

A Matter of Size

Directed by Sharon Maymon and Erez Tadmor



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A Matter of Size

SYNOPSIS

Four overweight friends from the Israeli city of Ramle are fed up of dieting and the dieting club they belong to.

When Herzl (155 kilos), the main protagonist, loses his job as a cook and starts working as a dishwasher in a Japanese restaurant in Ramle he discovers the world of Sumo where large people such as himself are honored and appreciated.

Through Kitano (60 kilos), the restaurant owner, a former Sumo coach in Japan (who is supposedly hiding from the Yakuza in Israel), he falls in love with a sport involving "two fatsos in diapers and girly hairdos". Herzl wants Kitano to be their coach but Kitano is reluctant - they first have to earn their spurs.

"A MATTER OF SIZE" is a comedy about a 'coming out' of a different kind - overweight people learning to accept themselves.

A Matter of Size

Director's Statement

EREZ TADMOR & SHARON MAYMON

A MATTER OF SIZE is a film about self-acceptance. The movie tells the story of a group of heavy weighted friends, first and foremost among them is Herzl, who leaves the dictatorship of dieting behind and form a Sumo club in Ramle instead. Through Sumo they begin to accept and connect with their overweight bodies.

About three months before the beginning of the shoot we traveled to Japan to learn about Sumo in Tokyo and Nagoya. During this trip we researched the art of Sumo thoroughly at the special Sumo universities and boarding schools for youngsters that are in fact the breeding ground for Sumo fighters. There, from morning till dawn, the teachers put their pupils through bone wrecking Sumo exercises while stuffing them with fattening health food. It was extremely important to us that the Sumo fight scenes should look as professional as possible. When we returned home, we began a two month long training of our actors under the supervision of a professional Sumo teacher.

The idea was to combine Japanese and Israeli elements in our style of directing. It was clear that we would film the scenes of Sumo training in a way that they would be reminiscent of Japanese paintings. Nevertheless, we took care to inject also enough Israeli and oriental elements from the city of Ramle. Of course it was most important to film our heavy weight actors in the most beautiful and aesthetic way possible. Since it is a comic drama we decided on a steady camera instead of handheld which might have given the film a realistic rough surface. Apart from that we wanted to give the film the appeal of a modern fairy tale that takes place in the city of Ramle. The first part of the film is shot in grayish colors that turn colorful at the moment that our hero meets Sumo and the colors even warm up when they begin to wear the traditional red Sumo shorts later on.

During the first meeting with our Director of Photography, David Gurfinkel, we expressed our intention that the actors should look like babies in diapers during the fight scenes when they wear only the sumo drapes. At the end of our meeting the decision was made: "They will all have to shave their bodies."

A Matter of Size

CREDITS

Cast

Dvir Benedek
Itzik Cohen
Shumlik Cohen
Alon Dahan
Levana Finkelstein
Evelin Hagoel
Togo Igawa
Alberg Iluz
Yuki Iwamoto
Irit Kaplan
Ofira Rahamim
Oshri Sahar

*Aharon
Herzl
Sami
Gidi
Mona
Geola
Kitano
Biton
Ito
Zehava
Gila
Einav*

A Matter of Size

Crew

Directors	Erez Tadmor
Screenwriters	Sharon Maymon Sharon Maymon
Producers	Danny Cohen-Solal Chilik Michaeli Avraham Pirchi Tami Leon Daniel Bauer Oliver Simon
Co-Producer	Antoine de Clermont-Torrenne
Executive Producer	Bill Stephens
Director of Photography	David Gurfinkel
Editor	Einat Glaser-Zarhin
Music	Eyal Leon Katzav
Production designer	Yoram Shayer
Costume designer	Inbal Shuki
Sound	Ronen Nagel
Casting	Levana Hakim

A Matter of Size

Details

Running Time	90 minutes
Language	Hebrew /Japanese
Subtitles	English
Medium	35 mm
Sound	Dolby SR
Genre	Comedy
Rating	Unrated
Country	Israel/Germany
Aspect Ratio	1:85:1

A Matter of Size

Erez Tadmor

Director

Erez Tadmor, born in Israel in 1974, is a writer and director of short and feature films. 1999 he graduated from the "Camera Obscura" film school in Tel Aviv.

His first short film "*Moosh*" won over 40 international film festival awards such as "World Fest" in Houston, Palm Springs and many more.

Together with co-director Guy Nattiv he produced the short film "*Strangers*" which won the online short competition at the Sundance Film festival in 2004 and also participated in the competition of the Berlin Festival of the same year.

This was followed by a second short – "*Offside*" – that won the award for best short film at the Manhattan International Short Film Festival in 2006.

The teamwork with Guy Nattiv continued and they directed together their first feature film. "*Strangers*" from 2008 is loosely based on the initial idea of the short film of the same name. This film was accepted to the "Sundance World Cinema Dramatic Competition" last year.

His newest film he co-directed with Sharon Maymon. "A Matter of Size" (2009) was accepted to the discovery competition of the "Tribeca Festival" in New York.

Film direction and scriptwriting

Moosh	(2001)	short film
Strangers	(2004)	short film
All is well by me	(2005)	feature Documentary
Offside	(2006)	short film
Strangers	(2008)	feature film
A Matter of Size	(2009)	feature film

Sharon Maymon

Director/Screenwriter

Sharon Maymon was born in Ramle, Israel. He graduated of **Camera Obscura** College of Arts in Tel Aviv in 1999. During his studies he directed two short films.

His short film "*Holes*" was screened at the Haifa Film Festival 2000 and won in the 2002 'Next Screen' television festival.

