

Kissufim: Love and passion in the time of war

GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN

The latest offering by *Netflix*, *Kissufim*, could not have been more apt or timely – focussing as the movie does on the world’s flashpoint, the Middle-East where the Hamas and Israel are locked in a bloody war with the Jewish forces pounding parts of Lebanon.

Kissufim – which won the Best Foreign Feature and Best Cinematography awards at the Orlando Film Festival and the Golden Aphrodite, Best Score, and Best Editing at the Cyprus Film Festival – was shot before the October 2023 attacks, and the devastation this caused on an Israeli settlement or *Kissufim* was horror beyond belief. The Hebrew-language work, helmed by Keren Nechmad, is set in the months after the Yom Kippur War and before the Camp David Peace Accord with Egypt in 1978. The story narrated through a group of young men and women follows their romance and heartbreak, their joys and sorrows as they come to terms with gunfire and grenade blasts across the line that separates their country from Lebanon or more precisely the areas under Hamas control.

Closely following the lives of three friends – Eli (Swell Ariel Or, Yoav (Yehonatan Vilozy) and Ron (Pfer Grinberg) – *Kissufim* runs like a mountain road with its undulating ups and downs resembling the youngsters mood swings, love, passion and jealousy. Despite all the differences the friends have with one another, they remain close. We learn that Eli is based on the true tale of Elian Gazil, a 21-year-old Israeli woman who was killed by a grenade thrown by a terrorist in the Gaza strip.



The intense animosity between Israel and its Arab neighbours is brought out with care. There is nothing loud or vulgar about it. In fact, it is a story of survival in a land where its people live in constant fear of being killed by Hamas and other hostile communities. Yet, Nechmad does not make it a sob story; the youngsters

work hard in the fields during the day but let their hair down after sundown partying hard. Questions of morality, sexuality, freedom and loss of innocence are underlined most compellingly. The climax is dramatic and tragic and reveals the dangers of hostilities which people on either side of the border face and

learn to live with. Mixing fact with fiction, the helmer turns out a tale which will make us think about the futility of war. And with the Middle-East conflict worsening by the day, the movie pushes us to ponder with a sense of fear and anxiety.

The writer is a senior movie critic and author