

FROM THE PRODUCER OF THE ACADEMY AWARD-WINNING **IDA** AND **KOLYA**  
AN **OLIVER HERMANUS** FILM

BFI LONDON  
FILM FESTIVAL  
BEST FILM AWARD 2019  
NOMINEE

# MOFFIE



DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JAMIE D RAMSAY EDITORS ALAIN DESSAUVAGE & GEORGE HANMER PRODUCTION DESIGNER FRANZ LEWIS COSTUME DESIGNER REZA LEVY CASTING DIRECTOR JACI CHEIMAN COMPOSER BRAAM DU TOIT  
SCREENPLAY OLIVER HERMANUS AND JACKY SIDEY BASED ON THE BOOK BY ANDRÉ CARL VAN DER MERWE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER PHILIP PRETTEJOHN CO-PRODUCERS THERESA RYAN-VAN-GRAAN LAMEE ALBERTUS  
GENEVIEVE HOFMEYER PRODUCERS ERIC ABRAHAM & JACK SIDEY DIRECTED BY OLIVER HERMANUS



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## LOGLINE

Een militaire dienst wordt een kwestie van overleven voor een jonge soldaat, nadat er een innige band ontstaat tussen hem en een medesoldaat.

## SYNOPSIS

Zuid-Afrika in het jaar 1981. Nicholas heeft altijd geweten dat hij anders is en houdt dat voor de buitenwereld verborgen. Intussen zit de minderheidsregering van Zuid-Afrika in een conflict verwickeld met de Angolese grenspost en moeten alle blanke jongemannen ouder dan zestien twee jaar militaire dienstplicht vervullen. In het leger worden de mannen intensief voorbereid op de dreiging van het communisme en “die swarte gevaar”. Daarbovenop moet Nicholas nog de wreedheid van het leger zien te overleven, nadat hij een innige band schept met een medesoldaat.





## DIRECTOR'S BIO

Moffie is de vierde speelfilm van Oliver Hermanus, sinds zijn debuut in 2009. Zijn eerste speelfilm (Shirley Adams) ging in première in de competitie van het 62e editie van Locarno Film Festival en zijn tweede speelfilm (Schoonheid/Beauty) ging in première in de Un Certain Regard competitie van het Cannes Film Festival en won hiermee de Queer Palm Award. Hermanus' derde film (The Endless River) ging in première in de competitie van het 72e Venice Film Festival en was daarmee de eerste Zuid-Afrikaanse film die werd uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan de officiële competitie. Oliver werd geboren in Kaapstad op 26 mei 1983, voltooide zijn Master of Arts diploma aan de London Film School en heeft talloze onderscheidingen voor zijn werk op zijn naam staan.

## FILMOGRAPHY

Shirley Adams - 2009

Schoonheid (*Beauty*) - 2011

The Endless River - 2015

Moffie - 2019

## DIRECTOR'S COMMENT

I knew very little about the Border War between South West Africa (now Namibia) and Angola. I also knew very little about the generation of white South African men who were forced to fight that war. In fairness, I have never given much thought to the hardships of white South Africans. In my mind, informed by the hardships and struggles of my own Coloured parents and their parents before them, all white people in South Africa have had it easy. For the most part this is true. The system favoured them and it was wholly unfair and unforgivable. As a result I never considered young, gay, white youth living in the 80's, never saw them as enemies of the state. This is a film about such a youth. White, eighteen and coming to terms with his illegality.

There have been many stories told over the past two decades about the Apartheid system and the lives it ruined, the heroes it spawned and the toll that it took on the heritage of South African people. However here is a seemingly more complex point of view - a hidden history of the generation of white men who had to endure the Apartheid propaganda machine. For many their conscription into the army destroyed them because it forcibly imprinted upon nearly one million white boys a diseased ideology of white supremacy, racial intolerance and the desire to eradicate homosexuality and communism from South African society. Even though he is part of the ruling race - our lead, Nicholas's life is at risk. He is property of the state, there to defend the indefensible without question or resistance. He is commanded to relinquish himself to the cause of the government which could so easily lead to his death. The war he is fighting is ultimately pointless and the lives lost are lost in vain. The terror that was inflicted on the innocent was racially motivated and in the end no side could claim true victory. Our story is Nicholas's journey to overcome, not without loss and suffering but in the end with an acceptance of who he is in 'that' South Africa.