In 2007 he co-directed and co-wrote '*Mortgage*', a 40 minute short film that won the best drama award at the Jerusalem Film Festival.

Film direction and scripting

- 2007 **A Matter of Size** - ('**Big Story**') – 90 minute feature film, based on my original idea.
Co-directed with Erez Tadmor and co-written with Danny Cohen Solal. Producers; UCM Films.
- 2006 '**Mortgage**' – 40 minute short comic drama. Co-written and directed with Tal Granit.
- 2005 '**Sketch Show**' – Scriptwriter for the Israeli television comedy series
- 2000 '**Holes**' –15 minutes graduation film. Wrote and directed the film as a part of his studies at Camera Obscura College of Arts.
- 1998 '**Do you Love me?** – 10 minutes – scripting and direction of a second year student film.

Danny Cohen Solal

Screenwriter

Danny Cohen Solal was born in Tunisia in 1969 and now lives and works in Tel Aviv. He studied at the Camera Obscura College of Arts and at the Tel Aviv University Film School. As a part of his studies, he wrote and directed the Final film " The French Channel " that won numerous prizes and was broadcasted on Israeli TV. He also created an experimental film called " Mother of Elijah ", and worked as a First assistant film editor in many feature films. In 2003 he wrote with his wife, the screenwriter Tali Afnaim, the TV drama "Overseas", that won awards and aired on Israeli TV. Between 2004 and 2008 he worked with Sharon Maymon writing the screenplay of "A Matter of Size" that was released in summer 2009 and was a great success in Israel and abroad. Now Cohen Solal is working his next project called "Cohen 82".

Filmography

- * Mechanics Also Need Love (1994), screenplay and direction
- * Daddy (1995), screenplay and direction

- * The French Channel (1996), screenplay and direction
- * Mother of Elijah (1998), screenplay and direction
- * Overseas (2003), co-screenplay and direction
- * Mother Faiz (2004), editing
- * A Matter of Size, A (2009), co-screenplay

A link to a radio interview on NPR in Washington DC:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/player/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=121870306&m=121870301>

ACTOR'S RESUMEES

Itzik Cohen (Herzl) had his first success as a member of the drag group "Passia Girls" in 1995. After the group broke up Cohen continued in drag and presented a side-kick in Einat Ehrlich's 'Half Past Six' show where he played the character of Yardena. He co-wrote and participated in the series 'Johnny' playing the Iraqi mother of Johnny (Jonathan Konjak). In the TV drama series on Israeli Channel 3 'Shuli's Guy' he turned to male roles. In 2003 he participated in the feature film 'Sima Vaknin, the Witch'. Halevi's series "Open Mind" was aired in 2004. During the first season Cohen portrayed the vice headmaster Elhanan Bardugo who became headmaster in the following seasons. On the stage of the Cameri Theatre in Tel Aviv he appeared in the year 2000 in the play "The Rabbi Kama" and in 2002 in the play "Father's Plait". In the musical "The Producers" of 2005 he played Roger de Bill, who was portrayed by de Bris in the Original. During the past year he appeared as Lizer Wolf, the butcher, in the musical "The Fiddler on the Roof". Also in the musical "Salah Shabbati" he plays the hero Salah Shabbati. Apart from that he still appears in the fifth season of "Open Mind" and begins currently the rehearsal for a part in an opera.

Dvir Bendak (Aharon) finished his studies at the theater department of the Tel Aviv University in 1997. In 2008 he received the price for best actor at the Seoul Festival for Television Dramas for his part in the film "The Tutor". He also received the prize for best supporting actor of the Habima Theater in 2008. Among the many plays he participated in are "Waiting for Godot", "Social Games", "The Revisor", "Night Play" and "I am finished with your Wife". On the stage of the Habima Theater he appeared in "The Dybbuk", "Brave Soldier Shweyk", "Kaddish for Naomi", "Tango", "Crumbs" and "Ms. Daisy's Driver". On the TV screen he appeared in the series "The Track", "Cause of Death – Murder", "My First Sony", "Rooms to Let", "Weekly Affair", "Life is not all" and "Quicky". In feature films he participated in "What a Wonderful Place", "Back Gammon" and

"Birthday". He also lent his voice to the hero of "Kung Fu Panda" in the Hebrew synchronization in 2008. These days he is busy filming for Yuval Segal's new series "Taxi Driver", participates in TV commercials for Mizrtahi Bank and plays on the stage of the Haifa Theatre in "The Ugly One" and "Three Parties".

Alon Dahan (Gidi) studied theater at the Beit Zvi School of Art until 1996. During his studies he received several scholarships and prizes for outstanding performance. He appeared in many theater plays such as "Syrano de Bergerac", "Catch 22" at Habima Theater; "Jacko" at Beit Lessin Theater; the part of Silvius in "As You Like It", as Eastwind in "Singles", as Flores in "The Well of Sheep", "Mother Karasso", "The Italian Straw Hat", "In the Name of Love", "Father's Plait", as Genscher in "Democracy" and as the messenger in "Antigone". He participated in several feature films: "Forbidden Love", "Jerusalem Syndrom", "Disappeared", "Sima Vaknin, the Witch" and "The Syrian Bride". He also appeared in TV dramas such as "Yarkon Street", "Zinzana", guest appearances in "Shemesh", "Upside Down", "Only in Israel", "Another Woman", "Shaul" and "Closed Case". In "The Naked Truth" of the Barabash Brothers he played the part of a police inspector which aired on Channel 10 in 2009. These days he plays several parts in the Bert Brecht's play "The Good Person of Sezchuan", he also plays Rosenkranz in "Hamlet" and will begin the filming of the children series "The Island 3" for the Children Channel.

