cab driver who lives across the road. Lenny has deliberately parked his taxi to obstruct Mahmud. Furious and frustrated, Mahmud storms across the road to confront him and ends up blurting out his secret. Not taking him seriously at first,



Lenny eventually remembers that an Izzy Shimshillewitz used to live nearby, could this be a relation of Mahmud's?



Mahmud tracks down Izzy to a Jewish old age home but discovers that he is very ill and under the supervision of a rather zealous Rabbi (**Matt Lucas**): who refuses to let him in. The Rabbi tells Mahmud he can't see his father - an observant Jew - in his



current Muslim state, he must come back once he has learnt more about what it is to be a Jew...

There is only one place that Mahmud can go to discover everything about being Jewish – back to Lenny's. So Mahmud begins living a double life – extremely Muslim at home to keep his son happy and learning how to be Jewish from Lenny at the same time.

Lenny invites Mahmud to a bar-mitzvah; on his way he meets Rashid at the Justice for Palestine rally where Uzma's new step-father Arshad will be speaking. Dressed in a suit, Mahmud looks like any other Muslim supporter, until he takes off his kufi and reveals a yarmulke he's wearing underneath. Panicking at all the attention he's getting, Mahmud goes to extreme measures, throwing the yarmulke on the ground and setting it on fire, not realising this is all being filmed by Arshad's henchmen.

The bar-mitzvah proves to be equally stressful when Lenny traps him into telling a classic bar-mitzvah story –which Mahmud manages to bluff his way through and get a big laugh. Being a Muslim-Jew doesn't seem so bad after all...

At home, Saamiya is devastated at the thought that Mahmud is having an affair and finally confronts him. Instead of coming clean when she accuses him, he lies: saying that he's afraid of meeting Arshad so has been taking extra classes at the mosque.

Mahmud has been spending so much time with Lenny, he thinks he must know everything there is to know about being Jewish – time to try again to see Izzy Shimshillewitz but the Rabbi quickly shows him that everything he has learnt is just not enough. Frustrated at not being able to see his ailing father, Mahmud has a massive argument with Lenny who throws him out of his cab. Maybe he should finally tell his family the truth?

Just as he's decided to do just that and marches into the house he realises he's forgotten about his tea time guest: Arshad Al-Masri. Fudging polite conversation, it all seems to be going well for Uzma and Rashid's marriage until the doorbell rings.

Two policemen are outside to arrest Mahmud for Inciting Religious Hatred when he burned the yarmulke: the footage had made it onto YouTube thanks to Arshad's henchmen... As he's taken outside, there are two mobs vying for Mahmud's blood – one Muslim, one Jewish. Pushed to the end of his tether, he finally screams out the truth – "I'm Jewish". Everyone is shocked, his family most of all, and Arshad pulls Uzma out of the house, much to Rashid's devastation.



The revelation may have saved Mahmud from arrest but now he has to face everyone's reactions. His family are angry that he has lied to them, his work colleagues are embarrassed, and he has even had some extremists put dog poo through his front door. It seems like his life is falling apart. Mahmud makes one last attempt to see Izzy Shimshillewitz, only to find that all his effort have been for nothing – Izzy has died. This is Mahmud's lowest ebb; he seems to have lost everything...until a chance video on the internet sparks a plan...

He tells Rashid he is going to take Arshad on at an upcoming lecture. Rashid is convinced that Arshad's knowledge of the Qu'ran will make Mahmud look a fool. He's not wrong at first but as they talk, the tide starts to turn as Mahmud meets Arshad's firebrand zeal with messages of peace and reconciliation from the Qu'ran and the Torah. And then his coup de grace: Mahmud cues up a video – revealing a younger Arshad, when he was druggie pop singer Gary Page. Arshad has been lying all along about who he is! The audience is shocked and as the lights come up, Arshad is nowhere to be seen.

Mahmud has found his identity and most importantly he fought hard to win his family back. Now that Arshad is out of the way, Rashid and Uzma's wedding goes ahead in a colourful finale.



cast and crew profiles

David Baddiel
Writer



*"I wrote **The Infidel** for three reasons..."*

- 1. I've always been a fan of life-swap comedy (Big, Trading Places etc)*
- 2. I think that people are terrified about race and religion, especially issues surrounding Muslims and Jews, and when people are terrified, what they really should do is laugh, and...*
- 3. I love Omid Djalili and his big funny face. I'm hoping that people recognise that underneath the comedy, the message of the film is one of mutual tolerance: if not, I'm hoping to find a new identity."*

