

TO BOX WITH GOD

A NEW MUSICAL FILM BY MUSICIAN
AND FILMMAKER **AMIT HAI COHEN**

Featuring **JOJO**



Frame from 'To box with god'

A musical cinema project which raises questions about historical justice, ethics and faith in the time of a pandemic, through the enigmatic persona known as JOJO. At the heart of the project lie a series of songs -electronic-messianic sound and critical and apocalyptic texts. This is a chaotic oeuvre merging Trap with ancient Amazigh Piyutim, Jewish spoken word with hip-hop and electronic beats, video clips with documentary scenes and performance art, continuing the artistic line of Amit Hai Cohen's work, known for amalgamating visual and musical mediums and genres into a single world.

'TO BOX WITH GOD' presents an intergeneratio nal link between two artists of Jewish-Moroccan extraction, working both in Jerusalem's underground as well as on international circuits. It's a deep dive into their shared world.

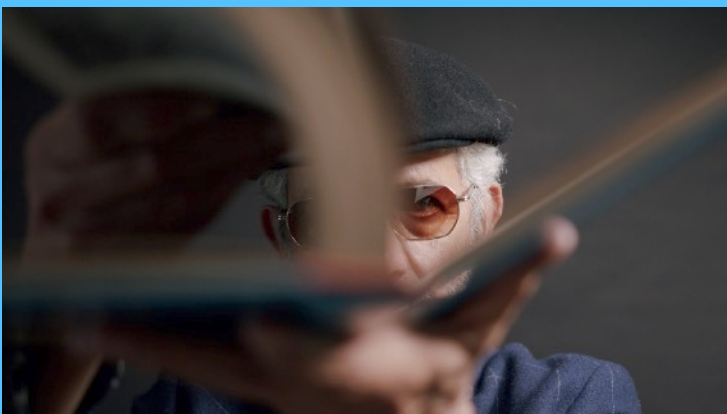
AMIT HAI COHEN, a Netivot native, is a musician, filmmaker and self-taught curator who has worked on the Jerusalem-Morocco axis for the past decade. He composed orchestral works as well as music for dance and film and has created a number of films, including "Stop the Evacuation" and musical documentary "Ya Lhmama" which was premiered at the Essaouira Festival. Along with his life and work partner, the singer and artist Neta Elkayam, he has produced numerous musical projects including "Abiadi" and "Arenas" in which was musical director, cooperating with the best artists on the North African scene, both in Israel and internationally. The couple are currently starring in director Kamal Hachkar's "In Your Eyes I See my Country" (2019) which traces their early careers, and recently released a new EP to great acclaim in Morocco. In 2019 Amit curated "Ziara", the Jerusalem Biennale's flagship exhibit of work by current Moroccan artists from all over the world, displayed at Jerusalem's YMCA. The show became the most successful in the history of the Biennale. In 2020 Amit directed the films and content for the "Banai" exhibit at the Tower of David Museum.



AMIT HAI COHEN

The **'TO BOX WITH GOD'** project is an amalgamation of all of Amit's loves: music and film, with strong references from the world of plastic arts.
www.amithaicohen.com

JOJO, who insists on writing his name without a last name, was born in Rabat, Morocco, grew up Haredi in Paris, later relocating to the United States, where he founded the first organic supermarket in Manhattan. After going bankrupt, he made the decision to live out the rest of his life in Jerusalem. He currently sings with the "Ben Zvi Institute Piyut Ensemble", which performs songs from the Moroccan Atlas mountain tradition where he introduced the unique "Yagel Yaakov" repertoire he specializes in and has carried with him since childhood.



“Oh... the academics who appropriate the knowledge, the historians who've forgotten my mother's history, those who hate the lower people, the ugly ones with no money but tell the truth, those who profit from our pain”

From 'To box with god'

The film, about 30 min. in length, is the first collaboration between JOJO and Cohen, who met in Jerusalem's Moroccan scene and discovered they were neighbours, forming a strong bond of friendship. The short distance between their homes allowed them to continue working together in Amit's studio even with the Covid-19 restrictions. The soundtrack to the film will be released in the near future as an EP.



Frame from 'To box with god'

“The psychedelic musical documentary “To Box with God” is one of the most impressive, enigmatic and bizarre creations you will view; who said Covid-19 doesn’t bring out the best in artists?”

Goel Pinto

Journalist and film critic

“A true pearl has emerged from the hands of Amit Hai Cohen; something which is both a pleasure for those familiar with the tangles of Moroccan music and for those who may not be accustomed but approach it with an ear willing to listen. The work simultaneously threads together and exposes the contacts and ranges of Malhoun, Gnawa, Amazigh vibe with rap and spoken word as if they had always coexisted since the dawn of time. And it has to be said- this Jojo is an absolute phenomenon; his character is a brilliant theatre of so many characters and passages, looks, ways of speaking and accents that serve as a musical, aesthetic plot of their own. That’s without mentioning the dramatic blend of performance, dance and ritual within an impressive cinematic performance. There is so much going on in this piece of art- bravo! I enjoyed it so much and was moved.”

Albert Swissa

Author, curator and art critic

“This work, ‘To Box with God’, by Amit Hai Cohen and Jojo is pure beauty and wisdom composed of visualia, sound and lyricism- Man, just so much wisdom. There is no purpose to boxing with God and admitting it is a kick in the teeth. I beg you to go see it.”

Khen Elmaleh

DJ and journalist

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The recent period caught me unprepared; projects I was deeply involved in were halted and music and visual work were shelved or delayed until some unknown future date. Out of this sense of helplessness, with my heart bleeding alone in the studio, no actual contact with an audience, darkened stages and cinemas shut down, I created "To Box with God". Jojo, the main character in this music film, is a close friend and neighbour with whom I had just been waiting to work. As he lives a mere 3 minute walk from me, it was enough to fulfil the government directives and we were able to meet at my studio, to record, film and edit into the night.

Within this world of creation which shielded us from the insanity outside, we shifted eclectically and freely between mediums. Movement through the various fields has always allowed me to find precision in what I'm trying to say- in contrast with the ever-present, conservative definitions within the industry. A project during this period forced me to pass on external funding or assistance, and to move forward out of passion, to create and leave a mark on this moment in time. Something in this madness and the desire to break out of it and discuss justice and ethics, solitude and persecution, brought me back to the essential core of pleasure in creation; it returned me, through this process of facing down life, to a sort of test of creativity and faith, to box with God.

TO BOX WITH GOD / 30 minutes / UHD 3840 x 2160

DIRECTION AND MUSICAL PRODUCTION: Amit Hai Cohen

ACTING: JOJO

LYRICS AND MUSIC: JOJO and Amit Hai Cohen

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS: Aharon Paz, Hallelujah Abehsera

VISUAL INSPIRATION: Ken Goldman, Neta Elkayam, Munir Fatmi

Produced, recorded, mixed and edited

at ' Estwanat Hai' by Amit Hai Cohen

Dec 2020 - Jan 2021

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