Irit Kaplan (Zehava) finished her studies of theater with honors at the Beit Zvi School of Art in 1998. She belongs to the cast of the Cameri Theater. Among her outstanding roles are parts in Shakespeare's "As You Like It", Hanoh Levin's "Singles", Neil Lebiot's "Fat One" and Yaeli Ronen's "Plonter" and Dana Masie's "Was or Was Not" to mention a few. In 2002 she received the prize for Most Promising Actress for her role in "Singles" and in 2006 the prize for Outstanding Actress for her part in the "Fat One".

On television she appeared in many guest roles, but has portrayed some wellknown characters in TV dramas such as inspector Israela in "Franko and Spector", Yaffit in the telenovella "The Champion" (of which the third season is being filmed right now) and as Havazelet in "Open Mind".

Evelyn Hagoel (Geula) worked at the beginning of her career as a talent agent for extras but began studying acting at the school of Yoram Loewenstein in 1995. Among her many parts in TV series are "Mummy", "Closed Case", "The Meter is Running", "Good Friends", "The Truck", "Pick up", "The Movers" and "Bad Girls". Hagoel played also in feature films: "Another War", "Summer Story", "Turn Left at the End of the World" and "What a Wonderful Place". In theater she performed in "An Integral Part" and "The White Necklace". In addition she does commercials for James Richardson and Duty Free. In 2007 Hagoel appeared in the comedy "Lower Galilee". In 2008 she received the Ophir Prize for Best Supporting Actress for her part in the film "Mourning".

Shmulik Cohen (Sammi) learned acting at the Nissan Nattiv School in 1999. He was a candidate for the Prize of Best Supporting Actor for his role as a yeshiva student in the film "Forbidden Love". In Haim Buzaglo's film "Honor" he played the part of the detective Shay. The film has not yet been screened in cinemas. He participated in TV dramas such as "The Bohemians", "Zeffi", "The Island", "Israelis" and others. TV commercials include "Egged Busses", "Barak" and "Nishnushim". At the Beit Lessin Theater he appeared in the play "A Streetcar named Desire", "Ricky's Kindergarten" and on the stage of Habima Theater in "Look over the Bridge", "Nudnik". These days he stands on the stage in the play "Weird Couple".

Levana Finkelstein (Mona) is a well known face on the stage and the screen already since the 1960s. Her breakthrough into the public conscience was in Menahem Golan's 1969 film "My Margo". The film was well received by the Israeli audience and she was believed to be one of the promising actresses in the Israeli cinema. Her resume includes films such as "Salomoniko" (1972), "The Zaanani Family" (1976) by Boaz Davidson, "The Cherry Season" (1991) by Haim Buzaglo, "Behind Bars" (1992) by Uri Barabash, "Aviva, my Love" (2006) by Shemi Zarhin. At the Habima Theater she played in "Entry of the Bird", "Mother Courage", at the Hifa Theater in "Blood Wedding", "The Three Penny Opera" and "Trumpet in the Wadi"; at the Cameri Theater in "Scapegoat", "Seagull", "Poetry" and "Killing Time", at the Geshen Theater in "Village" as well as a few plays in New York. Apart from that Finkelstein appeared in TV dramas such as "Nuts" (1999). She received the Prize for Best Actress at the Film Festival Jerusalem in 2001 for her part in "Mummy". She also participated in the "Cohen Clan" (1991) and in "Boot Camp" (1998).

Togo Igawa (Kitano) is a British actor of Japanese descent. He played in many European films and Hollywood productions: "The Last Samurai" by Edward Zwick alongside Tom Cruise, "Eyes Wide Shut" by Stanley Kubrick, "Speed Racer" by the Wachowsky Brothers, "Memoirs of a Geisha" and many more. Apart from his work as a cinema actor he founded his own theater close to his home in Oxford, England, where he dedicated his life to producing fringe theater plays and teaching acting students.

Hila Sourjoun (Dina) finished her studies at the Beit Zvi School of Art in 1998. She received various scholarships. Among the plays she participated in are at the Library Theater: "P.S. Your Cat is Dead" and "Joseph". Beit Lessin Theater: "Jacko". Short Theater Festival Jerusalem – Zavta: "Happy Birthday". Cameri Theater: "Rabbi Kama", "The Two Good Ones" and others. In feature films she appeared in "Backgammon", "Shlomi's Friends", "Mortgage" and the "Band's Visit". TV Series: "The Other Woman", "Life is not all", "Octavians" and the "Giants". In children's theater she played in "Snowwhite", "Princess Sissy" and

the "Waif". She also gave her voice to the Hebrew synchronisation of "Toy Story". At the moment she stands on the stage of the Cameri Steater in the Play "The Good Person of Sezchuan".

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

When Erez Tadmor and Sharon Maymon came to their first meeting with the production company UCM, the producers knew instantly that they had a brilliant idea for a film in their hands: "We told them that they had succeeded in finding a heart touching subject and turn it into a hilarious comedy." But Chilik Michaeli and his partners Avraham Pirchi and Tami Leon also knew that the huge and important step of casting was still ahead of them.

Sharon: "I got the idea for the script when I realized that I wanted to make a film about self acceptance and believed that through Sumo and rebellion against the dictatorship of slimness I can deal with the subject in a more unique and interesting way."

Chilik Michaeli: "The social message of the film is the necessity to accept the other in society and to be able to connect to your self. Also if you are different you still can be happy and live with yourself in peace."

