

This Is My Land - Film Review

This Is My Land

A Film Review



Last night my wife and I saw the film “This Is My Land” by Tamara Erde at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). We are both Israelis who immigrated to Canada some 43 years ago and who recently returned from a sabbatical year where we both studied at Tel-Aviv University. Myself, I am a Sabra born in Israel before Israel itself was born. Like most Israelis (Over 60% according to Dialog Institute poll July 7, 2014) I am a supporter of a two-state solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

I was totally intrigued by the film’s synopsis as I am a great believer that peace between Israelis and Palestinians can only be achieved when a new generation emerges, one that places coexistence, peace and prosperity ahead of historical claims, grievances and outright hatred and distrust of the other. The film promised to shed light on how young Israelis and Palestinian students are being taught the history of their respective people, the origins of the conflict, and hopefully the prospects for a peaceful and permanent resolution of the conflict.

The film purports to be a documentary and as such, according to the film maker Tamara Erde in an interview with IndieWire her biggest challenge in making this film was “*Managing to have a clear, balanced and, profound view of both sides – Israeli and Palestinian, without prejudging, and having both sides’ trust*”. On that score the film fails miserably. Tamara Erde’s allowed her own left leaning political views and her self-admitted disillusion with the state of Israel to turn the film into a not-so-subtle pro-Palestinian propaganda by portraying Palestinians as owners of Jewish stolen land and freedoms and Israelis as militaristic occupiers of hapless Palestinians in refugee camps.

Documentaries are deceiving at times. While I would never suspect the film's authenticity the film maker's political views are projected in the editing of the footage in order to reinforce, a not too well disguised point of view as was clearly expressed by Ms. Erde during the Q&A. Her portrayal of how Israeli students experience the memories of the Holocaust and how Israeli students celebrate Israel's Independence Day juxtaposed on the plight of the Palestinian people demonstrates brash immaturity or at best sensitivity in making a positive contribution to understanding this age old conflict. I wish I read Robert Bell's review in Exclaim before going to see the film where he said: *"In structure and execution, Tamara Erde's freshman documentary feature This is My Land is very much like a social sciences thesis, starting out with a mission statement or question that it then tackles with examples and arguments in order to reach a very obvious, almost redundant, conclusion."* If as Bell concludes that Ms. Erde was "focused chiefly on shocking the senses" this film can sadly be viewed as a missed opportunity.

Amnon Zohar

Toronto