David is a comedian, novelist, columnist and screenwriter. He first found fame in the UK in the early '90s, for the BBC radio and TV series, *The Mary Whitehouse Experience*. Since then his TV shows have included *Newman and Baddiel in Pieces*, *Fantasy Football League* and *Baddiel and Skinner*



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With Rob Newman, in 1993, he became the first comedian to play Wembley Arena. With Frank Skinner and The Lightning Seeds, he had a three-time No. 1 Single with the song, *Three Lions*. He has written three novels, *Time for Bed*, *Whatever Love Means* and *The Secret Purposes*. Most recently, he created and hosted a Radio 4 comedy discussion programme, *Heresy*, and in November 2007, BBC1 screened his documentary, *Baddiel and The Missing Nazi Billions*. David regularly writes for *The Times*, *Esquire* and *Psychologies* magazine.

Josh Appignanesi
Director



*"I originally became involved as a script editor and fell in love with the boldness of David's story. The idea of using a high-concept identity-swap comedy to address one of the hottest topics of our time was something I couldn't pass up. So, together with Omid, we created this kind of Muslim Homer Simpson: an everyman who happens to be a Muslim who happens to be a Jew. **The Infidel's** full of synergies - of different identities, styles, and filmmaking approaches. I think those collisions and collusions have made it something unique."*

Josh's debut feature *Song of Songs* starred Natalie Press (*My Summer of Love*, *Red Road*). International festival success included a special commendation at the Edinburgh Film Festival. Distributed by Soda Pictures, it was received with critical acclaim in the UK press.

*"It's a cinematic milestone... it has a challenging, unashamedly intellectual rigour to it. There's a beguiling central performance from Natalie Press. *Song of Songs* confirms her as a star. Appignanesi writes and directs with impressive intelligence, explaining little but building tension*



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and layers of extreme emotion using microscopically intense, handheld camera...In both style and content, the film reveals a distinctive and bold new voice in British cinema."

Jason Solomons, THE OBSERVER

"Ambitious and mysterious... The film offers some powerful scenes, and strong performances from Press and Chalfen... Appignanesi is a talent to watch."

Dave Calhoun, TIME OUT

Previous works include several award-winning short films such as BBC Talent winner *Nine ½ Minutes* starring David Tennant (*Doctor Who*), and Wellcome Trust funded, BIFA-nominated *Ex Memoria* with Sara Kestelman. Josh also founded a post-production company which edited Emmy and BAFTA-award winning political documentaries.

cast

Omid Djalili
Mahmud Nasir



"Mahmud is a second generation Pakistani Muslim. He's fat, he likes his football. He's someone who's very masculine and very London and very much a bloke, but he happens to be a Pakistani Muslim though he's not particularly devout or well versed. He feels as British as everyone else but he just happens to have a specific background but then you find out that this background is not hereditary."

Omid is a multi award winning comedian and actor whose international career spans across TV, feature films and the stage.

His hugely popular series for BBC1, *The Omid Djalili Show* has aired its second series with viewing figures hitting a high of 3.1m and his most recent live national tour was a critically acclaimed sell out success. Omid's feature film roles include *The Mummy*, *Gladiator*, *Casanova* and *Grow Your Own*. His most memorable TV role was co-starring opposite Whoopi Goldberg in her sitcom *Whoopi*.



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Omid became an Edinburgh Festival favourite in the early nineties with a one-man theatre piece and a string of sell-out comedy shows including *Short Fat Kebab Shop Owner's Son*, *Arab & The Jew*, *The Iranian Ceilidh* with Kamal Mazlumi and the critically acclaimed *Behind Enemy Lines* in 2002 which received six 5-star reviews.

In 2005, he performed his most successful show, *No Agenda*, with record breaking sales on the Fringe totalling 16,500; this show then transferred to a sell-out nationwide 40 date tour, including 2 shows at the London Palladium in 2006. He has also recorded an HBO special in New York, the first British comic to do so since Eddie Izzard.

He has performed across the globe from Monte Carlo to Qatar for the Emir where he shared a stage with Bill Clinton.

Richard Schiff
Lenny



"Lenny's not quite as good looking as I am. He's also shorter and has a bigger belly but he's a London black cabbie who happens to be a yank."

Primetime Emmy award winning Richard Schiff is best known for his role as the acerbic Toby Ziegler in NBC's *The West Wing*. He has been nominated for SAG awards 6 times for his role, winning twice.

His incredible body of feature film work includes Taylor Hackford's Oscar winning *Ray*, alongside Sean Penn in *I Am Sam*, as well as Hollywood blockbusters such as *Deep Impact* and *Lost World: Jurassic Park*.



