



LEBANON

Autumn
Season
2010

Director: Samuel Maoz

Starring: Itay Tiran, Michael Moshonov, Oshri Cohen, Xohar Strauss, Yoav Donat

Country: Israel

Cert: 15

Year: 2009

Length: 93 mins

The simplest way to describe the claustrophobic war drama **Lebanon** (2009, Metrodome, 15) is "*Das Boot* in a tank". Writer-director Samuel Maoz ruffled some liberal feathers by shooting his drama entirely from the point of view of Israeli soldiers staring at the world through the sights of a gun. Yet from the dank confines of what looks increasingly like an armoured coffin, these young Israelis witness first hand the atrocities of war, with the clanging chimes of death and destruction rattling evocatively around their tin tomb. The result may not be in the same league as *Waltz With Bashir*, but the anguished breast-beating seems honest and honourable, functioning as both a grand metaphor for Israel's siege mentality and a gruelling exorcism of personal demons. It's a tough watch – ideally made tougher by turning up the sound system to fully appreciate the aural assault.

Mark Kermode

Samuel Maoz was 20 years old when he killed a man for the first time. It was 1982 and Israel had recently begun fighting a war against the PLO and Syria in Lebanon, a campaign which, although supposed to last for just three weeks, would continue, in various guises, for 18 bloody and horrifying years.

Maoz was in Lebanon for 45 days. Thirty of them ("thirty days of hell," he says) he spent in his tank, with only three other men – the commander, the driver and the loader – for company. The remaining 15 he spent in Beirut, in a hotel suite, in the care of Israel's Christian Phalangist allies. "You couldn't leave the tank," he says. "But this is the thing: you didn't want to. You hate the tank, but you love it, too. To be inside it is hell. But it will save you. A tank can survive even a rocket attack." He smiles. "I remember we used to talk about injuries. Our dream was to have a light injury: a bullet in the leg, something like that. We'd seen soldiers with those kinds of injuries. They were smiling – victory smiles! – and smoking and waiting to be taken home. But we knew that wouldn't happen to us. Either we would live, and keep fighting, or there would be nothing left of us to bury."

The Guardian