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TOWN RAMLE

A MATTER OF SIZE is in fact the story of a group of fat guys from Ramle who decide to leave the reign of diets and form a club of sumo fighters. Through this Asian sport they achieve a new body image and begin to accept themselves," explains Sharon in a nutshell and adds: "As you say, you can take me out of the neighborhood, but you cannot take the neighborhood out of me. As a matter of fact I return to Ramle somehow when I am writing. This is the town where I grew up, I am telling the stories of people I know, places I have been to and of the smells and scents at the market. This town has been until now more or less the backdrop for my all my stories and the material I have been dealing with. The sumo tournament for example we shot in the gymnasium of my old school.

THE TRIP TO JAPAN

A few months before the filming began the two directors flew to Japan, to the cities Tokyo and Nagoya, in order to research and to learn about the world of Sumo. They visited a Sumo university in Tokyo and joined the students for a few days, watched their training and tasted the food they ate. We learned that Sumo is a sport solely for men and that it is forbidden for women to even come close. Sharon says: "It was very important for us to travel there, in order to feel Japan,

Tokyo and Nagoya. We were really impressed to see that people indeed dedicate their lives to sumo from earliest childhood on."

THE PERSUASION OF ITZIK COHEN

"Itzik Cohen is mainly an actor of the theatre stage. We approached him with the idea that he should be the main actor of our film. Itzik only heard what the film was about and said immediately "No". He even didn't want to listen and said: 'I will never get involved in a film about fat people.'" Cohen adds: "When they offered me the part the first thing I said was "No" and also the second time "No" ... and even a third time I said "No". I am an extremely shy person. I am not going to the beach and I am certainly not undressing in front of other people. They used to joke about me that I am even taking a shower with my clothes on."

After some considerable group pressure from the directors Itzik at last agreed to attend a meeting. Erez: "I remember that meeting with Itzik. We told him the story and finally he agreed to read at least the script." Itzik emphasizes: "After I read the script I came back to them and said: Really, but I mean really, really, really "No". And again they begged me and in the end I agreed to do a presentation for the Israeli Film Fund. According to Itzik he and the other main actors, Dvir Bendak, Alon Dahan and Shmulik Cohen had to wear the sumo diapers. "Also when we did the photo shoot for the presentation I tried to impose my condition on them and demanded that those stills would never be published," remembers Itzik and smiles. "In the end the photo session wasn't so bad and actually somehow reinforcing instead."

Sharon, the director and screenwriter, recalls the situation: "During the presentation we simply stopped and asked our four heavy weight actors to join us in this tiny office room. All four of them came in dressed in the traditional sumo garb and there was absolutely no space left anymore, hardly room to breathe. When the jurors met them like this they simply cracked up with laughter." Erez continues: "Shortly afterwards we turned again to Itzik and he replied that he had read the script and actually loved it – and that he very much wanted to be part of it. But before we could rejoice he added: 'But only with my shirt on'. We said: 'No way, most of the film you will have to be half naked wearing only the sumo diapers.' And he said: 'No, no, and no. I have got a problem with that and I am not going to take my shirt off.'"

On the first day of the shoot the directors simply threw Itzik into the cold water. The first scene of Itzik Cohen in the role of Herzl he already had to wear the sumo diapers. Itzik: "My first day on the set I began wearing the *Mawashi* – the traditional red sumo diapers - running after a bus. I remember that I came out of my trailer still wearing my bathrobe and being rather self-conscious. But after a short moment I took off my robe and it didn't bother me anymore throughout the whole shoot." In retrospect he smiles: "Nowadays I am going to the beach and

swimming pool without any embarrassment at all. Before I participated in the movie every colleague at the theatre knew very well that they had to leave the room when I had to change my costume for the next scene because I couldn't stand somebody seeing me undressing. Today, after the filming of A MATTER OF SIZE it doesn't concern me at all anymore. I went through a kind of process and have come to accept myself. When I told this to one of the producers he said: "You see, you should have paid us for this psychological treatment instead of the other way round."

ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

Itzik Cohen: "This is the story of Herzl, 35 years old and unemployed who lives with his mom in Ramle. He doesn't really manage to find neither work nor a girlfriend and is a rather lonesome sorry figure. When he does find work as a dishwasher in a Japanese restaurant he discovers to his surprise on the contrary to his friend from the diet club, that there nobody is making fun or jokes about his size. The workers at the restaurant regard him as a potential sumo fighter and he decides to shake of the burden of constant dieting, to rebel against the dictatorship of slimness and to open a sumo club instead."

Irit Kaplan: "This was my first time on the set of a feature film, the first and I certainly hope not the last time. In the beginning they were not sure yet how the character of Zehava should look like. But during the rehearsals we found slowly but steadily a common denominator, I pulled them closer to me and they pulled me closer to their ideas and suddenly we arrived at a compromise. So, Zehava turns out to be a very tender woman on the one hand and on the other full of warmth and vulnerability who has been burned in past relationships. She belongs to the same dieting group like the others, lives without a partner or family and doesn't have an easy time working with female prisoners who taunt her constantly."

Shmulik Cohen: "I play the part of Sami, a news reporter for a local TV station. All he live he strives to be a television personality and is on the lookout for good stories in order to justify his existence and finally achieve his dream: to become a reporter for the 2 Channel in Israel." About his connection to the character of Sami he says: "When I was little I was a fat child but strong at the same time. I would beat up those kids who were cursing or making fun of me because I was fat."

Alon Dahan: "Gidi is a guy of thirty something, about my age. He owns a Showarma joint. During the events of the film he finally comes out of the closet and owns up to being gay. To his utter surprise he discovers that there men who think fat guys are sexy and attractive." About the question of weight he says: "I

myself don't' have a problem with the way I look, I am content and actually like myself in the mirror. If I am undergoing a diet I do solely for health reasons, in order to feel a little bit lighter and stronger but not to please anybody but myself. Among the four guys in the film I am probably the slimmest. For the film I had to gain 15 – 20 kilo on purpose."