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Archie Panjabi
Saamiya Nasir



"She absolutely adores her husband, adores her family and like many Asian women she's a culture schizophrenic and comes in and out of her culture. She knows how to be a modern woman, taking care of herself and she also knows how to be a good wife, looking after her family and dressing traditionally when she needs to. This is kind of characteristic of a lot of Asian women born and bred in this country."

Critically acclaimed actress Archie Panjabi divides her time between the UK and US. She won the Shooting Star Award at the Berlin International Film Festival and the Best Actress Award at the Reims Festival for her role in *Yasmin*. She also won the Chopard Trophy at Cannes for her role in *A Mighty Heart* starring opposite Angelina Jolie. Most recently Archie was awarded an Emmy® for her role as *Kalinda Sharma* in the hit US drama *The Good Wife*.

She has worked with an eclectic array of directors including Fernando Meirelles on *The Constant Gardener*, Gurinder Chadha on *Bend It Like Beckham*, Michael Winterbottom on *A Mighty Heart* and as part of an ensemble cast on the multi award winning box office smash *East Is East*.

Igal Naor
Arshad Al-Masri



"I think Arshad is an artist and the only thing an artist needs is an audience. He needs the admiration of people around him. He isn't really judging what he's doing or why."

Igal Naor's 20 year career as an actor started in Israeli theatre and has led him across the Atlantic to work with directors such as Paul Greengrass on his WMD thriller *Greenzone*, Steven Spielberg in *Munich* and opposite Meryl Streep in *Rendition*.

In an acclaimed performance, Naor portrayed Saddam Hussein in HBO's *House of Saddam* for which he won a Golden Nymph for Outstanding Actor in a Mini-Series.



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Amit Shah
Rashid Nasir



"Rashid is Mahmud's son. He's obviously been brought up by very liberal parents but being a Muslim is important to him. He's more of a religious person than his father and that's an important part of his identity. At the same time, he's a young man about to get married."

Amit graduated from LAMDA early to make his West End debut in Andrew Lloyd Webber's hit musical *Bombay Dreams*. As part of the National Theatre's company for the next two years, he starred in productions including *The Man of Mode* and *The Alchemist* for which he was nominated for The Ian Charleson Award. He also appeared in Nina Raine's award winning *Shades* at the Royal Court and Dominic Cook's *Arabian Nights* for the Royal Shakespeare Company. Amit was selected as one of 50 best British actors in The Observer.

Recent TV appearances include the lead in Jeanette Winterson's children's drama *Ingenious, The Palace* and *Honest*. Film appearances include *Like Minds* and alongside Jimi Mistry and Shabana Azmi in Gurinder Chadha's *It's A Wonderful Afterlife*.

Mina Anwar
Muna

"She's Saamiya's friend so they go training together, they go swimming, they do lots of things. Muna is a big gossip. She's obviously married to a Muslim man and obviously adheres to the religious aspect of what that involves, wearing a burkha but to all intents and purposes she'd be reading Heat magazine as well as the Qu'ran."

Mina's career spans a variety of both comedy and drama projects. Most recently she was seen in the children's television show *The Sarah Jane Adventures* and *The Invisibles* but is perhaps best known for her role as PC Maggie Habib in Ben Elton's classic comedy *The Thin Blue Line*. A trained mezzo-soprano, she has also starred in several long running series such as *The Bill*, *Coronation*



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Street and No Angels.

Soraya Radford
Uzma

“Uzma’s a traditional Muslim daughter but she’s also got an independent streak. She’s quite a strong woman, and knows what she wants but I think she knows almost how hard it can be to face up to the men round her so in a way she’s learning how to manipulate people, men, to get what she wants. She is a bit powerless when it comes to Arshad calling off the wedding and that’s very frustrating for her.”

Soraya has recently graduated from the Drama Centre, London and ***The Infidel*** is her first feature.

Miranda Hart
Mrs. Keyes

Miranda is a comedy writer and performer. She has appeared in Jack Dee’s *Lead Balloon Absolutely Fabulous*, *Nighty Night*, *Smack the Pony* and sci-fi sitcom *Hyperdrive* for which she was nominated for a British Comedy Award. Her critically acclaimed sitcom *Miranda*, which she both wrote and starred in, has just finished its first series on BBC2.

Matt Lucas
Rabbi

Matt, together with his comedy partner David Walliams, created and starred in multi award winning smash hit series *Little Britain*. The three series have won over 26 awards including BAFTAs, Emmys and British Comedy Awards. *Little Britain Live* was one of the world’s largest comedy tours ever and ran for over 2 years in the UK and Australia. Following on from making *Little Britain USA* for HBO, Matt went on to star in Tim Burton’s *Alice in Wonderland* as Tweedledum/Tweedledee.

