

ELGOUNA 
FILM FESTIVAL

3RD EDITION
مهرجان الجونة السينمائي

19TH - 27TH SEPTEMBER 2019



CINEGOUNA PROJECTS
platforms **BOOK**

21ST - 26TH SEPTEMBER 2019

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WELCOME TO THE CINEGOUNA *SpringBoard*

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the CineGouna Platform (CGP) team, we welcome you to the 3rd edition of the industry arm of El Gouna Film Festival.

Through its two programs, CineGouna SpringBoard and CineGouna Bridge, the festival aims to create an inspiring hub to support Egyptian and Arab directors and producers.

CineGouna SpingBoard, the project development and co-production lab for Arab projects in development and films in post-production, selected 12 projects in development and 6 films in post-production to participate in the program—chosen from 133 submissions.

A week of activities, including meetings and constructive feedback from mentors, film producers, funding agencies, distributors, sales agents, and festival programmers will be followed by a presentation of the works in development and post-production to potential producers and a jury. The jury will grant the winners up to \$250,000 of cash prizes, thanks to the support of our partners and sponsors.

CineGouna Bridge is proud to continue its mission of being a forum for sharing and learning. Filmmakers and key industry experts have been invited to participate in and share their experiences through roundtable discussions, workshops, presentations, panels and master classes.

Once again, we are delighted to have you join us, and wish you a very creative and successful festival experience.

Sincerely,

CineGouna Platform Team

AWARDS

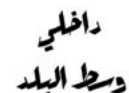
All selected **projects in development** and **films in post-production** will compete for awards that will be decided by a jury of industry experts. The best **project in development** and **film in post-production** will receive a **CineGouna Platform** Certificate and a cash prize of US **\$15,000** each. Additional awards and cash prizes are presented through partnerships with the local and regional institutions listed below. A total prize value of up to US **\$250,000** will be awarded during the **CineGouna Platform Awards Ceremony** to be held at the **Marina Theatre** on **September 26, 2019**.

- US **\$15,000** from **Drosos Foundation**
- US **\$15,000** from **El Taher Media Production**
- US **\$10,000** from **iProductions**
- US **\$10,000** from **Arab Radio & Television Network (ART)**
- US **\$10,000** from **Synergy Films**
- US **\$10,000** from **Ergo Media Ventures**
- US **\$10,000** from **New Century Production**
- US **\$10,000** from **Lagoonie Film Production**
- US **\$10,000** from **Rotana**
- US **\$10,000** from **Maqam Productions**
- US **\$5,000** from **Waraq powered by Magic Beans**
- US **\$5,000** from **Art City for Cinema and TV Production**
- US **\$50,000** pre-sale from **OSN**
- US **\$15,000** value for the participation of a screenwriter in the Film Independent Spirit Awards Residency (7 days in LA) from **Film Independent** and **The U.S. Embassy**
- US **\$15,000** value for the participation of a creative producer in the Film Independent Forum Residency (7 days in LA) from **Film Independent** and **The U.S. Embassy**
- US **\$10,000** worth of post-production services (edit and color grading) from **The Cell Post Production**
- US **\$10,000** worth of color grading services from **The Cell Creative Media Solutions**
- Participation of two filmmakers in IEFTA's Global Film Expression initiative, and sponsorship to attend a partnering festival lab or workshop from **IEFTA**
- Unlimited location shooting service from **Dakhli West El Balad**

drosos (...)



Ergo,



CINEGOUNA SPRINGBOARD JURY



Anup Singh

INDIA, UK

Anup Singh was born in Tanzania, East Africa. He graduated in literature and philosophy from Bombay University. He has been teaching cinema in various countries around the world. As a writer and director, he has made highly acclaimed and award-winning films. His first two feature films, *The Name of a River* (2003) and *Qissa* (2013), were awarded more than 15 prizes, including the Best Asian Film at the Toronto International Film Festival and the Audience Award at the International Film Festival Rotterdam. *The Song of Scorpions* (2017) premiered at the Locarno Film Festival and received numerous prizes at other prestigious international film festivals. His next feature-length project, *Lasya: The Gentle Dance*, was awarded the Prince Claus Award for the best project at IFFR's CineMart, among others.



Jad Abi Khalil

LEBANON

Jad Abi Khalil was born in Beirut, Lebanon. He completed his cinema studies at the Saint Joseph University of Beirut. He has directed and produced several acclaimed documentaries and short films, including *The One Man Village* (2008) by Simon El Habre, which earned the Special Jury Mention at the Dubai International Film Festival and the Best International Feature at the Hot Docs International Documentary Film Festival, and *Diaries of a Flying Dog* (2014) by Bassem Fayad. He is a founding member of Beirut DC, the cultural association for Arab cinema. He was the chairman of its board of directors and head of its DOCmed training program. He is currently head of Beirut DC's Beirut Cinema Platform and its Good Pitch workshop.



Josh Welsh

USA

As president of Film Independent, Josh Welsh oversees all programs and operations of the non-profit arts organization that supports independent films and filmmakers. Since he became president in 2012, the organization has grown significantly. Under his leadership, Film Independent has strengthened partnerships with studios, NGOs and governments, and increased its international reach. He has deepened the organization's commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion in the film industry and has amplified Film Independent's role as an advocate for filmmakers. Prior to becoming president, Welsh was responsible for the overall design, strategic planning and implementation of Film Independent's Artist Development programs for over a decade. He earned his PhD in philosophy from Johns Hopkins University.

CINEGOUNA SPRINGBOARD MENTORS



Elias Ribeiro

BRAZIL

Elias Ribeiro is a Brazilian film producer who has worked in over 10 countries. He is currently based in South Africa, where he founded Urucu Media. His award-winning work spans a wide range of documentary and fiction projects that premiered at Sundance, Berlinale, Festival do Rio, and Durban, among others. In 2017, he had two of his films in the running for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. He is the founder of the Realness African Screenwriters Residency, the Creative Producer Indaba, and the Realness Institute. He helmed the Market and Industry Programme of the Cape Town International Film Market. Lately, he has been a jury member for film funds such as Hubert Bals, mentoring producers in labs, and offering consultancy services to production companies and film-related businesses.



Jihan El Tahri

EGYPT

Jihan El Tahri is the General Director of the Berlin-based institution DOX BOX. She is an Egyptian-French director, writer, visual artist and producer. In 2017, she was invited to join the Academy of Arts and Sciences, and continues to serve as a mentor at the Documentary Campus and the Ouaga Lab. El Tahri started her career as a foreign correspondent covering Middle East politics. She has directed documentaries for several international broadcasters. Her award-winning documentaries include *Nasser* (2015), which premiered at the Toronto International Festival; *Behind the Rainbow* (2009), *Cuba, An African Odyssey* (2007), and the Emmy-nominated *House of Saud* (2004). She served as the regional secretary of the FEPACI, treasurer of the Guild of African Filmmakers in the Diaspora, and advisor on Focus Features' Africa First Program.

