



“ EI GOUNA BEATS

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Casablanca Beats was part of the 2021 Cannes Film Festival's official competition

Under the shining lights of **GFF's** Plaza, Moroccan director Nabil Ayouch's *Casablanca Beats* had its screening at 6:30 p.m. at the Festival Plaza the film which is competing at the GFF's Feature Narrative Competition, tells the story of former rapper Anas, who takes a job at a cultural center in a working-class Casablanca-based neighborhood and

steadily inspires his students. It's noteworthy that *Casablanca Beats* was part of the 2021 Cannes Film Festival's official competition.

Nabil Ayouch was born April 1st 1969 in Paris. He works and lives in Casablanca and is a member of the Academy of Motion Pictures, the Académie des Césars and the

Arab Film Academy. In 1997, Nabil Ayouch directed his first feature film, *Mektoub* which, like Ali Zaoua (2000) represented Morocco at the Oscars. In May 2015, his film *Much Loved* was selected at the Cannes festival, at the Directors' Fortnight. In September, he won the Valois d'Or and the Valois for best actress in Angoulême.

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Today

Red Carpet



Captains of Za'atari by director Ali El Arabi will walk the carpet with the presence of its director, producer Aya Dowara, cinematographer Mahmoud Bashir, and its two protagonists Mahmoud

Dagher and Fawzi at **5:30 p.m.** at **GFF's Festival Plaza**. This will be followed by a screening at **6:30 p.m.** Having its world premiere at Sundance 2021, this film competes in GFF's **Feature Documentary Competition** with its story following two biya living in a camp who pursue their dream to become world soccer stars and finally a world expert visits the camp to select players.

Meet the filmmaker

Mama, I'm Home

Director: Vladimir Bitokov
Sea Cinema 2
12:15 p.m.

A Man and A Camera

Director: Guido Hendrikx
Producer: Jasper Boon
Sea Cinema 2
3:00 p.m.

Captains of Za'atari

Director: Ali El Arabi
Producer: Aya Dowara
Cinematographer: Mahmoud Bashir
Cast: Fawzi Qatleesh
Mahmoud Dagher
Festival Plaza
6:30 p.m.

Life of Ivanna

Director: Renato Borrayo Serrano
Sea Cinema 3
6:00 p.m.

Natural Light

Cinematographer: Tamás Dobos
Producer: Marcell Gerő
TU Berlin Audimax
6:30 p.m.

This Rain Will Never Stop

Director: Alina Gorlova
Screenwriter: Maksym Nakonechnyi
Sea Cinema 2
5:30 p.m.

Shorts Competition

Branka

Director: Ákos K. Kovács
Noir-Soleil
Animator: Chloé Sorin
Nour Shams

cast:

Aisha Rifaie

CAI-BER

Director: Ahmed Abdelsalam

cast:

Mariam Al Ferjani

TU Berlin Audimax

9:45 p.m.

Three Winners at CinemaTech

Organized by Gemini Africa, a pitching session was held today under the title CinemaTech in the TUB, Audimax, for tech startups to showcase their innovative solutions and how it can serve the cinema/film making industry.

The competition is under the umbrella of CinemaTech, the first entrepreneurial track bridging the gap between entrepreneurship and filmmaking, with the aim of uplifting the industry by injecting technological solutions offered by startups.

The Jury members include Egyptian star Amina Khalil, actress-producer Saba Mubarek, Film Producer Shahinaz El Akkad, CEO of Lagoonie Film Production, director Ramy Rizkallah and Adly Toma, CEO of Gemini Africa.

The competition witnessed the participation of 13



startups from Egypt & Africa. The 3 winners received an online MBA from Agora School of Business, as the third winner QUAD A form Uganda had received 30% scholarship, second winner Int Media won 50% scholarship and the first winner Step Inside Had a full scholarship.