Paul Kaye
Policeman

Paul Kaye is a comedian and actor most well known for his alter ego Dennis Pennis, a shock interviewer on *The Sunday Show*. His film roles have included *Blackball* and mockumentary *It’s All Gong Pete Tong* which won him the Film Discovery Jury Award at the 2005 US Comedy Arts Festival.

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Natasha Braier
Director of Photography

Natasha is multi award winning cinematographer who has worked with an impressive range of directors including Alexis Dos Santos on *Glue* for which she won Best Cinematography in the New York's Latin ACE Awards, Shane Meadows on *Somers Town* and Lucia Puenzo on *XXY* for which she was nominated for Best Cinematography in both the Argentinean Critics Association Awards and Argentinean Film Academy Awards.

She has most recently worked on Claudia Llosa Wanda's Golden Bear winner and Oscar nominated *The Milk of Sorrow* and has a prolific background in both short films and commercials. In 2007 she was awarded the New Talent Award by Women in Film and Television.

Arvind Ethan David
Producer

Arvind is head producer and CEO at Slingshot, the next generation film company which he co-founded in 2005. Arvind leads both business and creative strategy, and has served as a producer on all of the company's films to date – *Sugarhouse*, *French Film*, *Faintheart*, *Tormented* and ***The Infidel***.

Immediately prior to Slingshot, Arvind served as Commercial Advisor to Headline Pictures, the production company set up by Mark Shivas, Stewart Mackinnon and Kevin Hood. Between 2003 and 2004, Arvind was Interim Managing Director of Ruby Films, working to Oscar-nominated producer Alison Owen. In 1999 he founded and ran hahabonk, one of the UK's early internet entertainment companies producing more than 100 short animated films and interactive games for cable television and broadband internet, in the course helping to launch the careers of such comedians as Jimmy Carr, Mackenzie Crook and The Hollow Men.

In addition to his career as producer and entrepreneur, Arvind is also a qualified solicitor, and an occasional writer of prose and plays; his stage-show *Dirk*, based on the Douglas Adams character, won three prizes in the 2007 LA Weekly Theatre Awards.

Uzma Hasan

Uzma is Development Producer at Slingshot where she



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Producer

works across project selection, development and packaging on all of the company's films and most recently was Associate Producer on Slingshot's latest feature *Tormented*. *The Infidel* is her first feature as Producer.

Uzma sits on the selection committees for Mira Nair's MAISHA Labs and the British Independent Film Awards. She is the London Chapter Head of Harvardwood, the official network of Harvard alumni in the entertainment and media industries.

Prior to joining Slingshot, Uzma was producing music promos and commercials. Whilst in New York, she supported the Executive Producer and Special Events team at the 2004 Tribeca Film Festival and worked with Focus Features and Mirabai Films on the post production of Mira Nair's *Vanity Fair*. Before moving into film, Uzma was a public relations consultant to international corporations such as NEC and Verizon and helped launch mCubed Magazine in the US, an arts and cultural magazine aimed at young Muslim professionals.

She graduated from the University of Wales, Cardiff with a First in English Literature and went on to study Film and Literature at Harvard University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

Stewart Le Marechal
Producer

Stewart is a BAFTA winning producer at Met Film. His first feature as producer, *French Film*, was released in May '09. *Little Ashes* co-produced by Stewart and directed by Paul Morrison was also released in May '09 simultaneously in the USA, UK and Spain and feature documentary *Heavy Load*, which Stewart also co-produced was released in theatres in October '08 and screened on the BBC in Feb '09. Prior to that he co-produced the feature documentary, *Deep Water*, for Pathé, FilmFour and the UKFC. Stewart was the associate producer on Paul Morrison's *Wondrous Oblivion*.

Stewart is developing a slate of features including *Foxglove* written by brother and sister team, Kate and Ornette Spenceley which is being financed and developed through



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Film London's *Microwave* scheme and *The Walk* written by Jonathan Pett & Fiorella Ruas.

He is an experienced producer and executive producer of short films which include the BAFTA winning *September* by Esther May Campbell and award winning *The Last Client*, *Circles*, *Swindles & Slim* and *Auto da Fe*, which have all been screened on the international film circuit. Stewart is a member of the ACE producers network and BAFTA. In addition he is a board director of Hi8us South, a company that gives young people the opportunity to learn and express themselves through the creation of innovative participatory media.

Erik Rehl
Production Designer

Erik has already collaborated with director Josh Appignanesi on a variety of projects including *Song of Songs*, *Nine ½ Minutes* and *Ex Memoria*.