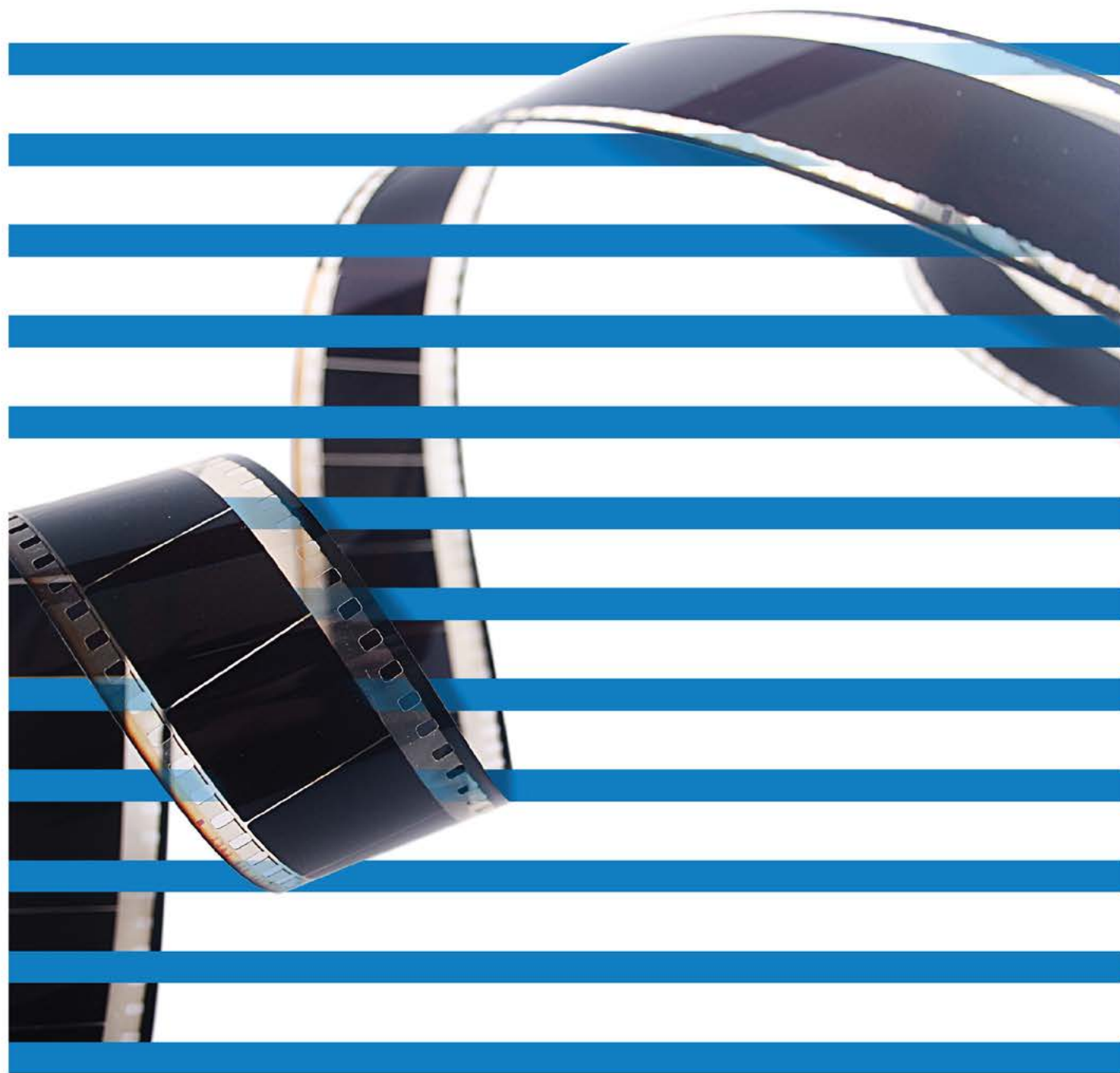


Pamela Biénzobas

FRANCE, CHILE

Pamela Biénzobas is a Chilean-French film consultant, critic and journalist. She graduated from the University of Chile's Journalism School, with postgraduate film studies at Paris X and Paris VIII universities. She has long years of experience in collaborating with film funds, labs, special programs and industry platforms, mainly from Europe and the Middle East, as well as with international film festivals. She has contributed to a number of dailies, magazines and books. She co-founded *Revista de Cine Mabuse*. She was the former Vice President of FIPRESCI (2005 - 2010). Currently, she is the Vice President of the Académie des Lumières, and is in charge of coordinating special awards at *FIPRESCI*.

drosos (...)



Cinema for Development

Drosos Foundation pledges support for one short film in development as part of its cinema for development and creative economies program in Egypt

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iProductions

HOME OF THE HIGHEST-GROSSING FILMS & TV SERIES

الضيف
THE
GUEST

WRITER : IBRAHIM EISSA
DIRECTOR : HADI EL BAGOURY

جاستون
SHEIKH
JACKSON

WRITER : AMR SALAMA, OMAR KHALED
DIRECTOR : AMR SALAMA

HEPTA
the last lecture

هيبتا
المحاضرة الاخيرة

NOVEL BY : MOHAMED SADEK
WRITER : WAEL HAMDY
DIRECTOR : HADI EL BAGOURY

WEDDING
SONG
أفراح القبة

NOVEL BY : NAGUIB MAHFOUZ
DIRECTOR : MOHAMED YASSIN

ماولانا
MAWLANA

WRITER : IBRAHIM EISSA
DIRECTOR : MAGDY AHMED ALI

عيار ناري
gunshot

WRITER : HAITHAM DABBOUR
DIRECTOR : KARIM EL SHENAWY



IS MAKING SOME NOISE WITH A SMASH-HIT LINE-UP OF FILMS



BY CHANCE

by
BASSEM CHRISTO

IN LEBANESE
THEATRES:
SEPTEMBER 26



A SON

by
MEHDI BARSAOUI

 HORIZONS
la Biennale di Venezia



ALL THIS VICTORY

by
AHMAD GHOSSEIN

 INT. FILM
CRITIC'S WEEK
la Biennale di Venezia



YOU WILL DIE AT TWENTY

by
AMJAD ABU ALALA

 VENICE DAYS
la Biennale di Venezia
tiff. CONTEMPORARY
WORLD CINEMA

Synergyfilm

كيرة و إلجن

KIRA & ELGEN

BASED ON THE BEST SELLING NOVEL 1919

SUMMER 2020

WRITTEN BY
AHMED MOURAD

DIRECTED BY
MARWAN HAMED

1919



PROJECTS
IN DEVELOPMENT



DIRECTOR
Zaid Abu Hamdan

Color | 100 min
Arabic

TEAM
Zaid Abu Hamdan (Director)
Aya Wuhoush (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$ 650,000

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$ 177,000

Primary Contact
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DAUGHTERS OF ABDUL-RAHMAN

Jordan

Log-line

Years after escaping their oppressive past, four estranged and offbeat sisters are forced to come together to find their suddenly-missing father.

Synopsis

In a lower middle-class neighborhood in Amman, single and middle-aged Zainab lives a dreary existence as a local seamstress. She looks after her father—a stubborn and distant old man who is going blind. Her father accidentally sees her in a wedding dress she is altering for her cousin. Soon afterward, Zainab wakes up one morning and finds her father, the man who gave reason for her existence, missing. Zainab must now reunite with her three estranged sisters at the old family bookshop to figure out how to find their old man.

It doesn't take long for Zainab to realize that she has unwillingly created a recipe for disaster. Cold, cynical and rich Samah argues with Amaal, who is poor, extremely religious, and wears the niqab. In turn, they clash with their liberal, stubborn and independent little sister Khitam, the one that ran away.

