

PM and STUDIOCANAL  
present

# HOLY LANDS

A FILM BY AMANDA STHERS

WRITTEN FOR THE SCREEN BY AMANDA STHERS

BASED ON THE BOOK 'HOLY LANDS'  
WRITTEN BY AMANDA STHERS

**James Caan**

**Tom Hollander**

**Jonathan Rhys Myers**

**Efrat Dor**

**and Rosanna Arquette**

**with the participation of Patrick Buel**

**and Guila Clara Kessous**

# HOLY LANDS

## SYNOPSIS

Adapting her critically acclaimed novel *Les Terres Saintes*, Amanda Sthers writes and directs *HOLY LANDS*, which explores the complicated lives of the Rosenmerck family.

Lapsed Jew Harry (James Caan) is a former cardiologist who suddenly decided to spend his retirement as a pig farmer in Nazareth, Israel, in a move which deeply shocks his family, the local community and rabbi, Moshe (Tom Hollander). Back in New York, his ex-wife Monica (Rosanna Arquette) is trying to manage the lives of their adult children Annabelle (Efrat For) and David (Jonathan Rhys Meyers), as well as her own, after finding out she has a brain tumour.

Filmed in the iconic landscapes of Israel, *HOLY LANDS* is a universal story about love, family, loss and tolerance, told with incredible humour and heart through career best performances by a stellar ensemble cast.

*HOLY LANDS* shows that, even in the most dysfunctional of families, what matters is the courage to say what has been left unsaid...

# THE WRITER/DIRECTOR



## AMANDA STHERS

Amanda Sthers was born in Paris and now lives in LA. She has written ten novels, which have been translated into more than fifteen languages. To highlight just a few of these works, her 2005 novel *Chicken Street* was named by the Italian press as the best book of the year; her 2007 novel *Madeleine* has sold over 200,000 copies worldwide. She wrote the only authorized biography of the French superstar Johnny Hallyday, that was also a best seller (more than 700,000 copies) and her 2015 novel *Promises (Les Promesses)* was named by *Elle* magazine as one of its picks for top ten novels of the

year and selected in all the prestigious French literary prizes. As a playwright, Sthers has received critical acclaim for her staged works; her 2006 *Old Blonde Jew! (Le vieux juif blonde)* has become a mainstay of the curriculum at Harvard University's theatre courses. « *Le Lien* » was a big success at the prestigious Avignon Festival. She wrote seven plays. Many of her works have Rosy de Palma in the lead roles debuted in Sydney, Australia in August 2017 and is soon to be in widespread in the US after a release

throughout Europe, Asia, Russia and the South America. (it was sold in more than 50 countries). She adapted her novel *Les Terres Saintes* into « *Holy Lands* » an English language film which is now in post-production

and stars Rosanna Arquette, James Caan, Tom Hollander, and Jonathan Rhys Meyers. *Holy Lands* will be published by Bloomsbury in December.

# — Q&A

with Writer/Director Amanda Sthers, Guila Clara Kessous, Patrick Bruel & Jonathan Rhys Myers

**Q:** Guila, do you feel this scene has a political message?

**Guila Clara Kessous:** For me this scene is highly political and very daring to do. It is the chance to listen to a suffering that is not politically correct because it shows the difficulty to kill for the one who is usually considered as the executioner. It allows a better understanding of the situation realistically.

**Q:** How did Amanda Sthers direct you? Was the result much different than what you imagined when you first read the script?

**Guila Clara Kessous:** Amanda was subtle enough to moderate the emotional part of the anger that initially I wanted to play more linearly. When I first read the part, there was more rage in me and Amanda found a way to cool things down despite of the heat (we were in the desert at 104 °F!!)

**Q:** You acted more in theaters than on movie sets, how is it different. Did you enjoy the ability to replay a scene right away?

**Guila Clara Kessous:** It was really different in terms of immediacy and efficiency. For me a movie scene is more intense in a fraction of the time whereas theatre is a durational art form. I highly enjoyed it!

**Q:** Amanda, Why did you choose Guila Clara Kessous for this role?

**Amanda Sthers:** I saw Guila on stage as a Human Right Protector. She has this very special feminine strength: she is at the same time very steady on what she express and her eyes are very gentle and soft. I felt that this contradiction would make her loveable and human whatever she would have to say. In this part she must say the Israeli suffering and their resolution not to go through hell anymore, even if it means being very hard on others.

**Q:** Why do you think this scene is important for the rest of the movie?

**Amanda Sthers:** This scene is important in the movie to explain that good and bad is not always what we think, that they are causes and consequences of previous actions in every situation, in stories hiding behind other stories. And it makes the parallel with the family. The dysfunctional family is at the center of the movie, and what else are the Middle East issues other than a family drama? Cousins that started to hate each other not knowing anymore why and which one started... and unable to say I love you again...

**Q:** Patrick, Is this scene important or dangerous for you in the whole movie and would you say this movie is political?

**Patrick Bruel:** The movie is political in a way because it's a point of view on the world and on a micro society that is family and that for sure represents the world. The scene is important for the director because she wanted to explore two points of view and explains that everyone believes he is a victim, it's all about on which side of the wall are you standing and maybe the only way out is empathy.

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