It must be mentioned that the last of this generation of men, moulded to be soldiers not just for the border but for the streets of South Africa, are still alive today. They are fathers and brothers, sons and uncles. Very few speak about their time in the army, as if the militarisation of these boys near the fall of Apartheid never happened. But the memory lingers and even for those who were not gay or politically averse to the system, the damage is significant and present. This is a film about how white South African men have been made for nearly a century.

Our title, Moffie, is a potent and derogatory Afrikaans term for 'gay'. It is a South African weapon of shame, used exclusively to oppress gay or effeminate men. When you are called this word for the first time you start to hide from it. You begin to edit yourself, it is when you first pretend you are someone else. The shame is instant, the realisation that *you* are visible. People can tell you apart. All you know about that word is that it means you are bad. You are reject-able and unlikable and unacceptable and during Apartheid, just like a black man or woman, you were a crime. And so you needed to put it away, you needed to cover it up, kill it - the *moffie* inside you.





# INTERVIEW WITH OLIVER HERMANUS

## **What inspired you to adapt André-Carl van der Merwe's iconic memoir?**

When I first read the book I was quite taken by the texture and detail it told of this part of our history. I did not know about the treatment of gay conscripts, about psychiatric Ward 22 or the damage that the system did to so many men and I felt very strongly that there was a power to Moffie that needed to be told on a cinema screen.

## **What was it about the story that resonated with you?**

At the centre of this film there is a word - moffie. Any gay man living in South Africa knows this word and has a relationship with it. It's a weapon that has been used against us for so long. I felt a strong pull to exploring my own history with this word which ended up being a scene in the film and I think it was the want to denuclearise, reform this word that was at the heart of my decision to make this film.

## **Issues of identity and sexuality are more pertinent today than they were in 1981, when the story takes place, do you agree?**

Absolutely. We are living in a global culture where we still see the persecution of the LGBT community all over the world. At the same time never before has the voice of this global community been more heard. A film like Moffie is there to remind us of what has come before, what we have endured and suffered through and why it is important to never stop being vocal and proud.

## **For some, Moffie has a derogatory meaning, to others it's a term of endearment, how do you see it?**

I see it as a weapon, I avoid using the word. It still has stigma for me and making this film allowed me to talk to other gay men about their relationship with this word. For most, I think, it still carries a pain. I am all for the act of appropriating it for good but like the book, I hope that having it as the title of the film will go some way to eroding the word's toxicity.

## **With Skoonheid you delved in the psyche of a young man who becomes the object of desire of an older man, with Moffie you explore the sexuality of a gay man imprisoned by society and the laws of an apartheid government ... your views on this?**

Skoonheid was about repression and self loathing where I would say that Moffie is about what comes before - shame and indoctrination. The two films will of course go hand in hand, one might even say that Moffie plays as a prequel but I think their messages are very different and as much as Moffie is about a gay man's journey through the SADF, it also the journey of an entire generation of white men, gay and straight. The film rests its attention on all them all.

## **Was it a difficult process from film to screen? What were the challenges?**

This has been a four year journey! I would say that the major obstacle was the casting process. Because the film's characters are all 18 or so, it's a tough age group to cast for. We spent more than a year finding our core cast and were quite blown away by the unseen talent in South Africa.



**Tell me about the cast and how you approached them to bring the characters to life?**

The cast are made up of high school students, trained actors, untrained actors and even non actors. They spent a good amount of time with a military advisor who put them through an SADF bootcamp. They learnt how to shoot R1 rifles and of course they were taught how to drill. I then spent a few weeks rehearsing with them in Cape Town and beyond that tried to fill their heads with as much history about the time as I could.