Along the way, the sisters discover, through fights and laughter, that their strict father was a lot like them; a victim of cultural conformity. Only by uniting will they be able to overcome their differences, find their father, and realize who they truly want to be. *Daughters of Abdul-Rahman* is a universal family drama about women making choices in a patriarchal society. It is a realistic and uplifting tale about four very different sisters who confront the truth about themselves in the most unlikely of situations.

Director's Biography

Zaid Abu Hamdan is a Jordanian actor and director who holds a B.A. in communication arts from the Lebanese American University in Beirut, and an M.F.A. from the New York Film Academy in Hollywood. He started his career as an assistant director, TV reporter and producer for MBC group in Hollywood. His TV work extended to developing content for E! Entertainment's Golden Globes coverage in Los Angeles, in addition to creative and directorial positions on reality and scripted shows covering children's content, sports and pop-culture.

In 2009, Abu Hamdan established his company Zaha Productions, which has produced 5 award-winning short films to date. He has travelled with his short films to more than 40 international film festivals worldwide, gaining critical acclaim, and strengthening his ties to studio systems in Los Angeles and the Gulf.

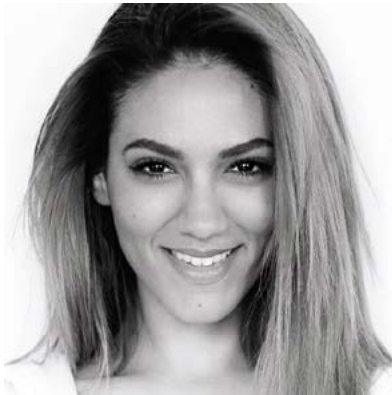


ZAID ABU HAMDAN
Director

Director's Statement

In 2001, I left my family and life in Jordan to explore the world, and pursue a career in film. I was eager to explore what is outside my comfort zone, and broaden my horizons. Throughout the years, I discovered the home I was seeking outside Amman, and learned more about the world I left behind. I became more critical, more aware, and started to touch the imperfections in a place I loved.

Ten years later, in 2011, as I was showing my accolades to my mother, a desolate look in her eyes, hard to overlook, unsettled me. That day I realized that the woman I love most in life was not genuinely happy. She had to give up her own goals and dreams at every stage of her life, first as an eldest daughter, then a wife, then a mother in an Arab society. This realization led me to start observing traditions, analyzing behaviors through meeting women with different experiences, and earning their trust to hear their intimate stories of life, love and career. One question kept popping in my head: are we trapped in a cycle of oppressed women and unhappy men? Why do we have this reputation of being angry? Being the eldest of four brothers, it made me wonder... what if we were four sisters instead? That is when I realized that this subject needed to be observed, unapologetically.



AYA WUHOUSH
Producer

Producer's Note

As a Jordanian producer, nothing brings joy to my heart as much as working on an authentic story that reflects the reality of our communities. I have been involved in this project for almost two years now, and since the very first day when I read the script and met those beautifully written characters, I could not help but feel like I know them. They're my aunts, neighbors, and friends. As Arabs—moreover, as a woman myself—this film brings different aspects of the diversity present in our daily life, in addition to the struggles women face in our societies. All of this is reflected in the encounters and journeys of those four sisters.



Producer's Filmography

Pan East Media is a Jordanian production house owned and managed by Saba Mubarak.

2019: Oboor

2016: Viber, The Guest: Aleppo - Istanbul

2014: Tawq Al Asphalt

2012: Zain



DIRECTOR

Mohamed Siam

Color | 82 min

Arabic, French

TEAM

M. Siam (Director, Producer)

Yacine Baziz (Producer)

François Artemare (Producer)

TYPE

Feature Documentary Film

TOTAL BUDGET

US \$ 300,000

CONFIRMED FINANCING

US \$ 30,000

Primary Contact

m_siam2000@yahoo.com.com

+33668679070

ETHEL

Egypt

Log-line

Ethel is a Jewish-Algerian student, born to Algerian immigrant parents. She is a member of the “yellow vests” movement. When the Algerian movement catalyzes in March 2019, Ethel decides to go to Algeria on a self-searching odyssey to find her roots.

Synopsis

Ethel is a 22-year-old art student who has too many social, political and existential questions about her future and identity. The young woman is very creative, rebellious and militant in her fight. She stands at the crossroads of many fronts: her career, her sexuality, her life choices, her Arab-Jewish background and its implications notwithstanding. Ethel is also an artist who has been filming her own life and creating a personal video diary of herself, and her progress since her childhood.

She joins the “yellow vests” movement in November 2018, and shortly thereafter, public protests arise in Algiers, snowballing into a nationwide movement that resonates with Ethel and questioning her identity.

Ethel’s family have long ignored their origins and even tried to separate themselves from them, feeling that those origins have worked against them in the past. Ethel, on the other hand, is on the verge of discovering what it means to be half Algerian, half French; half Muslim, half Jewish; to belong to two countries that experience political turmoil after long years of violent history, causing wounds to fester across generations. While questions of immigration, identity and religion are forcing Ethel to take sides between her family, friends and political views, she has to confront real life and her roots after graduation, through her first trip to Algeria this fall.

Director’s Biography

Mohamed Siam is a fiction and documentary filmmaker who is a member of The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He has received grants from various institutions such as Sundance Institute, World Cinema Fund, Aide aux cinémas du monde, Sorfond, Visions sud est, Doha Film Institute, and Cinereach. His work has been screened at NYFF, Karlovy Vary, and Carthage, where his documentary film *Whose Country?* (2016) won the Grand Prize and the Best Cinematography award. His documentary *Amal* (2017) was the opening film at IDFA, where it won the Sheffield Jury Prize and the London Grand Prize. It was also screened at Göteborg, CPH:DOX and Visions du Réel. Siam is a winner of the Robert Bosch Film Prize and the Thessaloniki Award, in addition to being a jury member at Karlovy Vary, Göteborg, Carthage, Durban and Fidadoc film festivals, and IDFA Bertha and Hot Docs Funds. He was a fellow and resident filmmaker at the American University in Paris in 2018.



MOHAMED SIAM
Director

Director's Statement

This film is an intersectional transition between *Amal*, my last film—about an Egyptian teenager who survived the Arab spring while searching for her identity—and the period when I partially lived in France during my fellowship. I participated in the demonstrations and met Ethel in the streets among the “yellow vests.”

Having lived through the Egyptian revolution and its consequences, I have learned that political movements have resonance long after the news has depicted the first glimpses of the young faces fronting them, and the cameras have stopped rolling. That is, indeed, the moment when the real stories begin.

This time, my focus is the lost youth between several identities that are on opposing sides. All of these battles happen within one person who absorbs these political and religious struggles.

I intend to follow Ethel's story by accompanying her in her journey to Algeria, in her quest to be able to express herself freely and truly as an independent young woman with Arab origins and Jewish heritage. I also intend to follow Ethel through her next steps in finding a job, finding her voice as an artist, trying to fight for her beliefs, and her resistance against settling for a corporate job. During this period, I reckon that she would confront all the contrasting aspects of her being, and return as a different person. I aim to explore how that would affect her life in France with both her Muslim and Jewish communities, especially in the context of the new limiting immigration laws and discrimination.