Schedule

CAPTAINS OF ZA'ATARI Festival Plaza 6:30 PM	SHORT FILM PROGRAM 1 Audimax (TU Berlin) 9:45 PM	CASABLANCA BEATS Sea Cinema 1 10:00 PM	THIS RAIN WILL NEVER STOP Sea Cinema 2 9:45 PM	Krzysztof Kieślowski - I'M SO-SO Arena 6:30 PM	Short film program 1 Branka - 20 min Lili Alone - 22 min NOIR-SOLEIL - 20 min Nour Shams - 26 min CAI - BER - 17 min
CGP Opening Ceremony Festival Plaza 10:00 PM	PLAYGROUND Sea Cinema 1 12:30 PM	MAMA, I'M HOME Sea Cinema 2 12:15 PM	ARTHUR RAMBO Sea Cinema 3 3:15 PM	A Short Film About Killing Arena 8:30 PM	
THE BLIND MAN WHO DID NOT WANT TO SEE TITANIC Audimax (TU Berlin) 3:45 PM	CAPTAIN VOLKONOGOV ESCAPED Sea Cinema 1 3:30 PM	A MAN AND A CAMERA Sea Cinema 2 3:00 PM	LIFE OF IVANNA Sea Cinema 3 6:00 PM		
NATURAL LIGHT Audimax (TU Berlin) 6:30 PM	MURINA Sea Cinema 1 7:00 PM	ANIMAL Sea Cinema 2 5:45 PM	NITRAM Sea Cinema 3 8:45 PM		

Tomorrow



CGP Holds A Masterclass by American Director Darren Aronofsky

Moderated by Teresa Cavina, CineGouna Bridge is set to host a masterclass by Academy Award-nominated American filmmaker Darren Aronofsky at TU Berlin's Audimax at 12:30 p.m. till 2:00 p.m.

The Brooklyn-born director and producer's work includes the 2017 film, *Mother!*, which starred Jennifer Lawrence and Javier Bardem, and *Noah* as well as *Black Swan*, for which he was nominated for an Academy Award.

As a producer under Protozoa Pictures, Aronofsky was responsible for *Jackie*, which secured three Academy Awards, the documentary feature *Some Kind of Heaven*, and the docu-memoir *Serendipity*.

Up next among Aronofsky's production projects is the Netflix thriller *The Good Nurse*, which stars Noah Emmerich, Jessica Chastain, and Eddie Redmayne. He will also executive-produce Netflix's *The Craving* and FX's series *Kindred*, an adaption of an influential Octavia E. Butler novel.

Currently, Aronofsky is in post-production on the upcoming A24 film *The Whale*, starring Brendan Fraser, Sadie Sink, Hong Chau, and Samantha Morton.



A Special Event Involving the Binational Fulbright Commission

Hosted by the CineGouna Bridge, the Binational Fulbright Commission will hold a special event at the TU Berlin from 10:30 a.m to 4:00 p.m.

Established in 1949 by a protocol between the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United States Department of State, the Binational Fulbright Commission is the largest and oldest Fulbright program in the Middle East and Africa.

Fulbright-Egypt has a diversified portfolio in the arts for Egyptian and American artists that

include: grants for Egyptian artists in the fine, applied, and performing arts; grants for Egyptian professionals in the arts and cultural management, or museum and heritage studies fields and funds Master's degrees for Egyptians and data collection grants for doctoral students. Among Fulbright-Egypt's alumni are actors Lubna Abdelaziz and Hussein Fahmy.

CineGouna Bridge Launches Its First Panel

CineGouna Bridge kicks off with its first panel discussion: Cinema as an Agent for Social Change, which was moderated by Mariam Farag and will take place at TU Berlin's Audimax at 10:30 a. m. till 12:00 p.m.

During this panel, cinema's role in public debates will be discussed as well as how film can be an

agent of change. The panelists will discuss the importance of developing an impact plan and an early corresponding budget to support their outreach campaigns. The panel will include directors of selected films from GFF's 5th edition, as well as institution representatives



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El Gouna Film Festival supported us at a crucial and important stage



Film director Ali El Arabi on Captains Of Za'atari: Celebrating the Champions

Nahed Nasr

The world premiere of Captains Of Zaatari was at the Sundance Film Festival, followed by other international film screenings. How did an audience of different nationalities receive a film about a junior football team in a Syrian refugee camp?