Dvir Bendak: "There were times in my life when I thought that was too fat for a relationship with a woman. Then I began dieting but I realized that this was not the reason. Where I can identify with the character of Aharon? There are only very few point of connection between Dvir and Aharon. In the film I am playing a character that is not happy with the way he looks and is constantly fighting with the calories. I myself usually do not have any problem at all with my appearance. Aharon is unhappy in his marriage, Dvir on the contrary is very happy with his wife. Aharon is suspicious of his wife, afraid that she betrays him and has her followed, Dvir wouldn't dream of it. Fat people often are preoccupied about their looks and because of that sometimes the really important things in life get lost out of sight. The process of sumo became for me a metaphor how someone finally begins to accept his body and suddenly the real problems of life pop up and they have to face those instead."

The directors met the actor Togo Igawa on the set of the film Speed Racer in Berlin. "They asked me to read one scene in Hebrew and that was the beginning of my torture." Togo remembers with a smile the difficulties of Hebrew pronunciation. Erez adds: "Togo Igawa is a British actor of Japanese descent. We wanted him to speak Hebrew, which was very difficult for him. So we introduced him to Yoni Lukaz, a dialogue coach, and he trained him for the part. Working with Togo was amazing, he has such a great sense of humor." Sharon continues: "Togo portrays the character of Kitano in the film who is the mentor of the sumo group. But Kitano also belongs to a group of Zionist Japanese called *Makoya* from the kibbutz Heftziba. So, we wanted him to sound like a true Israeli, maybe even a little bit of Ramle dialect."

STORIES FROM THE REHEARSALS AND THE SET

Three months before the shoot began we had our main actors undergo a thorough training three times a week under the strict auspices of our local Sumo trainer, Eldad Ben Horin, who paid attention to the last and most tiny detail which also prompted them to have the perfect timing during the shoot itself.

Eldad Ben Horin: "I told the actors that they couldn't expect mercy from me, that I wouldn't allow them to succumb to pain or to give in."

Alon Dahan: "Eldad saw us only under the professional point of view. From nine o'clock in the morning he would tease us, why we are not yet awake, why we are not slim and why we are not in as good shape as he is."

Itzik Cohen: "I myself was the reason that I gave up Judo in the third grade. The teacher enjoyed himself immensely to use me as his guinea pig, because my fat is soft, elastic and spongy. After one of those exercises he demonstrated on me, half of my brain went blank and I decided 'That's it.'" Sharon: "We wanted the actors to know exactly what was expected from them and their part. The choreography was precisely timed and very professional."

Erez: "It started out easy enough but as the training commenced it became more and more difficult and complicated because our friends had never trained before. Suddenly Eldad demanded from them training sessions three times a week and all of them had sore muscles."

Dvir: "You can't imagine how much it hurts until you begin training."

Erez: "It turned out that Dvir actually wanted to be a wrestler when he was young and understood after a short while of training that this sport hurts. Now it was his opportunity to close this circle."

Alon: "What frightened me most was the fact that I am hitting and beating. And I don't like to hurt my friends."

Shmulik: "They said I was hitting them too hard."

Itzik: "I was most afraid from Shmulik ... Behind the scenes he was hitting us already before the directors said 'Action!'"

Irit on the other hand remembers a scene that was most difficult for her. The female prisoners throw broccoli and vegetables at her and sing a mocking song. "That was a most unpleasant scene. Thirty women taunt you and throw kilograms of broccoli at you," she says, "That hurts physically and also psychologically. You can prepare yourself for such a scene as much as you want to, but when it happens it gets under your skin and is humiliating after all. I was never slim and slender, that is simply not my frame. But I do remember that a few years ago I went to the other extreme during a personal crisis after I was disappointed in love."

Erez: "I remember that Sharon got one morning a telephone call from Alon's girlfriend screaming at him that we shouldn't force Alon to gain weight, that he had just undergone an operation and that he should please not gain any more weight. Apart from that you mustn't forget that we shot the film in December. The whole crew wore warm clothes and coats and our actors had to wear the sumo Mawashi – they were freezing in the cold. Between the scenes they ran to the trailer to warm up ..."

SHARON MAYMON – DIRECTOR OF "A MATTER OF SIZE"

1. What were the circumstances that lead you to become a filmmaker?

Ever since I remember myself I was chronically addicted to cinema. I always knew that I want to make film, so much so that I never thought about an alternative. Woody Allan and his cinematic style have had a great influence on me, especially his film "Annie Hall". I admire his ability to produce a romantic comedy that analyses human relationships and at the same time deconstructs the structure of the medium as well as the plot.

Already during my army service I signed up for cinema studies at the "Camera Obscura for Arts" where I met Erez Tadmor, my co-director in the film "A Matter of Size".

2. What prompted the idea for your film and what excited you to make you undertake it?

The idea for "A Matter of Size" came up when I understood that I wanted to deal with the subject of self-acceptance. During my research for an original way of dealing with this subject I came across the art of Sumo wrestling and chose to write a story about the coming out of the closet of shame of a bunch of really fat guys. Since I grew up in the small city of Ramle, Israel, it was only natural that my heroes would also be from Ramle, based on various characters I knew there.