FRANÇOIS D'ARTEMARE
Producer

Producer's Note

From the first images I saw from Siam's documentary *Amal*, I was amazed. Everything spoke to me; from the way Siam filmed it, to the refined editing and directing. I told Siam that if he ever decided to work on another film, I wanted to be involved in it.

Having attended many festivals together, we got along, and achieved a convincing treatment. A year later, Siam contacted me to work together on *Ethel*, an ambitious and intense film with a vision that is colorful, harsh and grounded, all at the same time. This was exactly the kind of cinema I want to support and defend.

International co-productions are the trademark of our work. We have many contacts in Europe and in the Arab world, as we have participated in all A-list film festivals and won many prizes for our films in both regions.



Producer's Filmography

ArtKhana, a Cairo-based production company, has its focus on documentaries whose subjects and impact echo internationally, and grab audiences worldwide. The company shares its name with ArtKhana Film Centre in Alexandria, an established art space founded by Siam in 2006, which caters to filmmakers' technical and training needs.

- 2018: The Path
- 2017: Amal
- 2016: Whose Country?
- 2015: The Trials of the Spring

Les Films de l'Après-Midi

- 2019: Made in Bangladesh, Noura's Dream
- 2018: Fatima, Our Madness, Yesterday (Hier), Alice T
- 2010: The Strange Case of Angelica
- 2009: Eccentricities of a Blonde-haired Girl
- 2007: Christopher Columbus – The Enigma

Thala Films

Founded in Algiers in January 2010, Thala Films is a production company for cinema and television productions. The company seeks to be in sync with international standards on technical, logistic and artistic levels. Our products are diverse because our ambition is to actively be a part of the promotion and sustainability of the Algerian culture. Since its creation, Thala Films has produced feature documentaries which have won several awards.

- 2019: Abou Leila



DIRECTOR
Mohamed Taher

Color | 70 min
Arabic, English

TEAM
Mohamed Taher (Director)
Amir Elshenawy (Producer)
TYPE
Feature Documentary Film
TOTAL BUDGET
US \$ 150,000
CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$ 10,000

Primary Contact
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+201003631188

THE FOUNTAIN OF BAKHCHISARAI

Egypt

Log-line

Five Egyptian former prima ballerinas reunite after 50 years, in an attempt to recreate together their first public dance, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*.

Synopsis

In 1960s Egypt, when ballet was an elite foreign art, five ballerinas went on stage for the first time in public to perform the ballet performance “*The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*” at the old Khedivial Opera House. Diana Hakak, Aleya Abdel Razek, Maya Selim, Wedad Faizy and Magda Saleh were the first Egyptian ballerinas to perform in Egypt, after studying at the mighty Bolshoi in Moscow.

As one of the most important events in the Egyptian art and culture scene, Magda Saleh, the first Egyptian prima ballerina, recognizes that her feelings of this night is only left in her memory and some photographs in her photo albums, as the main videotape was damaged along with other materials in the custody of the Egyptian TV. Therefore, she decides to reunite with her former colleagues, after 50 years, in an attempt to recreate their first performance together in hologram technology, in search of a lost history and vanished cultural heritage.

The documentary film traces the dancers’ journey of making their dream performance come to life again in hologram, stemming from the idea of bringing the past to life, till the final exhibition for the audience. Through this journey, they share stories, recall captivating memories and anecdotes that are filled with passion, humor, emotions and nostalgia, in a unique and personal manner.

Director’s Biography

Mohamed Taher is an Egyptian film director, producer and artist, who has over 10 years of experience in the film industry. In 2013, Taher received his M.F.A. in film from The Savannah College of Art and Design in the United States. Over the years, he produced and directed several documentary shorts, while working extensively with major Cairo-based production companies and international organizations.

He produced the feature-length documentary *Kilo 64* (2018), and *Cairo Syndrome* (2019), a hybrid documentary short directed by Amir El Shenawy. Taher’s photography projects have been exhibited and published worldwide.

He recently founded Digital Tales Production, a production company that creates media content and produces innovative fiction and documentary films. He is currently working on his first documentary feature *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*.



MOHAMED TAHER
Director

Director's Statement

For decades, the primas of the National Cairo Ballet Company have been from East Europe, even though Egypt has a history of great Egyptian ballerinas who were, at one point, dancing visitors to the world's most notable ballet companies. I always wonder; why don't we have Egyptian prima ballerinas in Cairo Ballet Company today?

After completing my graduate studies abroad, I started *Ballerinas of Cairo*, an initiative to revive the ballet scene in Egypt by capturing dancing ballerinas, while using the scenery of Cairo streets. The project has stormed the Internet with millions of views and it was featured internationally. However, I used to receive the same questions repeatedly: are these ballerinas from Egypt, and does Egypt still have ballet?

Last spring, in New York, I approached Mrs. Magda Saleh, the first Egyptian prima ballerina. Through her photographs, she took me back to the 60s, to the journey behind her memorable dance. All I could think was the fact that we have lost the TV tape of this iconic dance because of our poor archiving system in Egypt.

I want to make this documentary to restore a vanished form of art in Egypt. I am eager to employ various filmmaking elements including characters, backstory, archival footage, interactive dance and technology to tell an emotionally-driven story of the past, while making the audience experience a full range of sentiments. I hope that the holographic dance itself would be shown as an art installation project in the world's most notable museums, to celebrate the pioneers of ballet dance in Egypt.



AMIR EL SHENAWY
Producer

Producer's Note

I am interested in producing *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, because I believe that the best documentaries are those that combine documenting an event with an interesting human story. Reuniting legendary former ballerinas from Egypt after 50 years, and combining their stories on Egyptian art and culture scene layered over Egypt's rare archival footage of the 60s with hologram technology, then exhibiting it to the audience in a nostalgic and vintage style will result in a unique documentary that is simultaneously human, artistic and entertaining, with a universal appeal.

We are currently at the development phase, and we are participating in various film markets to meet international producers and distributors to survey opportunities for co-production and distribution at an early stage. As a creative documentary, I believe that *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* has the potential to be a co-production between the Arab world, Europe and the US, not only because of its subject, but also because of the restoration process of the dance.

I believe that the story of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* is universal and unique. Therefore, I try to seek different kinds of co-production opportunities; not only with film funds but also with hologram technology companies and ballet and art institutes. After all, I am sure that the documentary has an interesting story beyond ballet, as it tells a national story with an international impact, while dancing and arts make present the potential for it to be featured in theatrical releases, and to be regionally and internationally distributed through various distribution platforms.



Producer's Filmography

2018: Kilo 64

2016: The Halal Guy



DIRECTOR
Ely Dagher

Color | 90 min
Arabic

TEAM
Ely Dagher (Director)
Arnaud Dommerc (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$ 804,663

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$ 419,231

Primary Contact
production@andolfi.fr
+33950652305

HARVEST

Lebanon

Log-line

After being gone for a long time, a young woman suddenly returns to Beirut and finds herself reconnecting with the familiar yet strange life she had once left.