He began his career as art director on TV projects *The Thieving Headmistress* and *To Kill a Burglar: The Tony Martin Story* before designing the Richard Jobson directed *The Purifiers*. Other projects include Eran Creevy's critically acclaimed thriller *Shifty*, the TV documentary crime drama *The Antique Rogue Show* and the documentary drama *When Boris Met Dave*, about the early lives of Boris Johnson and David Cameron.

Marianne Agertoft
Costume Designer

Marianne has worked on a diverse range of feature projects as costume designer including rock mockumentary *Brothers of the Head*, period drama *Villa Des Roses* starring Julie Delpy, Paul Andrew Williams' *The Cottage* and the eagerly awaited thriller *Cherry Tree Lane*.

Her career started as stylist on high end commercials and supervisor on features and TV such as Jonathan Glazer's *Sexy Beast*, *The Reckoning* with Paul Bettany and Willem Dafoe, *Dr Zhivago* with Keira Knightley and Ray Winstone's *Sweeny Todd*.

Erran Baron Cohen
Composer

Erran is a founding member of "world fusion beat scientists" Zohar whose 2001 album one.three.seven was released worldwide in 2001 to critical acclaim. His production and



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writing credits include collaborations with Grammy award winning producer Narada Michael Walden and legendary Buddha Bar DJ Claude Challe.

Erran was awarded the ASCAP award in 2007 for his work on his brother Sacha's film *Borat*. He also composed the soundtrack for *Da Ali G Show* and *Brüno* as well as creating the theme music for the popular CBBC wildlife television show *Serious Jungle*.

In 2008, Cohen released an album entitled *Songs in the Key of Hanukkah* collaborating with Yasmin Levy, Jules Brookes and Y-Love amongst others and his work on *The Infidel* includes the creation of an original song for the end credits alongside David Baddiel.

Kim Gaster
Editor

As editor, Kim has worked on Eran Creevy's critically acclaimed thriller *Shifty* and on documentary *Love Story* about the life and times of rock icon Arthur Lee.

Amongst his work as Assistant and Associate Editor is Roger Michell's *The Mother*, *Enduring Love*, *Venus*, Dominic Savage's *Love + Hate*, *Goal III* and the television biographical drama of Winston Churchill's life and career at the end of World War II – *Into the Storm*.

q&a interview

from script to screen

The premise of *The Infidel*, a Muslim finding out he was adopted and actually born Jewish, came from the pen of writer/comedian David Baddiel.

David Baddiel: "I don't know whether I had the idea and went to see Omid's show or I was watching Omid and thought of the idea as I saw him, because in my mind now I think he's intrinsic to my having the idea."

It was not only the actor's physical presence, but the way with which Djilili tackled material about race and religion that inspired Baddiel to write *The Infidel* and bring to life this extraordinary story.



Arvind Ethan David (Producer): “I was having breakfast with Morwenna Banks (who is David Baddiel’s girlfriend) and we were talking about some of her film ideas when suddenly David bursts in, introduces himself, sits down and says, ‘I just want to tell Arvind this one idea: what if Omid Djalili plays a Muslim who discovers he’s a Jew?’ And I said, yes, we’ll do that movie.”

Uzma Hasan (Producer): “It was difficult to convince the industry that it was OK to make this kind of movie, that nobody was going to get into trouble for laughing at that stuff.”

David Baddiel: “People are frightened of the material, that it’s about race and it’s about Islam. People have come along with me on this belief, both at Slingshot (the production company) and elsewhere, that the time is right for there to be a comedy about this.”

Omid Djalili: “*The Infidel* captures so much of what I want to say about race and religion. A great deal has been made in the political realm to ‘tolerate’ and to ‘live side by side’ whereas to highlight absurdities and to laugh at similarities as well as differences is possibly a more meaningful way to go.

Everyone has a slightly older and more sensible friend to look up to at school, and in comedy I think that role in my life has been filled by David Baddiel. I’ve always wanted to write a film like *The Infidel* but it took my more intelligent and capable friend to do it for me. It’s an interesting partnership, I bring the funny to the table and he brings the intelligent and the funny. Thus Baddiel wins. It’s not fair. Jews so control the media.”

Archie Panjabi (Saamiya Nasir): “I thought it was a brilliant script. The characters were really good, the story made me laugh and I got a good gut instinct about the whole project. I was keen not to make her into a stereotype because I think a lot of the time Asian women, particularly once they have kids, are always conveyed in this very stereotyped way. So I thought it was quite challenging to play a role that was fun but would represent what real Asian women are about.”