The movie selection at Sundance was a very pleasant surprise, as one of my dreams was to get there. The film also ranked second on the critics' list of Sundance's 15 best films. Despite the diverse backgrounds and nationalities of the different festival audiences, I was surprised by their reception of the film and how they felt connected to the characters' story. Part of this may be due to the fact that its dramatic structure is close to that of a feature film. There is also the dream, the hope, and the friendship that binds the two boys who have grown up before the audience over the seven years of filming.

And now with the film's premiere in the Middle East at El Gouna Film Festival, what are your expectations?

El Gouna Film Festival supported the film at a crucial and important

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This film is about a dream, hope, and friendship that binds the two boys

stage. We came to CineGouna in post-production, after an arduous production journey to showcase parts of what we filmed, and that's how we had co-producers. Yet, I'm waiting for Arab audiences' feedback with great concern. For foreign audiences, the friendship between two teenagers who dreamed of becoming professional football players was the crux of the story. On the other hand, the film's protagonists belong to a Syrian refugee camp, and this is an issue that has other dimensions for the Arab audience. Perhaps they would have expected the movie to get into politics while I was trying to get away from it. My goal was to tell a human story about hope and the fulfillment of dreams, not about numbers in a camp as in the news, which I hope will resonate.

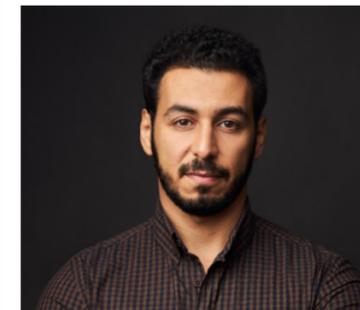
What are the main challenges you faced in making this movie?

There is the challenge that this movie is my debut feature. Also it was a bit risky to make a movie like this, because it required following the daily lives of its characters in the camp over the course of seven years without being sure where it would take us: will they become professional players, give up and stay in the camp, or will they go back to Syria? All roads lead to my film, but the uncertainty is unpleasant for the producers. That's why I decided to take the risk myself, and produce the film with my own sources, and later look for partners. It feels like I did the right thing, and if I could go back in time, I wouldn't hesitate to make the same decision.

How did the film's journey begin in the Za'atari camp for Syrian refugees in Jordan?

For many years I worked as a war correspondent for a news channel, during which I made dozens of television documentaries. But I have often felt guilty for living on

the agony of war victims who are mere numbers and statistics for news reports, but not human beings who have their hopes and dreams. After a short period of time away from the news channels, I decided to tour refugee camps in 22 different countries in an effort not to be a passive viewer of events. My goal was to convey refugee stories to the world from a closer and more humane point of view. That was until I met Mahmoud and Fawzy in the Za'atari camp in Jordan in 2013. When Fawzy asked me, "What is life like outside the camp?" I felt that to him we were aliens carrying cameras and chasing his life. At this point, I decided to approach their world with the intention of staying for a week or two in the camp, but the period lasted more than six years and 700 hours of filming.



The structure and style of your film is radically different from the usual style of news reporting that you've been used to for years. How did you find your cinematic language?

My decisions were free from the constraints and fears of expectations and prejudices, as I had no intention of showing the film in a festival or channel, nor had I hoped to persuade the producers, I had no fear of failure, dissatisfaction or losing money, and my team was extremely supportive. The goal was to get closer to the kids' lives and we were there all the intimate moments that the news cameras didn't care to capture. I wanted people watching the movie to feel that they were inside the camp. We never interfered with the course of events and did not direct the characters in any way. We filmed so many recurring events from which we chose the most expressive during the editing phase, and this was quite a challenge. My relationship with Mahmoud and Fawzy was closer to that of brothers, which was reflected in the way they appeared in front of the camera.

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If I could go back in time, I wouldn't hesitate to make the same decision.

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All roads lead to my film, but the uncertainty is unpleasant for the producers.



Why were Mahmoud and Fawzy, residents of Za'atari camp, the most inspiring, out of the 22 camps you visited in search of a story?