Synopsis

It's pitch dark in the middle of the night as Jana makes her way back to her parents' home. She has returned unexpectedly. Jana finds herself in a familiar yet strange environment after having been abroad and out of touch for a while. Vulnerable to the outside world, and haunted by the pressure to fit in, she retreats into herself until she is left with no choice but to fully immerse herself into the city she was once so eager to leave. Her insecurities about her past and future push her to reconnect with the life she had abandoned with her longtime refuge, Adam. She tries to come to terms with herself against the backdrop of Beirut, where dreams and the harsh realities of a conflicted city mix and merge.

Director's Biography

Ely Dagher is a filmmaker and an artist who works with different mediums, producing work that intertwines on various levels. His work focuses on the layering and constructing of multiple narratives across film, painting and installation.

Drawing inspiration from his upbringing in Lebanon and his current situation, his work explores the correlation and possibilities created through play identification and visual structures, from surrealism to science fiction and the occult.

His latest short film *Waves '98* (2015) won the Short Film Palme D'Or at the 68th Cannes Film Festival. His films have been awarded at numerous international film festivals.

He obtained an M.A. with distinction in new media and contemporary art studies from Goldsmiths College in London. In 2011, Dagher founded BeaverAndBeaver, a production studio that tackles different projects.



ELY DAGHER
Director

Director's Statement

Harvest, a live-action feature project, explores the core subjects and themes that have been the driving force of my personal and professional life. They are questions that are at once local and universal. The project provides a space to investigate identity on a multitude of levels, where the city and the built environment take center stage along with the characters.

Having failed to succeed in her independent life abroad, Jana must face her failure while revisiting all that she had once deliberately left. She was never required to have as much ambition as her brother, and in that perspective, her biggest disappointments—beyond anything else—are in herself. Throughout Jana's migratory journey and her relationships, we draw a portrait of a city and people whose lives have been overwhelmed and torn apart by forces beyond their control. We shed light on a whole generation—if not generations—of people who have been numbed and disillusioned.

What starts off as a potential mystery turns into a drama and an escapist journey, diving deep into Jana's psyche, and floating between different layers of reality as memories and future dreams intertwine with the present.



ARNAUD DOMMERC
Producer

Producer's Note

I discovered the cinematic universe of Ely Dagher during the Beirut Coproduction Platform in March 2017. After our discussions, I felt this was the kind of obvious encounter all producers are dreaming of.

It's a great pleasure and opportunity for my company to produce his first feature. Ely has a rich universe, and in *Harvest* there is plenty of all his cinematic desires: a poetic vision of Beirut, a musical vibration, and the wish to let the audience fall into a deep emotional experience, same as his characters.

Something I particularly appreciate in Ely's script is that for his first feature, he chooses to reinvent himself. *Harvest* won't be an animated film, and the goal is set high with this story that revolves around a female character, Jana. At the same time, Ely maintains his line and vision that shone in his short film *Waves '98*, which was awarded the Palme d'Or in 2015.

After several script lab sessions (Torino Film Lab, Berlinale Talent, Ateliers d'Angers) we now feel comfortable with the script. It's a perfect mix of the specific universe that Ely wants for his film; a universe that stands in between dream and reality, past and present.

Harvest is a strong cinematographic proposal, which will find its strength and quality through the interpretation of the main character. Manal Issa, a talented young actress, will play Jana.

The film boasts an international co-production between France, Belgium and Lebanon. I'm really confident in the quality we can contribute to this first feature.

Producer's Filmography

2019: You Will Die at Twenty, A Beautiful Summer, I See Red People

2018: Amal; Lindy Lou, Juror Number 2

2017: Go, Toto!, Félicité, The Competition





DIRECTOR
Cyril Aris

Color | 95 min
Arabic

TEAM

Cyril Aris (Director)
Georg Neubert (Producer)
Katharina Weser (Producer)

TYPE

Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET

US \$ 1100,000

Primary Contact

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IT'S A SAD AND BEAUTIFUL WORLD

Lebanon

Log-line

A love story and improbable romance between two contrasting characters: Nino, a warmhearted idealist, and Soraya, a wounded cynic—throughout their childhood, adulthood and married life, all set against the backdrop of Lebanon's history over the past 40 years.

Synopsis

Seeming as though they were meant to be together since childhood—as indicated by cosmic events revolving around their inevitable encounter and studied by a local astronomer—Nino and Soraya could not be more different in their viewpoints. Nino's childhood traumas lead him to voluntarily taint his vision of the world with magic and positivity, ultimately focusing on nothing but beauty. Soraya's childhood traumas, on the other hand, doom her not to see anything in life beyond sadness.

In their adulthood, when cosmic events reunite them, Nino falls head over heels for Soraya, and promises to make her world a brighter place, contaminating her with his optimistic vision.

While he successfully rejuvenates her and opens windows of beauty before her eyes, with time love withers, and amid the increasing hardships of living in a city like Beirut, the couple struggles to find solace in their decaying love. Nino progressively loses his smile, forcing Soraya to take over the positivity train. Their contrasting visions finally come clashing as they argue over which school of thoughts is to be transmitted to their little daughter: Would they pass on to her the magical world Nino sheltered himself in for so long? Or would they teach her reality as crude as it is, in order to arm her with some sense of pragmatism to better confront the world later on?

Director's Biography

Cyril Aris is a Lebanese director and screenwriter. His feature documentary *The Swing* (2018) premiered at Karlovy Vary and won awards in El Gouna, Rome, London, Budapest and Tunisia. The Hollywood Reporter called it an "intimate and moving [...] meditation on truth, love and lies in the face of illness and death." His short fiction *The President's Visit* (2017), premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival, and screened at over 60 film festivals.

Aris holds an M.F.A. from Columbia University and is a voting member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Currently, he is developing his first narrative feature film, *It's a Sad and Beautiful World*, selected for the 2019 TIFF Filmmaker Lab, the Screenwriter Colony in Nantucket, the CineGouna Platform at GFF, a residency at the Cité-des-Arts in Paris, in addition to winning the A.R.T award at the 4th Beirut Cinema Platform.



CYRIL ARIS
Director

Director's Statement

The friction between Nino's positivity with Soraya's cynicism embodies the conflict between the opposing mindsets I have, as a Lebanese citizen.

Indeed, there are two types of people in Lebanon: those who still have hope and think the country can stand up from rubbles again, opposing those who believe we are in a hopeless dead end. There are the "Nino"s who, as a survival instinct, do not look into the bull's eye and willingly ignore problems, and the "Soraya"s who are more awake, but so disgusted by the desperation and decline of the country that they remove themselves from finding any solution, and incorporate the problems into their lifestyles to keep on living accordingly.

Finding both mindsets paralyzing, I often ask myself how we would advance if we all stayed in this state of dissociation, in which our eyes have adjusted to the darkness and we integrate our woes into our society's DNA. These two mindsets fluctuate interchangeably, creating a complex relationship of love/hate we all feel towards our motherland.

I hope to look at the structure of this couple and their experience in our Beirut, to mirror that of our society, and hopefully, of all societies.



GEORG NEUBERT, KATHARINA WESER
Producers

Producer's Note

When we saw Cyril Aris' well-observed documentary *The Swing* and his award-winning short film *The President's Visit*, we felt in safe hands and quickly knew that we wanted to produce whatever Cyril wanted to create next.