Arvind Ethan David (Producer): “The response was extraordinary. I think it’s become the best selling independently made British comedy of recent years.”

finding the director

By sheer fortune, writer David Baddiel and director Josh Appignanesi live in the same road and a chance conversation between the two led to Appignanesi reading the script with a view to acting as script editor.

David Baddiel: “He wrote some brilliant notes on it. Some of the best notes I’ve ever got for anything I’ve ever written and he knows a lot about cinema and narrative and structure so at that point I wanted to bring him in as script editor.

I didn’t want this movie to feel like a conventional Brit com. I wanted it to feel like an American indie movie, if anything like *Juno* or *Little Miss Sunshine*. To get that, I thought to use a director with some knowledge of the history of cinema who could give it that feel visually. I thought he could do that.”



Uzma Hasan (Producer): “Josh is such an energetic and effervescent guy and understands cinema in a way that I don’t think I’ve ever encountered before. He understood the mechanics of this story and how not to speak down to people, to make this an intelligent comedy.”

on omid djalili

Josh Appignanesi (Director): “Omid is not only brilliant but he’s also the biggest supporter of the film. No other actor could do what this role requires. The only difficult thing was making him less funny sometimes.”

Arvind Ethan David (Producer): “I’ve been a fan of Omid for at least 10 years since he started his stand-up career and I always thought he’d be a brilliant actor given the right lead role. An interesting thing about British cinema is that we’ve yet to have an Asian everyman. A guy who happens to be brown but is an everyman for an audience of every stripe, colour, creed and religion and Omid is the quintessential everyman. He’s a funny guy whose funniness is partly laughing at him and partly laughing with him.”

Josh Appignanesi (Director): “I wanted to surround Omid with character actors so we’d have a mix of acting styles. It’s all comedy but they’d bring a reality, kind of bed down the bigness that Omid has, in narrative reality so it doesn’t become a sketch show.”

the search for lenny...

David Baddiel: “We were struggling for Lenny to be honest. There isn’t really a 50-something British actor who is convincingly Jewish and we were thinking that we’ll just have to audition for this part.”

Arvind Ethan David (Producer): “The part as written was English, but we could not think of a 50-something irascible dead pan explicitly Jewish British film actor. It’s a surprisingly short list because Britain doesn’t have this tradition of Jewish comedy that America does. We had this moment of lets think about Americans and the second we did that, Richard’s (Schiff) name came to mind. Richard is a delight. Putting him and Omid next to each other creates a clash of comic styles, bringing different acting styles together. They are this comedy powerhouse.”

David Baddiel: “I now can’t think of anyone else playing that part. I hadn’t written it American but I really like it American. I mean Richard’s done so much with them but the lines appear to be written for an American voice to me. He’s so brilliant at delivering that stuff.”

Richard Schiff (Lenny): “The script was dealing with a subject matter than deserves to be made fun with, namely the religious separation people impose on each other and it has real heart to it. The relationship between Mahmud and Lenny was one I found compelling to read and I looked forward to doing it.”

The cast includes cameos from Paul Kaye, actor and Dennis Pennis creator, David Schneider, from the popular *Alan Partridge* series, Matt Lucas from *Little Britain* and Miranda Hart from hit comedy *Miranda*.



Uzma Hasan (Producer): “We have such an amazing mix of people. It’s a great family that we put together.”

the look and feel of the infidel

Josh Appignanesi (Director): “It’s lit in what I would call an art house kind of realism, a soft sort of light that usually evokes drama. I wanted long takes, wide shots that allow the comedy to develop between the actors. It doesn’t cut back and forth like a mainstream comedy so there’s more of a sense of being there. It doesn’t tell the audience when to laugh but it allows you to see the genuine comic performances unfolding.”

Erik Rehl (Production Designer): “We decided to focus on what was really important, the colours and textures for the different Muslim elements and locations and homes and the Jewish side and Josh had very particular ideas about that and we spoke a lot. I did a lot of research and came up with images and I did a lot of film referencing as well, Woody Allen to films like Rushmore, even a bit of Bergman thrown in for good measure.

The greens and oranges were Muslim and the blues, silvers and obviously a splash of yellow would be for the Jewish cultural references and worlds as it were.”

Omid Djalili: “When David and I spoke about this, we wanted a mainstream comedy that would have an indie feel to it and I think that’s what Josh has done. The biggest challenge was to keep the characters truthful because there’s always a tendency to go for something really funny, to go for a gag or something that you know will get a big laugh. There’s lots of physical slapstick humour but I wanted this to be a movie where people would laugh because it’s so truthful and we were trying to go for a real super realism.”

