



presents



A Film by Alexander Klein

USA 2011

In English, Hebrew and Arabic

Running Time: 84 minutes

Stereo Sound

Not Rated

For press clips, <http://www.vimeo.com/album/1570981>

For hi res box art, http://www.cinematlibrestudio.com/clscatalog/2011/GodWentSurfing_3D_HR.jpg

www.godwentsurfing.com

www.facebook.com/godwentsurfing

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SYNOPSIS

In 2006, Israel stepped up the blockade of the Gaza Strip, largely ending the free-flow of people and goods. Shortly thereafter, it emerged that a small group of young men were surfing in Gaza, sharing battered surfboards and used gear. From first-time director Alexander Klein is an inspirational film that charts the difficulties and dangers encountered by surfers in Gaza and how a non-profit group would attempt to deliver 23 surfboards into the region. Along the way, Israelis, Arab-Israelis and Palestinians affected by the violence, speak candidly about their daily struggle to supersede the conflict through the pure joy of surfing.



FESTIVALS

WINNER

Duke Spirit Award
California Surf Film Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION

Palm Beach Film Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION

Santa Barbara International Film Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION

Woods Hole Film Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION

Globians DocFest Berlin

OFFICIAL SELECTION

Hawai'i International Film Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION

New York Surf Film Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION

Byron Bay International Film Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION

Seville International Film Festival

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The origins of *God Went Surfing with the Devil* were scrappy at best. My film crew consisted of three of my best friends, all recent college graduates. Our camera was borrowed, our audio equipment unreliable and our editing suite doubled as my living room. Funding was exhausted from the start, as it took every penny I possessed to cover airfare and a two-month apartment rental in Tel Aviv. Yet what we did have was a youthful zeal to tell an important story -- the story of young men picking up surfboards instead of rifles and coming together to ride waves in the name of peace.

The story of *God Went Surfing with the Devil* isn't the kind that gets covered in the mainstream media. It lacks violence and corruption and bombastic vitriol. Instead it shares a beautiful narrative of young Israelis and Palestinians attempting to look beyond the strife and heal their fragmented relations through the simple act of surfing.



It was an enlivening and at times petrifying journey. For two months, we traversed Israel and Gaza, meeting the surfers and hearing their experience of the conflict. In a region marred by generational hatred, these surfers were beacons of light, eager to put politics and religion behind them and instead focus on the humanity of the situation.

Along the way, I discovered the maddening process of getting things done in a region afflicted by decades of violence and hatred. Even the simple act of giving was hampered by petty politics and bureaucratic disorganization. I also learned that all too often the media focuses on a conflict narrative-- the sensational acts of violence, the rants of the fanatics -- yet this is a tremendous distortion of the actual situation. The vast majority of those in the Middle East want to live peacefully among their neighbors and yet this stance is rarely reported. People often ask my opinion on the possibility of peace and I reply optimistically. With every generation we have a chance to hit the reset button and rebuild relations. It won't be easy-- and the rocket attacks and retaliatory strikes do little to help -- but it is possible, and it's programs like [Surfing 4 Peace](#) that will plant the seeds for this healing.



If people see the film and are inspired to action, that's wonderful. But my even more basic hope is that this film inspires viewers to once again believe in peace, just to get in the mindset that it's possible. Cynicism is a destructive and self-fulfilling state of mind, but as the young surfers of *God Went Surfing with the Devil* show, a little love and optimism can create huge waves of change for the future.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Alexander Klein (Director)

Alexander Klein was born and raised in San Francisco. Upon graduating from UC Berkeley in 2003 with a degree in English Literature, Klein traveled the world as a professional skateboarder, penning articles for *Skateboarder* and *The Skateboard Mag* along the way. It was during these years of wanderlust that his fascination with storytelling grew, particularly cinema with its invigorating and expansive narrative techniques.



As the years passed, Klein honed his writing skills until a chance encounter with a successful Hollywood director changed his life. "Make a film," the director advised. It was simple advice that was taken to heart and six months later, Klein was on a plane to the Middle East with a video camera in tow. *God Went Surfing with the Devil* is Klein's first film and directorial debut.

Since its completion, the film has traveled to festivals around the world. Klein currently lives in New York and is continuing to work in various areas of filmmaking.

PEOPLE FEATURED IN THE FILM

Matt Olsen

Matt currently splits his time between the US and Gaza, where he is working on the development of a variety of programs including the Gaza Surf Club and promoting Surfing for Peace. He founded and serves as the Director of Explore Corps, a U.S.-based, 501c(3) non-profit organization implementing unique, youth-focused projects in outdoor education, recreation and the arts.



Arthur Rashkovan

Arthur was born and raised in Tel Aviv and is one of the founding members of Surfing 4 Peace. Arthur is currently working as the brand manager for Gotcha Europe, still skating and surfing as much as he can. His greatest recent achievement is fatherhood.



Gil Keren

Gil is a 16 year-old Israeli surfer living in Ramat Aviv, a suburb north of Tel Aviv. When he's not in school, Gil can be found representing the Israel Under-18's on the international contest circuit. Today, Gil Keren is a professional surfer and is still competing in Israel and recently attended the world championships in Peru thanks to the support of his primary sponsor, Billabong.

Mofeed Jabar

Mofeed is a 14 year-old Arab-Israeli surfer from Jaffa, the ancient Arab city bordering Tel Aviv. He started surfing two years ago, when his brother-in-law, Abedullah, gave him his first surfboard. Mofeed enjoys swimming at the port, eating toasted tuna fish sandwiches with his friends Mahmoud and Mahmoud and of course, surfing. Today, Mofeed stopped surfing and is currently working in an auto body shop, fixing cars.



Yousef Abughanem

Yousef lives in Gaza City and is the son of a fisherman. He is currently training to be a professional lifeguard. His sister and female cousin are now learning to surf with the support of Gaza's surfing community. Surfing 4 Peace is working to equip the two new female surfers in Gaza with wetsuits, boards and special swimwear that will allow them to surf in this conservative society.

DISTRIBUTOR

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ABOUT CINEMA LIBRE STUDIO Cinema Libre Studio, a leader in distributing social issue documentaries and features by passionate filmmakers, is a haven for independent filmmakers offering a complete array of production and distribution resources. Headquartered in Los Angeles, the Cinema Libre team has released over one hundred films and is best known for releasing the award-winning films: *OUTFOXED*, *UNCOVERED:THE WAR ON IRAQ*, Participant Media's *ANGELS IN THE DUST*, the Independent Spirit John Cassavetes Award Winner, *CONVENTIONEERS*, the Sundance Audience Award-Winning *FUEL* and the studio's highly acclaimed production, *THE END OF POVERTY?*. Others include Oliver Stone's documentary *SOUTH OF THE BORDER* with films from Haskell Wexler and Rachid Bouchareb slated for 2011 releases. In 2011, Cinema Libre Studio is producing *THE LAST DAYS OF KARL MARX* in Algeria and Belgium as well as developing John Perkins' best-selling memoirs, *CONFESSIONS OF AN ECONOMIC HIT MAN*, into a major motion picture. For more information and updates, please visit: www.cinematlibrestudio.com

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