His debut feature *It's a Sad and Beautiful World* is a culmination of what he has made so far, only further flavored with hints of magical realism. It is an intimate depiction of two lovers falling in and out of love, while the social and economical structures surrounding them are effervescently changing during Lebanon's tumultuous history. When way too many Arab films depict the tragic events unfolding in the region, we particularly like that this one tells a story about love, hopelessness and new beginnings, focusing on personal stories rooted in their Arab context, and set in a melancholically sad and beautiful world.

Additionally, the strong theme of bringing children into the unjust and unkind environment our world has become is something on the minds of many of today's youth. As Europeans, we found ourselves in this story, despite its specificity to its Arab context. European societies have also been on the decline, and part of the reason lies in the overall cynical attitude today's youth hold towards their future. Indeed, many lose faith in humanity and deliberately choose not to procreate. And since we are nothing but a reflection of and a mirror to our society, we strongly believe that this universal story is relevant for all societies and cultures.



Producer's Filmography

2019: The Forgotten Treasure

2018: The Copper Man

2017: Leipzig Fairy Tale

2015: The Hunters, Play Dead



DIRECTOR
Areen Omari

Color | 70 min
Arabic

TEAM
Areen Omari (Director)
Rashid Masharawi (Producer)
Linda Mutawi (Producer)
De Gaulle Eeid (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Documentary Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$ 102,850

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$ 30,000

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LOOKING FOR SA'ADAH

Palestine

Log-line

My mother Fatima, who is over 80 years old, is trying to find a copy of an old American Movie called *Son of Sulam*. She claims to have played "Sa'adah," the main character in the film, when she was 14 years old.

Synopsis

For several days, my mother, Fatima, who's now over 80, was named Sa'adah. "That's true! I was then about 14 years old," she told us, almost swore on it. Later on, she had returned to her first name and continued living her life in Sulam, a Palestinian village in Marj Ibn Amir (Jezreel Valley). When she got married, Fatima moved to Nazareth. Now she lives alone, after her husband died and her two sons and two daughters got married.

In April 2016, I got a call from my sister, who lives in Sulam. She said that she had a guest at her house—an American journalist in her 60's, who came to find people from Sulam, who acted in a movie called *Son of Sulam*, directed by her father in 1951! My sister said: "She has a copy of the film!"

It's hard for me to express how happy and fascinated I was during the screening of the film, especially when I noticed the resemblance between me and my mother. Some people even thought it was me who played the role of Sa'adah. While I deeply indulged in the movie, my mother hardly stopped pointing to her co-actors on the screen, her folks from the village of Sulam. She is the only one alive from the Sulamees who played in *Son of Sulam*.

Director's Biography

Born in Nazareth, Areen Omari is a Palestinian actress, producer and director based in Ramallah. She has acted in theater and in award-winning films that have screened at international and regional film festivals. She has also participated in regional and international juries. In 1995, in cooperation with Palestinian filmmaker Rashid Masharawi, she established a cinema production center in Ramallah to support the local cinema industry and young filmmakers.

Omari started her artistic career by acting in Rashid Masharawi's film *Curfew* (1994). She then took on several roles in film, including *Haiifa* (1996), *Ticket to Jerusalem* (2002), *Waiting* (2005), *Leila's Birthday* (2008), and *Writing on Snow* (2017) by Rashid Masharawi, *The Olive Harvest* (2003) by Hanna Elias, *Private* (2004) by Saverio Costanzo, *The Other Son* (2012) by Lorraine Lévy, *Eyes of a Thief* (2014) by Najwa Najjar, and *Screwdriver* (2018) by Bassam Jarbawi. She was also the executive producer for both *Haiifa* and *Ticket to Jerusalem*.



AREEN OMARI
Director

Director's Statement

My mother was born in 1937, a decade before 1948 Palestinian exodus and the establishment of the state of Israel. For me, dealing with her early life and memories is also dealing with my life and experiences. Not just because in many ways I'm a product of that Palestinian experience with its socio-political upheavals, but also because as a theater and movie actress myself, I feel a strong and special connection to this part of my mother's life. I'm also proud to put on screen a documentary of a special historical importance: a film about the first Palestinian woman who took part in the first movie on Palestine.

For me, the film is a project through which I try, as a Palestinian, to show some aspects of our collective life through the personal experience and individual memories of my mother. On a professional level, after acting on screen and stage, and directing a short fiction film, this is an opportunity for me to enrich my experience by directing a documentary film.



RASHID MASHARAWI
Producer

Producer's Note

For me as the producer, the film *Looking for Sa'adah* is an embodiment of Palestinian life before the establishment of the state of Israel. More importantly, the memory and geography are documented by an American filmmaker. The old film combines the city, the village and the Bedouin community with their different cultures, confirming that Palestine was a legitimate land with its people.

In the experience of the film and its construction, I see a new perspective on Arab and Palestinian cinema that deals with the Palestinian collective memory through individual memory. But in this case, the documentation of the events by an old feature film adds a personal aspect to that.



Producer's Filmography

Rashid Masharawi as a director

- 2017: Writing on Snow Feature
- 2013: Palestine Stereo
- 2012: Land of the Story
- 2011: Picasso in Palestine, Aman Homeland and City
- 2009: Hawra' Baghdad
- 2008: Laila's Birthday
- 2005: Waiting, Arafat My Brother
- 2003: Shahrazad, One Moon, Hommos El Eid
- 2002: Checkpoint, Waiting, Home Movie, Ticket to Jerusalem, Live From Palestine
- 2001: Love Season
- 2000: Out of Focus, Upside Down
- 1999: Behind the Walls
- 1998: Tension

- 1997: Rabab
- 1995: Haifa
- 1993: Curfew
- 1991: Long Days In Gaza
- 1990: Dar O Dour
- 1989: The Shelter
- 1986: Travel Document



DIRECTOR
Rim Mejd

Color | 90 min
Arabic, Amazigh

TEAM
Rim Mejd (Director)
Nabil Merrouch (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$ 810,067

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$ 10,000

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PLUM SEASON

Morocco

Log-line

A teenager flees her broken family home to the mountains, where she gradually undergoes an irreversible transformation.

Synopsis

Sixteen-year-old Nouha lives in a bubble between an unstable relationship with her mother, and her wanderings with Omar, Amine, and other boys in a motorbike gang. Her father unexpectedly reappears after repetitive abandonments, trying to win his family back.

Eventually, Nouha's parents get back together, but she struggles to accept it. She ends up escaping with her friends, on motorbikes, heading up to the mountains of the Grand Atlas.

The group of teenagers live in a small house that belongs to Omar's uncle. They spend their time wandering between the river and the forest. Nouha encounters the spirits of the river and the woods, Taghzent and Aghzen, who both want to possess her.

As supernatural forces begin to affect reality beyond Nouha's understanding, she undergoes a process of metamorphosis. To what extent would it affect Nouha's own flesh? And how would it change her life forever?

Director's Biography

Born on August 7, 1989, in Marrakech, Morocco, Rim Mejd graduated with a B.A. and an M.A. in film directing from ESAV Marrakech.

Her graduation project, short film *Out of Town*, was selected for several film festivals including Locarno, Cinemed Montpellier, Carthage, and Cairo International Film Festival, among others.

She is currently working on the development of her feature narrative debut *Plum Season*, in addition to a short film in post-production, *Children's Game*.