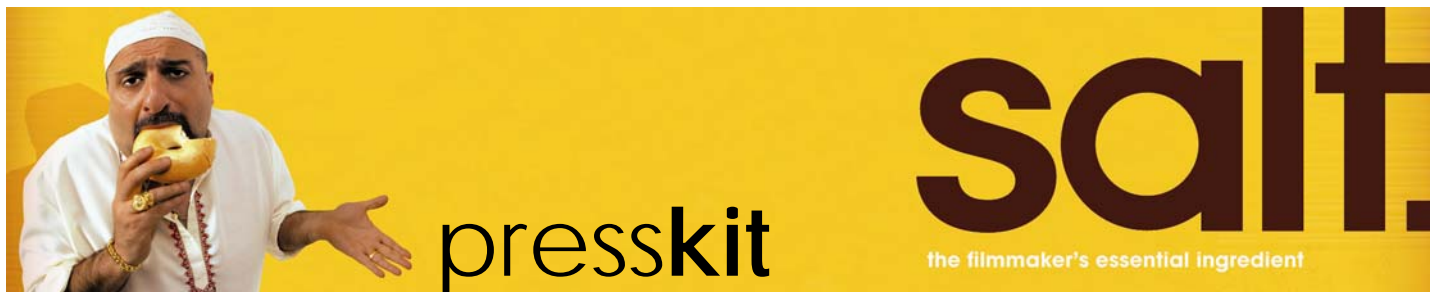
David Baddiel: “One interesting point from a writer’s point of view is that originally I thought that to get maximum force from the character of Mahmud not being a Muslim all his life and being a Jew, you have to make him a really prominent, proper, solid Muslim. But then I thought, that I want the audience to identify with him and he can feel his Muslimness very powerfully without necessarily being that kind of important religious figure. I’m really pleased we found our way towards that because I think it would have been a duller movie if it was about a prominent, important Muslim.”

Arvind Ethan David (Producer): “This is not a message movie, this is not a cause movie and I think that’s important because if you set out to make a cause movie, you forget your primary obligation to your audience which is to entertain them. I think Josh (director) has the ability to draw out amazing performances where it be from Omid as a comedian or myself who usually does a lot of straight acting roles, more serious stuff. I think he’s got an eye for comedy as well as making it quite real and human.”

a comedy of ethnic proportions

Omid Djalili: “It was a film that had to be made.”

David Baddiel: “I felt there was something in the idea of a body swap movie and on some level, that’s what I think the movie is. A lot of people will take this movie as being a massive



culture clash but for me, it's a body swap movie like *Trading Places* or *Big*. If it was a kid's movie, it would be about a cat that discovered it was born a dog."

Omid Djalili: "I think people are very nervous about laughing at anything to do with religion. I always thought that there was a line where you should never make fun of the founders of a faith but you can make fun of people that follow a religion as they're human. You can laugh at human foibles."

Arvind Ethan David (Producer): "As fundamentalism has risen in importance on the world's stage, it's occurred to me that the only rational response to it is to laugh. There's not yet been a comedy. That just seemed bizarre. So I think one big part of it was to say that we have to be able to laugh at this and this seemed a brilliant entry point into allowing people to see the funny in fundamentalism."

This movie is very much about taking identities and smashing them together. Can you be a Muslim and a Chelsea supporter at the same time? Can you be a Muslim and a Jew at the same time?"

Soraya Radford (Uzma): "I think this should break down some barriers and make people realise that it actually doesn't matter at the end if Mahmud is Muslim or if he's a Jew. He's just an ordinary bloke, someone's father, someone's husband and he's just as important whichever religion he decides to go with."

Omid Djalili: "When I look at the films I loved growing up – I loved films like *The Graduate*, where I felt entertained, I was educated and I was elevated. The classic films make you feel that, they uplift you somehow. I hope people come away feeling a little bit happier and more positive about life."

Igal Naor (Arshad Al-Masri): "I liked that it dares. No limits. That's amazing in my eyes because everything is so restricted. In my eyes you can laugh about everything. I think it's very brave and beautiful and a very, very funny comedy. I was by myself reading it and laughing. Usually it's hard to laugh by yourself but I was laughing like crazy."

the music of *the infidel*

The film's score is written by Erran Baron-Cohen, brother of Sacha Baron-Cohen, who's previous work includes *Borat* and *Bruno*. With David Baddiel, he also wrote a song, *This Confusion*, which can be heard over the end credits; the song is based on various musical themes present in the score.