3. Please elaborate a bit on your approach to making your film.

I directed this film together with Erez Tadmor. The idea was to combine Japanese and Israeli elements in our style of directing. It was clear that we would film the scenes of Sumo training in a way that they would remind Japanese paintings. Nevertheless, we took care to inject also enough Israeli and oriental elements from the city of Ramle. Of course it was most important to film our heavy weight actors in the most beautiful and aesthetic way possible. Since it is a comic drama we decided on a steady camera instead of handheld which might have given the film a realistic rough surface. Apart from that we wanted to give the film the appeal of a modern fairy tale that takes place in the city of Ramle. The first part of the film is shot in grayish colors that turn colorful at the moment that our hero meets Sumo that even warm up when they begin to wear the traditional red Sumo shorts later on.

4. What were some of the biggest challenges you faced in developing the project?

The biggest challenge during our production was the Sumo training. We wanted the Sumo scenes to look as professional as possible and it was clear that we had to study it thoroughly. So, we traveled to Japan in order research the world of Sumo: there our guides took us from one Sumo university to another, we watched their tournaments and interviewed students. In addition to that we had our actors go through some exhausting Sumo training und an Israeli Sumo trainer three months before the shoot began.

5. How do you define success as a filmmaker, and what are your personal goals as a filmmaker?

From my point of view my success as a creator is defined through the work itself and the steadfastness to realize my cinematic vision as a film maker, when I succeed in

entertaining my audience and yet to pass on some kind of underlying important message. Also in my last film "Mortgage" which I directed together with Tal Granit, it was important to me to tell a comical story with a social message. I believe that cinema can make a difference and that is why my films will always serve the treatment of social issues.

6. What are your future projects?

My next film is called "My Sweet Euthanasia". Writing and directing will be done together with Tal Granit who collaborated with me also on my first film "Mortgage". The story evolves around a group of pensioners who live in a protected residence and are fed up with the legal system. They decide to take matters into their own hands and form an 'independent' committee that will lend a helping hand to their dying friends in need of assistance. The rumor about this "Secret" committee travels from nursery to nursery, from exercises at the beach in the morning to the bowling halls in the evening and old people come knocking on the doors of the "Secret" committee.

EREZ TADMOR – DIRECTOR OF "A MATTER OF SIZE"

1. What were the circumstances that lead you to become a filmmaker?

For me cinema represents a combination of different forms of art with which I occupied myself during my youth, first of all painting and music, later on also photography. I knew already early on that I wanted to work in the world of film but did not yet know how I would fit in, but I was sure that this was the field I wanted to work in. At the beginning I used to do very realistic drawings, which evolved in time into caricatures and comics. Later on I began drawing storyboards for the films I imagined and that I had written as a boy. They stayed storyboards only. Then I began to play the guitar and composed the music to my first film, which remained an impromptu only. From there I began to study camera and imagined how I would film my first film, but also those pictures stayed only in the family album. One day I bought my first video camera and knew instantly that this was what I wanted to do with my life. And those video clips – they stayed in my private collection of tapes.

2. What prompted the idea for your film and what excited you to make you undertake it?

Usually an idea is prompted through a personal experience, or the combination of several ideas, some of them personal and others through circumstances. For ideas I usually rely on my personal world on my surroundings, the place I live in or other places I have lived at, inspiration through characters from the present or the past. When I do have a personal connection with a project it is easier for me to connect to the characters and the story. I believe that a filmmaker has to have a personal connection with his

project; otherwise he will have to do some serious research in order to get excited about his topic.

3. Please elaborate a bit on your approach to making your film.

My co-director Sharon Maymon and I had the same approach to the film "A Matter of Size". We decided to shoot the film in a precise and aesthetic way according to a storyboard that had been drawn up beforehand. Because our main characters are heavy people we knew and wanted to show them in the most beautiful and aesthetic way, through planned shots and in a perspective that would compliment our actors. We also decided to use only steady shots as compared to my first film that was shot only handheld according to the principles of the Danish "Dogma". As a director whose previous film was highly realistic and dramatic, my attitude changed toward the idea of filming a fairy tale, presenting my audience with a fairy-tale like experience. "A Matter of Size" is a comic drama that strives not to hurt its characters or make them look vulgar which was a trap only waiting for us to fall into.

4. What were some of the biggest challenges you faced in developing the project?

Quite a while before the production itself, Sharon Maymon and I traveled to Japan in order to research and to learn about the world of Sumo. We came to a Sumo university in Tokyo and joined the students for a few days, watched their training and tasted the food they ate. We learned that Sumo is a sport solely for men and that it is forbidden for women to even come close. We continued our research after our return to Israel and three months before the shoot began we had our main actors undergo a thorough training three times a week under the strict auspices of our local Sumo trainer, who paid attention to the last and most tiny detail which also prompted them to have the perfect timing during the shoot itself.

5. How do you define success as a filmmaker, and what are your personal goals as a filmmaker?

The success of a filmmaker in my opinion is measured by the topics he picks up and the tenacity with which he sticks to his subject. The question is whether he succeeds in bringing the relevance of his message to the audience, no matter if this is his first or his 30th film. A good filmmaker should be appreciated by the audience as well as international critics. I feel that I have still quite a lot to say, in the short or long term future.

One of my favorite film directors is Sidney Lumet who has made more than 40 films in his lifetime. Maybe not all of his films are complex masterpieces but once in a while he succeeded in drawing a picture of society with a profound meaning. After him emerged a whole generation of American filmmakers who produced high quality cinema that dealt with social topics. Lumet's work holds his own among the classics of American realism of the 70's. Like this he has continued his work that always touches important American topics.

6. What are your future projects?

My next project is a comical road movie called "Son of God" about the journey of a father and a son who have grown apart over the years. The film will be an Israeli-Polish co-production as well as a reunion with co-director Guy Nattiv, with whom I directed the film "Strangers".