RIM MEJDI
Director

Director's Statement

For my first feature film, I chose to tackle adolescence because it is a particularly sensitive period of life to which I connect deeply; I still conserve the memory of being scared of growing up and becoming an adult. Nouha, the main character, is an adolescent who bears the weight of a vivid anxiety of time passing by. She tries to deal with it, by constantly escaping the inexorable sands of time. She has no choice but to confront her existential crisis. The film is a modern tale of a teenage girl awakening to supernatural dimensions, which make her cross reality's borders.

What are the internal challenges adolescents meet as they grow up? What's the impact of the inevitable process of growing up, on their body and soul? Using those questions, the film opens a window to catch a glimpse into the contemporary Moroccan adolescent world with intimacy and delicacy.



NABIL MERROUCH
Producer

Producer's Note

Plum Season is our first feature film, both for Rim as a director and for me as a producer. But this is far from being our first collaboration. We have known each other for years now through ESAV student networks, and since then, we had been actively working on the development and production of our respective projects as a team of producer/director in both capacities, until the creation of Tifaw Films in 2018, the production company that we manage together.

If our journey has been this way, it is also through the common vision that we share on the Moroccan cinematic production, and even the contemporary international one. When I produce Rim's projects, I see in her—and in the way she defends her artistic choices—a certain radicality with which I strongly identify. The subjectivity of an author, the determination and the talent they have to express it, is what creates their singularity. And that's what I look for as a young producer in the Arab world—to help singular and important gazes to come out to the world. Rim is a young director who approaches the stories she tells and the *mise en scène* she elaborates with sensitivity and imagination. I think that *Plum Season*, with its hybridization of genre, is a great film to present to the Arab public and Arabic cinema lovers as a unique chance to discover other ways to make films in our region.



Producer's Filmography

Tifaw Films was founded in 2018 by Rim Mejdi and Nabil Merrouch to produce their own film projects, as well as other films by filmmakers of their generation.

2018: *Jayeen*



DIRECTOR
Lotfi Achour

Color | 95 min
Arabic

TEAM
Lotfi Achour (Director)
Anissa Daoud (Producer)
Sebastien Hussenot (Producer)
Marie Savare de Laitre (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$ 950,000

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$ 285,000

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SEVERED HEAD

Tunisia

Log-line

Two teenage shepherds are attacked on a mountain by jihadists, who decapitate the elder one and force the younger one to return the head as a macabre message to the family. Inspired by real events, the film tells of a boy's journey.

Synopsis

Two young shepherds, 16 year-old Nizar and his 14-year-old cousin Achraf, are grazing their goats on a meadow high in a poor and mountainous region of Center-West Tunisia. This mountain has become a militarized zone, forbidden to civilians since it became a hideout for jihadist groups.

The two boys secretly climb up without taking their dogs. As they spend a joyful moment in the splendid nature, a group of men attack them with extreme violence, accusing Nizar of being an army informant. Achraf loses consciousness, while his cousin is tied up.

When Achraf wakes up, he sees Nizar's body lying inanimately beside him, as one of the terrorists kicks a round mass towards him, ordering him to take it back to their family. Achraf discovers, with horror, that it is the severed head of his cousin. After some hesitation, full of pain and fear, Achraf finally rolls the severed head in a bag and puts it on his back.

Achraf will begin a painful journey during which he will have to summon all the tools of imagination and innocence, in order to find the courage to carry out his horrifying duty to the end, but above all, to survive. Throughout this unbearable task, he will find help from Rahma, his 13-year-old cousin, who is driven by a uniquely personal life force and stubbornness.

Inspired by real events, the film tells the initiatory journey of a boy by diving in the universe of childhood and its incredible ability to overcome violence and trauma.

Director's Biography

A theater and cinema director, living in Paris and Tunis, Lotfi Achour is the author of over twenty-five theatrical and musical productions on multiple stages, including London, Paris, Festival in Avignon, Tunis, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt. His last show was produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company for the London Olympics. He is also the author of an installation for the 2006 Nuit Blanche in Paris.

Trained in documentary filmmaking at the Ateliers Varan in Paris, he directed four award-winning short films including *Law of the Lamb*, which was selected for the Official Competition at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival. The same year, he directed his first feature film *Burning Hope*, selected for the official competition at the 2016 Carthage Film Festival, CINEMED, in addition to New York, Beirut, Sharm El Sheikh, Oujda, Durban, Lausanne, Geneva, and Paris, among others.



LOTFI ACHOUR
Director

Director's Statement

In November 2015, an entire country—just like myself—woke up shocked and overwhelmed by the brutal murder of Mabrouk Soltani, and the double tragedy experienced by his cousin. I became obsessed with this almost mythological story and with the question: "What can happen in the mind of a child while travelling ten kilometers with his cousin's head in his bag?"

Despite a bloody opening, the film never wallows in it, but focuses instead on the essence of what concerns me: observing the changes within Achraf. I want to follow his path, with a camera that will alternately be hyper-realistic and almost anthropological, then epic and mystical with a nearly supernatural feel, when it comes to filming this child in dialogue with a nature full of spiritual charge.

Rooted in reality, raw and radical, the film is punctuated by Achraf's mental submersions, which I want to treat without frills of special effects or strange music, but with the same harshness as the rest of the reality that surrounds the child. *Severed Head* is, above all, the story of a struggle for survival, and a reflection on violence as much as on childhood. For this purpose, it allows itself to freely invent poetic escapes, just as childhood allows itself to experience the world by inventing it.



**ANISSA DAOUD, SEBASTIEN HUSSENOT,
MARIE SAVARE DE LAITRE**
Producers

Producer's Note

Severed Head is a project within the framework of a long-term collaboration between the producers of the Tunisian company APA and La Luna Productions. The APA first entrusted the distribution of their short films to La Luna Productions, then the two companies co-produced the short film *Law of the Lamb*, also directed by Lotfi Achour.

This partnership expanded when Lotfi Achour's filmography, the mastery of his cinema and his exigency convinced the producer of Maje Production to join this co-production around the project *Severed Head*.

This collaboration is also based on a fundamental importance given by all of us to the script.

The narrative and the film proposal are highly engaging, because it disturbs by its violence and echoes with a harsh reality. We were particularly interested in the choice of the narrative point of view. The violence and trauma are narrated through a story that occasionally creates confusion between reality and Achraf's imagination, a mechanism of self-preservation we feel with emotion, without complacency. The narrative also questions the consequences of such a barbaric act for these men, women and children, and its repercussions. And of course, the geopolitical dimension of this story strikes, at every moment, through the images evoked—the brutality of this abandonment, the alienation of these populations in touch with a disconcerting reality, isolation, remoteness, the absence of authorities, the harshness of the place; they all contribute to reinforce the grip of the strongest on the weakest.



Producer's Filmography

APA

In addition to two documentaries, APA produced *Burning Hope*, a feature film by Lotfi Achour; and his multiple award-winning short films *Father*, selected for over 90 festivals; and *Law of the Lamb*, selected for over 80 festivals including in the official competition of the 2016 Cannes Film Festival. The latter two were also selected for the Official Competition of the César Awards. APA also produced *Laisse-moi finir* and *All the Rest Is the Work of Man* by Doria Achour, presented in the official selection of the 2016 Venice Film Festival.

