

# THE MILKY WAY

a film by MAYA KENIG

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a film by  
**MAYA KENIG**

ISRAEL, FRANCE  
FICTION / HEBREW / 2023 / 94'

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# Synopsis

Tala, 33, an Israeli offbeat musician, just had her first baby. Desperate to make a living and support her kid with no father in the picture, she takes up a job at the “Milky Way”. In this dairy for breast milk, you can get the best newly mothers can offer: vegan, high-rate of protein, with top-quality essential nutrients milk.

In this dystopic dark comedy, Tala embarks on a journey navigating the complexities of motherhood, while taking a glimpse into the wealthy lives she is supplying.

# Director's statement

I originally had written a director's statement some time ago, but in the light of the events that unfolded on October 7th, I felt like I had to write a new one. Our whole world has turned upside down and it's impossible not to respond to it.

The script of the film was written in Israel under a general atmosphere of despair, a sense of impending deadlock, particularly among my social circles. There was a definite sense that something ominous was brewing due to an intolerable government preserving stark inequalities, in between rich and poor or Israeli Jews and Palestinians. It was evident that this situation could not persist indefinitely; it was bound to reach a breaking point. In the film, the friendship between women, be they Arab, Orthodox Jews, or secular Jews, is kind of a non-issue, but with the current events here in Israel, it gains newfound significance.

Considering this atmosphere, a lot of thoughts floated in my mind regarding what world we're bringing to our kids. I asked myself, how come, despite all the suffering and injustice around, both globally and in Israel, I and so many other people keep having babies, even though it's so easy to prevent it these days. Even people living in the worst conditions, we all keep doing it, bringing life. It's a wonder. And to me, that's **the** question of the film. I think the poem by Wisława Szymborska, woven throughout the film and composed by our heroine Tala, offers a kind of spiritual answer to this question, for me at least:

*So long as that woman/ from the Rijksmuseum/ in painted quiet and concentration/  
keeps pouring milk/ day after day/ from the pitcher to the bowl/  
the World hasn't earned/the world's end.*

Art, and music in the case of the film, is the answer, is what gives a reason.

The image of a factory where breastfeeding women are lined up, like cows in a barn, and have their milk pumped for commercial and retail purposes came to me one day when I was pumping milk for my baby. I imagined such a dairy and I wondered how it would be run. Where would the milk go? And what kind of women would agree to work in such a place?

This spectacle also presents a simple equation through which we can explore different yet parallel examples in our ultra-capitalistic world, where so many of us function like milking cows. This concept captivated me for its simplicity, yet it carries profound layers.

When I started writing and delving into the wondrous world of the Gold-Liquid - breast milk - I discovered that the fictional reality described in the script is in fact just around the corner. We already have today bustling websites dealing with breast milk, a profitable factory selling concentrated breast milk to hospitals (to save lives in the newborn/premature babies units), and some clandestine sweatshops in tin-roofed apartments in the third world, where women sit and pump milk, which is then distributed to the highest bidder.



Breast milk, a fundamental element of motherhood - as mammals, it's what defines us as a species - is also a metaphor for a broader theme: the role of motherhood in its entirety. It involves the perpetual feeding, the unending caregiving, the profound physical connection, the accompanying guilt, anxiety, depression, and the infinite love. In the end, *The Milky Way* is first and foremost a film about Motherhood. It focuses on the first steps of motherhood, closely exploring the metamorphosis a woman has to undergo when she becomes a mother.

A few years ago, I lost my beloved mother, an event that shook my world and broke me down into pieces. Since then, I've been immersed in thoughts about the essence of the symbiotic relationship between a mother and her children, both as a daughter and a mother myself. It's clear to me that here lies the heart of the film, and that it aims to uncover some secret in respect to this fundamental relationship.



# Maya Kenig

Maya is an Israeli screenwriter, director, and editor. She studied at the Sam Spiegel Film School and at The London Film School (LFS).

Her short film *Top of the World* has successfully participated in festivals in Israel and around the world. Her first full-length feature film *Off White Lies* (2012) was selected for Berlinale, Busan Film Festival (South Korea) and the Palm Springs Film Festival, was nominated for seven Ophir Awards in Israel (including for best film, best script and best director), and won the best actor award at the Jerusalem Film Festival. She directed, along with her life partner, Gur Bentwich, the full-length documentary *The Bentwich Syndrome*, which was selected for Docaviv FF and other festivals around the world.

Her short film *In the shade of the palm tree* was screened as part of the *Voice over* project (screened at the Moma NY), which was a tribute compilation film to Abraham Hefner, curated by Rennen Schor. As an editor, she's worked on *Uri and Ella*, *On the Spectrum* (winner of Series Mania 2018, directed by Yuval Shaferman) for which she also won the Israeli academy Award, *Just for Today* (directed by Nir Bergman, winner of special Jury award at Series Mania), and Gur Bentwich's new film *Peaches and cream* (nominated for 11 Ophir awards).

Currently, Maya is releasing a new full-length feature film she wrote named *The Milky Way* and writing a series, *Doctor End*, for HOT cable TV.

# Cast

<b>Hila Ruach</b>	Tala
<b>Hadas Yaron</b>	Nili
<b>Orly Feldheim</b>	Tala's mom
<b>Tali Sharon</b>	Milky Way Manager
<b>Seymor Daniel</b>	Shoshana
<b>Ma'ayan Turgeman</b>	Betty
<b>Samira Saraya</b>	Manar
<b>Evgeny Moliboga</b>	Milkman





# Credits

<b>Screenplay</b>	Maya Kenig
<b>Photography</b>	Amit Yasur
<b>Sound designer</b>	Aviv Aldema
<b>Set designer</b>	Hefi Bohem
<b>Music</b>	Assa Raviv, Tom Meira Armony, Hila Ruach
<b>Editor</b>	Maya Kenig
<b>Costume designer</b>	Rachel Dahan
<b>Producers</b>	Maya Fischer, Gal Greenspan, Roi Kurland, Alona Refua, Roni Shamiss (Green Productions, Israel), Moshe Edery, Leon Edery (United King Films, Israel)
<b>Co-producers</b>	Yaël Fogiel, Inès Daien Dasi, Shani Srór