Father (78) and son (45) lost touch because the son turned orthodox religious, belonging to the Braslav Jews. They haven't spoken in ten years. Now they travel through the snow covered Poland searching for a magician who saved the father's life 65 years ago. They don't know if he is dead or alive. This borderline surrealistic journey ends in a final test of their relationship. This is, in fact, a personal testimony about my own grandfather and that of Guy Nattiv. He decided at a very late age to go and look for the man who had saved his life during the holocaust. By the way of magic he survived WW2 and now by the way of magic he succeeds in reaching his son's heart.

A Matter of Size

Awards

Israeli Oscars (Ophir Awards) 2010	Winner	Best Actress Irit Kaplan
	Winner	Best Costume Design Inbal Shuki
	Winner	Best Supporting Actress Levana Finkelstein
Alpe d'Huez Int'l Comedy Film Festival 2010	Winner	Grand Prix Feature Film
	Winner	Special Jury Award Feature Film
Karlovy Vary Int'l Film Festival 2009	Winner	Audience Award
Sarlat Int'l Cinema Festival 2009	Winner	Prix Aquitaine Feature Film
	Winner	Prix Decouverte Erez Tadmor Sharon Maymon
San Francisco Jewish Film Festival 2009	Winner	Audience Award
Washington Jewish Film Festival 2009	Winner	Audience Award
Traverse City Film Festival 2009	Winner	Firefighter's Jury Prize Best Comedy Film
Brooklyn Israel Film Festival 2010	Winner	Audience Award
Detroit Jewish Film Festival 2010	Winner	Audience Award
Seattle Jewish Film Festival 2010	Winner	Audience Award

VARIETY April 27, 2009

A Matter of Size

Sipur gadol (Israel-Germany-France)

By ALISSA SIMON

A UCM Films (Israel)/Tapuz Communications (Israel)/ K5 Intl. (Germany)/Mact Prods. (France) production. Produced by Chilik Michaeli, Avraham Pirchi, Tami Leon, Oliver Simon, Daniel Baur. Co-producers, Micha Shagrir, Marc Sillam, Antoine de Clermont-Tonnerre, Bill Stephens. Directed by Sharon Maymon, Erez Tadmor. Screenplay by Maymon, Danny Cohen Solal, based on an original idea by Maymon. **With:** Itzik Cohen, Irit Kaplan, Dvir Benedek, Alon Dahan, Shmulik Cohen, Togo Igawa, Evelin Hagoel. (Hebrew, Japanese dialogue)

Fed up with dieting, four overweight friends in the Israeli city of Ramle decide to start a sumo wrestling club in genial situation comedy "A Matter of Size," from helmers Sharon Maymon and Erez Tadmor. Part sports drama, part love story, this sweetly absurd tale of forlorn blue-collar guys pursuing a difficult goal -- and in the process learning to accept themselves -- recalls audience-pleasing fare such as "The Full Monty." With visual and verbal humor hitting the mark, the pic could attract offers from niche arthouse distributors Stateside. A summer theatrical opening in Israel promises hefty returns.

Shy salad bar chef Herzl (Itzik Cohen) weighs in at a massive 340 lbs. and can't catch seem to catch a break. After getting booted out of his diet group for gaining 28 lbs. in two months, he loses his hotel dining room job when customers complain he's not presentable because of his size.

Winding up as a dishwasher in a Japanese restaurant, Herzl discovers the world of sumo, where large people are honored and appreciated. It takes some time to convince his heavyweight pals Aharon (Dvir Benedek), Sami (Shmulik Cohen) and Gidi (Alon Dahan) that a sport involving "two fatsos in diapers and girly hairdos" could be for them, but with the reluctant assistance of restaurant owner Kitano (Togo Igawa), they start a training regime.

Co-helmets Maymon and Tadmor ("Strangers") display a finely honed visual sense and superb comic timing in the cleverly composed training sequences. Shots of the four elephantine guys, clad only in their bright red fighting *mawashi*, as they jog through green fields, perform the graceful ritual warm-ups, and strain to push one another out of an improvised *dohyo* (wrestling ring) in the forest are ludicrously funny and beautiful.

Meanwhile, Herzl's commitment to a demanding men-only sport threatens his budding relationship with sympathetic plus-size social worker Zehava (Irit Kaplan).

Although the story concept could be set anywhere, and indeed, is ripe for a remake, the laconic script by Maymon and Danny Cohen Solal captures the essence of Israeli Jewish humor with dialogue such as "even on a diet, you have to eat," and "with your mouth, we only talk."

Subplots involving Aharon's wife's infidelity and Gidi's sexual orientation work better to support the main theme of self-acceptance than does one about Zehava's attempt to impose a nutritious diet on female prisoners.

Appealing cast comprises mostly Israeli TV vets who dig into their meaty, flesh-baring roles with palpable joy. Trim Japanese thesp Igawa brings a grave dignity to the proceedings.

Colorfully detailed tech package is first-class.

Camera (color) David Gurfinkel; editor, Einat Glaser-Zarhin; music, Eyal Leon Katzav; production designer, Yoram Shayer; costume designer, Inbal Shuki; sound (Dolby SR), Ronen Nagel. Reviewed at Berlin Film Festival (market), Feb. 10, 2009. (Also in Tribeca Film Festival -- Discovery.) Running time: 92 MIN.

The Jewish Daily Forward

By Jordana Horn

Published April 15, 2009, issue of [April 24, 2009](#).

'A Matter of Size' ("Sipur Gadol") happens to be one of the Israeli entries in this year's Tribeca Film Festival — but it addresses personal conflict rather than the more stereotypical geopolitical conflict. Directed by Sharon Maymon and Erez Tadmor, the movie tells the story of an overweight Israeli chef who mutinies from the rigors of his diet support group to pursue a field where one can be overweight with impunity: He forms Israel's first sumo wrestling team.