The power of dream and friendship. I can meet Mahmoud and Fawzy in India, China, Egypt, Tunisia or anywhere. Anyone will feel that there is something in common with their story. I myself have had similar experiences to theirs in my hometown of Mansoura at their age. Each of us has a friend whom he loves, and a family member whom he wants to help, just like Mahmoud and Fawzy. This is what I am currently writing about on my feature film project. I once dreamed of being the world champion in boxing, and I pursued that dream. So, I understand very well what the two boys are going through. Fawzy looks like me in his wildness when I was his age. I come from a poor village in Mansoura, where I had many dreams at a time when the dream was called madness. I had no support. I have had a journey where my dream and my will were all I had and it's still on.

Coming-of-age films are rare in Arab cinema. How did you find working with and about this age group?

As for the documentary, the characters at this age are much richer. At this age, we have many contradictions, and our ambitions and dreams are much greater than their normal size, even our sorrows. The transformations that happen from the beginning of adolescence to the end make you feel like you're dealing with two personalities, or one split into two, which is quite inspiring to follow.

What did you get out of a personal and professional level from the experience of Captains Of Za'atari?

What the movie gave me is far more important than the time and money it cost me. It's an affirmation that I can tell the stories I want the way I want, and that a documentary can be popular, at least that's what has happened with the film with Western audiences so far. And that a movie can succeed without a famous producer, director or actor as long as people believe in it. This movie changed me a lot and put me as a director and producer on the map. Through this film, I realized that as a generation we can make films by ourselves without guardians.

