

# Forest fire leads musician to provide a soundtrack to the Yom Kippur War

BY GABE FRIEDMAN



PICTURE: OFIR ABE

INTERACTIVE: Yair Yona

IT'S not often that a deadly forest fire sparks artistic innovation.

But for Israeli musician Yair Yona — who recently released a “soundtrack” to the 1973 Yom Kippur War — that’s precisely what happened.

It was in 2010, during the Mount Carmel forest fire — the deadliest fire of its kind in Israel’s history, which lasted for three days and left 44 people dead.

Yona felt that no one in the Israeli government or the broader society took responsibility for the disaster, and he had an epiphany that this was one of Israel’s biggest flaws.

“It felt as if the country was on fire, not the state — the actual ground, the soil that we are born from,” he said. “I felt like this DNA of not taking responsibility — the same behaviour, the same circle happens time and time again. And I thought, what was the biggest crisis of this kind? It’s the Yom Kippur War.”

Yona created a 10-track instrumental album about the conflict. But he didn’t stop there — he devised an interactive listening experience, complete with noise-cancelling headphones and an eye mask that forces listeners to viscerally reckon with the war’s effects.

The album, named *Sword* — a word whose three Hebrew root letters can also spell ‘destruction’ — is composed of rock guitar, strings, atmospheric sounds and snippets of real army radio recordings from the Israel Defence Forces archives.

Yona has been holding “listening parties” in Israeli bars, galleries, a school and other public places.

Later this month, he will host a massive listening experience at

the InDNegev festival, near the Gvulot kibbutz, that will include a simultaneous film screening of real IDF footage from the war.

The conflict was fought between Israel and a coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria over territory in the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights.

Although Israel repelled the attacks (which were launched unexpectedly on Yom Kippur of that year) within a few weeks, all sides suffered heavy casualties.

“If you were to ask a typical Israeli in the street if we won or lost in this war, you’d get a very confused answer,” Yona said.

“So many people got their hearts broken because they could not believe the contradiction of their faith in the country.”

Yona, 35, who has released two other solo albums and played as a

bassist in the experimental electronic band Farthest South, spent four years researching the war.

Each track on *Sword* is inspired by a specific aspect of the armed conflict, or are taken from individuals’ stories that he learned about through various documents and films.

For instance, the opening track, *Sir Bassar*, was a code word used on army and public radio that called army units to attention.

But the track *2:37 AM, For 43 Years* is more specific — it refers to the time that one traumatised soldier wakes up every night since fighting in the war.

“It’s every day. Every night, every evening . . . Today I can hardly complete a sentence. There’s this abscess that decapitates me,” the soldier is quoted as saying in a booklet that accompanies the album.

Yona is contributing 20 per cent of all the album’s profits to Natal, a trauma centre for Israeli veterans and terrorism victims.

At the listening parties, Yona reads a paragraph of context before each track. At the end of one session, he says all of the participants stayed silent for five full minutes.

He recently received an email from a man whose father finally opened up to him about his personal war experiences, after more than 40 years of reticence, while listening to the album online.

“I’m not taking a political stand, but a very humanistic stand,” Yona said.

“It’s not about left or right, in war everybody loses.

“I want people to eventually choose life. Not remember the dead, but choose life.”

■ Listen to the album at [yairyona.net/sword-en](http://yairyona.net/sword-en)



Rachael prepares for CD release by going back to school

RACHAEL Sage is celebrating the forthcoming release of her 12th album with a short tour of some of the UK’s top dance schools.

*Choreographic* (MPress), released on November 11, includes the single *Try Try Try*, which has already been an American top 40 hit.

Rachael — who has had 17 songs featured in reality TV show *Dance Moms* — envisioned each track on the new album as a fully-choreographed multimedia experience.

“Making this album was a meditation on my lifelong relationship to ballet and more recently, to lyrical dance,” the New York City-based singer said.

“Dance gave me virtually everything I cherish as an artist: melody, expressiveness, a sense of ensemble, a love of costume and fashion, and foremost, discipline.”

The track *I Don’t Believe It* explores bullying with the video featuring three-time national dance

champion Kaci King, an 11-year-old who reached out to Rachael on Facebook.

The album was co-produced by Grammy Award winner Andy Zulla, who has worked with Idina Menzel and Rod Stewart.

A version of Carole King’s *So Far Away* will feature exclusively on the UK version of the album.

Rachael, who attended The School of American Ballet as a teen, was hugely influenced by songs she heard at her local synagogue.

She told the *Jewish Telegraph* a few years ago how she was given a four-track cassette recorded for her batmitzvah, which she used to create demos.

She added: “The chazan at my shul also taught me guitar, as well as teaching me my batmitzvah piece.”

■ [www.rachael sage.com](http://www.rachael sage.com) or follow her @rachael sage on Twitter

## Antiques Roadshow to feature items with Holocaust stories

FIONA Bruce will host a special Holocaust edition of *Antiques Roadshow* next year.

The BBC has partnered with the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation for the programme.

Featuring artefacts from the Holocaust, and exploring the extraordinary stories behind them, the episode will include footage from interviews conducted by UKHMF board member and BBC news presenter Natasha Kaplinsky.

A spokesman said: “The testimonies uncover untold stories and belongings from more than 100 British Holocaust survivors and camp liberators, the vast majority of whom were speaking for the first time.

“Many of the artefacts in this special edition are of such

historical importance that they are priceless.

“So in a rare break with the traditions of the programme, the BBC has decided that items will not be valued.”

The items featured include jewels buried by families fleeing the Nazis, a precious watch that’s a permanent reminder of a relative who lost her life in Auschwitz and a ring kept hidden through several concentration camps by a survivor.

The programme wants to hear from anyone who has antiques which tell the stories of loss and tragedy in the Holocaust.

The episode is due to be filmed later this year and aired in January.

■ Details: [shareyourstory@bbc.co.uk](mailto:shareyourstory@bbc.co.uk)



MEMORIES: Fiona Bruce

## Drake sets record

JEWISH rapper Drake has been nominated for 13 American Music Awards — breaking the record of 11 set by Michael Jackson in 1984.

The 29-year-old was born Aubrey Graham in Toronto to a black father and white Jewish mother.

He attended a Jewish day school and still occasionally notes Jewish holidays on social media.

He discussed his mixed heritage in a barmitzvah sketch while hosting comedy show *Saturday Night Live* in 2014.

## Legend Dylan can add Nobel Prize to collection

LEGENDARY singer Bob Dylan, pictured, has been awarded the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature.

The 75-year-old star received the prize “for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition”.

Dylan, who was born Robert Allen Zimmerman in Duluth, Minnesota,



in 1941, had long been tipped as a potential Nobel recipient.

The Nobel Prize will sit on his mantelpiece alongside his nine Grammy Awards and his Oscar, among his many other honours.

He is also a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

He will receive the award on December 10, the anniversary of prize founder Alfred Nobel’s 1896 death.