**What do you hope audiences will get from watching *Moffie*?**

I hope audiences will get an visceral experience. The film is heart felt and emotive. No doubt, for some, it will conjure up memories of their own time in the military but most of all I think the film is a bit of tear jerker, so perhaps some tears? Haha!

**Tell me about some of the issues regarding being a 'Moffie' that you deal with in the film?**

The film's primary focus is masculinity. It explores the way that white South African men have been made for over a century. How the Apartheid system, the army and the conservative nature of this country fed young boys an ideology of superiority and hate. Being a 'moffie' in this context meant being a crime, being a problem, a mistake.

**How did you approach these issues as a filmmaker?**

With a lot of research, haha! For me, personally, it was sticking to the core idea - that this was a system of hate and separation, and the intention of the conscription was to re-enforce and protect that system. I want to show that process through the film, letting an audience witness and experience the indoctrination.

**Why do you think it was so difficult for young conscripted men to deal with their gayness during this period in South African history?**

Because of the simple fact that it was deemed criminal and it was dangerous. The society at that time was determined to keep gay men and women in the closet.

**Do you think it has changed much, even with the new Rainbow nation Constitutional support?**

In the army, I am not too sure. But in the general public, there has been a change. I guess the simple fact that I can make a film like this is testament to that.

**Being gay has always been an issue when it comes to the military internationally. Why do you think this milieu makes it so confrontational?**

I think it is the nature of the army - it is an inherently masculine, heterosexual space and is, to a large degree, inhabited by men. I think that with the context comes an expectation and assumption that all men in the military should want to be heteronormative. Of course, we have now seen how that is changing.



## CAST

De cast van Moffie bestaat uit middelbare scholieren, professionele acteurs en onervaren acteurs, waarvan de meeste nog onbekend waren totdat ze voor deze film werden gecast.

De casting voor Moffie begon al in oktober 2017 en de eerste ronde werd gehouden in Kaapstad en Johannesburg. Dit was tevens ook de eerste keer dat we kennismaakten met onze hoofdrolspeler, Kai Luke Brummer. In de loop van een jaar deed Kai auditie voor drie verschillende rollen maar werd uiteindelijk eind 2018 voor de rol van Nicholas gecast.

Begin 2018 werd de casting opengesteld voor het reguliere publiek. We hebben veel jong, nieuw talent ontdekt nadat we overspoeld werden met aanmelding. Na ruim 1000 audities, ontdekten we Matthew Vey en Rikus Terblanche, toen allebei nog middelbare scholieren.



# CAST & CREW

NICHOLAS VAN DER SWART - Kai Luke Brummer

DYLAN STASSEN - Ryan de Villiers

MICHAEL SACHS - Matthew Vey

OSCAR FOURIE - Stefan Vermaak

SERGEANT BRAND - Hilton Pelser

SNYMAN - Wynand Ferreira

BESTER - Rikus Terblanche

VAN DER MERWE - Shaun Chad Smit

ROOS - Hendrik Nieuwoudt

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REGGISEUR - Oliver Hermanus

SCENARIO - Oliver Hermanus & Jack Sidey

PRODUCENTEN - Eric Abraham & Jack Sidey

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY - Jamie D Ramsay

PRODUCTION DESIGNER - Franz Lewis

COSTUME DESIGNER - Reza Levy

HAAR & MAKE-UP - Francesca Van Der Feyst

EDITORS - Alain Dessauvage & George Hanmer

COMPONIST - Braam du Toit

COLORIST - Joseph Bicknell

CO-PRODUCENTEN - Theresa Ryan-Van-Graan, Lamees Albertus,  
Genevieve Hofmeyr





*Zuid-Afrika / Verenigd Koninkrijk - 103 minutes - Kleur- 1:18 - DCP - 5.1.*

Taal: Afrikaans/Engels

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