5 Years Questions



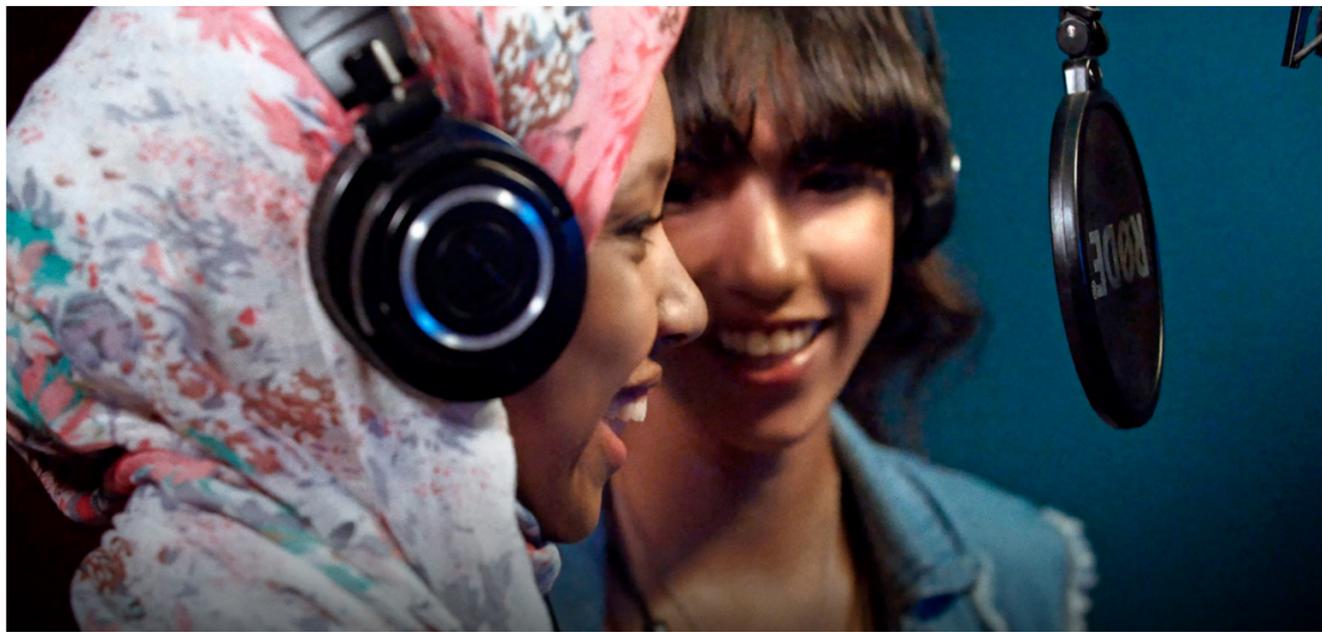
Siza Zayed

CineGouna Bridge Manager

- 5 years of GFF is a rollercoaster of happy memories and hard work!
- GFF is a success story. I was happily part of this success story for the past 4 years, I have seen CineGouna grow every year more than the others. The biggest challenge is always to make a Bridge programme that is diverse and suits different interests from masterclasses, panels, workshops and special events
- The secret of the GFF success is loyalty, teamwork and simply having fun while doing the work
- The greatest moments I experience are in the CGP closing when the festival is almost over, filmmakers are happy with awards and the team is proud of our success!
- I hope that in the next 5 years GFF even grows more, it is already on the map of the most important Arab festivals, and hoping for more success, more guests to come every year.

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I once dreamed of being a champion in boxing...I understand what the boys are going through.



'Casablanca Beats' Film Review Exercise in Self-expression

Stories of young talents working their way to maturity and success via classes in music have become their own genre, and a pretty dull one by now. But director Nabil Ayouch gets it right in *Casablanca Beats*, communicating the creative excitement of hip-hop from the Moroccan ghetto, where a dedicated former rapper teaches it with passion. It's the first of Ayouch's features to land in Cannes competition (*Horses of God* played in Un Certain Regard, *Much Loved* in Directors' Fortnight) and its mix of political

messaging and rousing songs should rally both critics and audiences. Perhaps the news here is that the film is not about the individual talent and personal success of the cast members, but about the power of music and how that power works. The ending is not upbeat but a loud, angry work in progress.

“The music is the other major protagonist and should be a strong attraction for audiences

Given the story's gritty realism, it comes as no surprise that the screenplay is based on Ayouch's own experiences opening a cultural center for young people on the outskirts of Casablanca. *Casablanca Beats* captures that dream, along with some tough realities.

The story begins when a well-known ex-rapper named Anas (masterfully played by Anas Basbousi) arrives in Sidi Moumen to teach his first class. That he is an outsider is clear from the uncertainty with which he drives his car into the area, searching for a cultural center no one has heard of.

“The tremendous energy that can be generated by hip-hop is on display in a climactic group dance on stage.



Deborah Young

In the center, Ayouch just needs to set up a tense conversation between Anas and the woman who runs the place to indicate he's an innovative type with out-of-the-box ideas. He relates to his students, an extroverted bunch of street-smart kids (about equally split between girls and boys) as a group, rather than seeking out a star.

In a mini history lesson on rap, Anas cites African-American culture in the U.S. and the changes that permitted the election of Barack Obama and fueled the Arab Spring movement in Tunisia. Soon he has the class working together. His stern, no-tears attitude shows he takes his subject seriously, but it may be too rigid an approach for kids who face huge struggles at home, parental opposition, even hunger.

Having come from a similar background, Anas systematically pushes back on the weakness and sentimentality of the poetry they write. The big issue is self-censorship, particularly in lyrics that touch on religion or politics. Some fear they'll be arrested if they talk about these subjects in public, but Anas urges them to use their music against the state to defend their civil rights.

Islam is a big issue for Abdou, a religious youth who looks at his female classmates askance but still wants to express himself through hip-hop. He earns our respect when he says hip-hop isn't about faith; if you have self-confidence and a good image of yourself, the extremists can't buy you. This is the film's philosophy in a nutshell. Some of the most interesting culture clashes occur over gender issues when the boys laughingly tell off the girls for not covering up and being "decent." Several of the girls wear tight-fitting hijabs to hide their hair and neckline, while others look like punk rebels off the streets of Paris.

The camera often stays disturbingly close on faces, creating a nervous tension echoed in the editing. The tremendous energy that can be generated by hip-hop at full volume is on display in a climactic group dance on stage.

The music is the other major protagonist and should be a strong attraction for audiences, even those with little experience of hip-hop.