David Gavurin and Harriet Wheeler, of the band The Sundays also wrote two original songs for the score. David Gavurin, in his teens, was in a band with David Baddiel, and so, while looking for someone to write songs in an '80s style, suitable for the Gary Page character to sing, David B contacted David G and asked him to think back to those times, and see if he could come up with some '80s-sounding electro. So far,



most people who have seen the film have assumed that the Gary Page tracks are real obscure pop songs from the 80s.

International Bhangra star Imran Khan also has two tracks that appear in the film *Ni Nachle* and a special ***The Infidel*** remix of his hit *Aaje Ve Mahiya*.

Lastly, ***The Infidel***'s theme tune is George Michael's seminal classic *Faith*. ***The Infidel*** being a modestly budgeted film, couldn't afford the usual prices for use of a huge transatlantic hit of that nature – especially one that hasn't been used before in a movie – so the filmmakers are very indebted to George, who said we could have it for a bargain price after David Baddiel wrote to him asking very nicely. George happened to remember meeting David some 17 years ago and having a pleasant chat: so a lesson there in good karma...

useful information

uk release | 9th April 2010, Revolver Entertainment

official website | www.infidelformovie.com

youtube channel | <http://www.youtube.com/user/infidelformovie>

high res film stills | <http://www.salt-co.com/index.php/press/>

company profiles

Met Film | Production Company

Met Film Production is dedicated to the development and production of innovative, commercially-driven feature films which will attract audiences both nationally and internationally. Formed in 2007 with the successful transition of the entire team behind feature film production company APT Films, producers of the award-winning feature documentary *Deep Water*, the highly acclaimed *Wondrous Oblivion*, and the Academy Award nominated film *Solomon & Gaenor*.



In the last year we have made three films; *Heavy Load*, a feature documentary directed by Jerry Rothwell which was released in October 2008 and has already screened at the SXSW festival and won the Audience Award at Britdoc. Romantic comedy, *French Film*, starring Hugh Bonneville, Anne-Marie Duff and Eric Cantona and *Little Ashes*, a Lorca-Dali biopic, starring Robert Pattinson, were both released in May 2009.

Met Film also has a policy of making short films as part of the development process with talent and our latest short film, *September*, written and directed by Esther May Campbell won a BAFTA for Best Short Film.

www.metfilmproduction.co.uk

Revolver Entertainment | UK Distributor

Revolver Entertainment is one of the UK & Ireland's leading 'All Rights' distribution companies, shaking up the industry with a unique approach to managing its enviable and edgy slate of Film and DVD releases. Handling both the large scale and smaller films with equal care and attention. Specialists in delivering maximum media coverage and awareness via multi-platforms, with Revolver Books and 357 Records also operating under the Revolver umbrella, they are an aggressive all rights brand marketing entity. The launch of Revolver USA in 2007 expanded this brand across the Atlantic, commencing with the release of home entertainment titles throughout the country. Forthcoming theatrical titles include Steven Soderbergh's *The Girlfriend Experience* starring Sasha Grey, Sundance award winner *Sin Nombre*, British freestyle basketball feature *Freestyle*, extraordinary environmental documentary *Big River Man* and *Black Death* starring Sean Bean.

www.revolvergroup.com

Slingshot Studios | Production Company

Slingshot is an all-digital, British film company that is dedicated to making good films, differently. Headed by Arvind Ethan David, Slingshot is backed by industry specialist media investors including Arts Alliance.

Slingshot has so far co-financed and produced five films, *Sugarhouse*, *French Film*, *Faintheart*, *Tormented* and *The Infidel*. It has multi-picture co-development and co-financing deals with BBC Films and Screen West Midlands, and an output deal with



leading European distributor and international sales company, Pathé who, alongside Warner Bros., released Slingshot's latest film *Tormented* across the UK in May 2009.

In 2008, Slingshot was selected as the only film business on Mediatech's list of "the 100 European companies among those most likely to change the mediatech world".

www.slingshot-studios.com

Salt. | International Sales

Salt sells and helps package and finance films by new and established filmmakers from Sundance Film Festival 2008 hit *Donkey Punch* (sold to Magnolia) to Fernando Meirelles' *City of Men* (acquired by Miramax). Other projects include Slingshot Studios' *The Infidel* written by David Baddiel and starring Omid Djalili; *Killing Bono*, an Irish music-based comedy from the writers of *The Commitments* with Ben Barnes and Robert Sheehan; *Cherry Tree Lane*, the latest provocative drama from *London to Brighton* director Paul Andrew Williams; and upcoming camp comedy *Dirty Girl* from writer/director Abe Sylvia with Juno Temple, Sally Hawkins, James Woods and William H. Macy.

Salt helps get films made. From financing and packaging to launching and selling. Salt