The film is a comedy, not a documentary, and there can be no denying that it owes debts of gratitude to other cinematic scenarios where "growth through conflict" is sprinkled with humor. The obvious model for "Outsider Receives Asian Tutelage To Overcome His Own Insecurities" is "The Karate Kid," but Kitano, the group's appointed sumo sage and sushi restaurant owner, is no Mr. Miyagi; he's a Makuya Japanese Zionist, of all things (go ahead and Google it; I did). Another familiar trope the film uses is "Beauty Comes in All Shapes," which "A Matter of Size" shares with the two British films about getting naked — "The Full Monty" and "Calendar Girls." And finally, of course, there is the inevitable motif recurrence: the getting in shape montage (mercifully short) and the men sauntering along the highway and *shuk* (marketplace) in itsy-bitsy sumo outfits scene. Okay, arguably the latter is not yet a true cinematic formula, but the Sumo Saunter is a recurring gag in the film.

But, while the film uses sumo on one level, the clichés work because the movie's real subject has nothing to do with the Japanese sport. What puts "A Matter of Size" in a weight class (forgive me) of its own is its examination of conceptions of physicality within the context of Israeli society — a society based on occasionally brutal candor, the near-desperate desire not to be a "frier," or "sucker," and the hardy character of the "sabara." The plight of the protagonist, Herzl Musiker (played by an expressive and boyish Itzik Cohen), and his four friends, Sammy, Gidi, Aharon and Zehava, is all the more touching as a result. As a child, Herzl is referred to as "Har Herzl" (an allusion to the Israeli mountain), but I'd venture his name was chosen to make clear the parallel between the character and Theodore Herzl, who famously said, "If you will it, it is no dream." The original Herzl may not have meant sumo, but never mind.

Fat people, the film contends, are people that Israeli society deems it completely okay to hate. True in America, which, ironically, is one of the fattest countries around, it seems doubly true in Israel — an active, appearance-conscious society with that lethal combination of great beaches and mandatory military service. "How come there's no sumo in Israel?" one guy inquires as the four buddies sit around Gidi's shawarma joint. "Because there are no fat people in Israel," Aharon flatly answers, taking another tremendous bite of his shawarma.

Of course, there are the expected scenes of fat-person-rejection-sadness: Gidi's struggles with online dating, for example, or Aharon's constant fears of his wife's infidelity. But where the Farrelly brothers' film "Shallow Hal" deliberately, and cruelly, plays on its viewers' prejudices and preconceptions, "A Matter of Size" puts the viewer on Herzl's side from the very beginning. Herzl is deliberately introduced in the opening scene as a sweet, young, overweight boy waiting to be weighed at school. By the tenth minute when we see the adult Herzl, along with four friends, semi-nonchalantly try to squeeze into the compact for the diet group carpool, they are our buddies. Sure, we like Herzl more than the other boys — who wouldn't feel for the guy who's kicked out of the diet group for gaining rather than losing weight? — but we like them all, even with their imperfections.

And the film makes it even easier to sympathize with them, because for the most part, the world around them is filled with real jerks. For example, anyone familiar with Israeli culture — or American Weight Watchers, for that matter — will derive great amusement from the film's depiction of an Israeli weight-loss "support group." Where the American equivalent is all about being supportive of one another — "This is your second meeting? Come on, folks, let's give her a big hand and two stickers!" — Evelin Hagoel's depiction of Geula, the cold-blooded, chain-smoking Israeli diet facilitator, brings a new dimension to the label "tough love." Her brutal honesty comes across as nothing less than jaw-droppingly evil. "It hurts me to see you turning yourself into a whale," she says on Herzl's answering machine. "Bye-bye, sweetie." Geula's a gem of pure kindness compared with Herzl's mother, Mona, with whom he lives. Mona couples her regular "You're getting too fat; I can't stand to look at you!" comments with the immediate follow-up of: "There's more couscous in the fridge. Go ahead and finish it." Mona's unexpected, piercing meanness

(its roots in the circumstances of the death of Herzl's father notwithstanding) lends more poignancy to the film's point: For people who are overweight, even love is a double-edged sword. Mona shows that people who are overweight shouldn't expect to love themselves, or to be loved by anyone else.

Of course, no growth-through-conflict fable would be complete without a love story: Herzl is, in fact, loved. Zehava (Irit Kaplan) meets Herzl in the diet group and there is a spark of genuine attraction. Later, in one of the film's most emotionally honest moments, Zehava leans seductively in the doorway of her bedroom, clad in only a white silk negligee that strains at her hips and pendulous breasts. In that moment, she could not be more beautiful: She is simply a divorced woman hoping against hope to find love, while knowing that appearances can be deceiving. "I hope you don't make love with the lights off," she says — and in her candor, she could not be more attractive, standards be damned. The ensuing playful war with Herzl — lights on, lights off! — is the subject of amusement rather than shame, foreplay rather than forbearance. This, the film says without words, is what the world could promise all of us, Israelis and Americans alike, if we could only let go of our inhibitions and simply be ourselves.

It's the Israeli "I am who I am" unapologetic spirit that makes this film transcend its formula and the characters transcend their outcast status. Only in Israel, after all, would a boyfriend, upon hearing that a billboard of a girl in a bikini depressed his girlfriend, take it on himself to, shall we say, put an extra few pounds on the billboard with the help of some spray paint. If you will it, after all, it is no dream.

Jordana Horn is a lawyer and writer at work on her first novel.