2017: *Burning Hope*

2016: *Law of the Lamb*, *All the Rest Is the Work of Man*

2014: *Father*, *Laisse-moi finir*

La Luna Productions

La Luna produced more than 90 short films that screened worldwide, winning

over 600 awards, including an Oscar nomination in 2009 for the narrative short film *Manon on the Asphalt*, directed by Elizabeth Marre and Olivier Pont. Sébastien Hussenot received the Producer Award of the Procirep at the Clermont-Ferrand Festival in 2018.

2007: *Manon on the Asphalt*

Maje Productions

Maje founder Marie Savare produced Jim Mickle's *Cold in July* (2014 Sundance Film Festival; 2014 Cannes Film Festival - Quinzaine des réalisateurs); as well as *Still Alice* by R. Glatzer and W. Westmoreland (2014 Toronto Film Festival; 2015 Golden Globe, BAFTA and Academy Award for Best Actress for Julianne Moore).

2018: *American Dharma*

2017: *Chien*

2015: *Braqueurs*, *Asphalte*

2014: *Still Alice*, *Cold in July*



DIRECTOR
Tamer Ashry

Color | 90 min
Arabic, French

TEAM
Tamer Ashry (Director)
Safei Eldin Mahmoud
(Producer)
Anna Elliot (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$ 1,797,268

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$ 778,815

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STRAIGHT TO THE GOAL

Egypt

Log-line

Ali is an aspiring soccer player from Egypt, recently arrived in Marseille. After suffering a debilitating injury, he is forced to navigate the city's nefarious underbelly while balancing an explosive temper and budding romance.

Synopsis

Ali is 20 years old, and comes from a modest family in the Nile Delta region. He has always dreamed of becoming a soccer star. He is recruited and moves to Marseille, where a slippery agent, Jean-Marc, hopes to sign him to a pro-team. But as he begins training and displays exceptional talent, Ali gets seriously injured. Jean-Marc decides to let him go, as his monetary prospects will dwindle.

Forced to find work in order to help his family back home, Ali soon discovers the underground life of Marseille's illegal immigrants, their survival strategies and coping mechanisms in the face of crushed hopes. As family pressures start to mount, a drug-dealer offers him a way out. As Ali begins to descend into darkness, will soccer's ubiquitous presence in the tough neighborhoods of Marseille, and his budding love for Chloé—Jean Marc's daughter—suffice to reconnect him with his lifelong dream? Will his attachment to money be his liberty or his downfall? What if happiness could be found outside of soccer?

Director's Biography

Tamer Ashry is a director, producer, and writer with 15 years of experience working in film and television in the Middle East. His first narrative feature, *Photocopy* (2017), was screened internationally and won numerous awards. Ashry's short film, *Eyebrows* (2018), focusing on two niqab-clad women in a shopping mall, won the El Gouna Star for the Best Arab Short Film at the 2nd edition of El Gouna Film Festival. He has directed a number of documentaries including *The Seventh War* (2010), *A Decent Living* (2012), *Pictures from Gaza* (2013), and *Neighbors of the Morgue* (2014), which have been featured on PBS, BBC, and Al-Jazeera, as well as human rights campaigns for the UN that have gone viral. He also directed work for Emmy and Oscar-winning filmmakers Gini Reticker (*Trials of Spring*), and Thomas Lennon (*Sacred*). He was the recipient of the 2017 Meditalents Fellowship for Scripted Development.



TAMER ASHRY
Director

Director's Statement

This film addresses some timely issues that are close to my heart; poverty, migration, soccer, love across cultures, and the Mediterranean city of Marseille. I have been searching for a way to combine some autobiographical elements—against the larger backdrop of contemporary, systemic, social and political challenges—with a personable story that is relatable through the universality of soccer and youthful love.

The primary focus is the character of Ali: his inner growth, his outer dream, his healing through love, and the consequences of his decisions. He will have to uncover the ways he subconsciously carries his family's wounding into his adult life: insecurity that arises from growing up with the pressures of poverty, a flaring temper stoked by the humiliation from his mother, and a deep-seated shame he covers with arrogance, aggression, ambition, and the need for approval. As the circumstances of his life thrust these weaknesses into the fore, he will have to choose between career, country, and love—a struggle I am intimately familiar with.

Marseille serves as an ideal location that embodies an intense communal mania for soccer, and all that the business entails. It has the Mediterranean confluence of cultures and people, decades of migration, and the tensions that naturally arise around identity and belonging.

Ultimately, through these characters and their journeys, we are interested in exploring the universality of human wounds; the ways our masks of fear, judgment, aggression, and ambition thwart our growth, unless we find the courage to confront them with understanding and compassion, inside and out.



SAFEI ELDIN MAHMOUD, ANNA ELLIOT
Producers

Producer's Note

Straight to the Goal has undeniably compelling elements for today's audiences: soccer, romance, migration, greedy villains, and a flawed but heroic underdog, all set against the visually striking and mesmerizing pulse of Marseille. But beyond this captivating premise, what is most appealing about this film is its intimate portrayal of unique characters and their inner evolution. It is rare to find stories that strike such a delicious balance between bold action and attention to the delicate emotional landscapes of each character. *Straight to the Goal* fuses just that—a heartwarming sensitivity to the deeper roots of why we are the way we are.

The film builds on Ashry's career in controversial documentary filmmaking. It has a precise rhythm, and sheds a nuanced light on the larger socio-economic issues at play, without distracting from a gritty, twisting plot, and ambitious character arcs.

The realism is intense; co-writers Belmahy and Ashry spent a lot of time in Marseille, and have based each character and scene on real people and real situations. Everything hinges on this—their commitment to do justice to the reality of life across the different layers of Marseille is powerful. As such, both mainstream and independent cinema audiences are likely to be drawn to this film.



Producer's Filmography

Red Star Production

- 2019: Extra Safe, Habib, This Is My Night
- 2018: Eyebrows, Fork & Knife, Sculpting in Time
- 2017: Al Asleyeen, Photocopy
- 2016: Dry Hot Summer, One Week Two Days
- 2015: Nawara

Bee Media Productions

- 2018: Eyebrows



DIRECTOR
Lina Sinjab

Color | 80 min
Arabic

TEAM
Lina Sinjab (Director, Producer)

TYPE
Feature Documentary Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$ 150,000

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$ 25,000

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THOSE WHO REMAINED

Syria

Log-line

Khaled is among the last friends I have still living in Syria. He refused to leave, and stayed put. He became exiled in his country. Now he lives in the shadow of a city that was once home, as I lost the meaning of home.

Synopsis

Damascus has become smaller, tighter and heavier. The lightness we lived in and enjoyed before the war, and during the optimistic times of the early days of the uprising, has faded away. People left, friends died, others disappeared in prisons, and the city has new occupants now. The price of the war lies heavy over Damascus. You can feel it in every corner. Khaled and a few other friends are still holding on to what's remaining of home. But I see him, day in and day out, trying to find the home that was. It is a mirage, I like to call it. The war is a mirage, being an exile is a mirage; the death toll, the destruction, the fact that all our hopes and dreams faded away, are also a mirage. I don't want to believe it. Since I left Syria in 2013, I have been devastated, and all I have wanted is to go back. Damascus is no longer the city I grew up in. Khaled still believes it is. He is in denial, I think. Since day one, he is in denial. In 2011, he told us with his optimistic spirit, cynical attitude and big laughter on his round chubby face, that the uprising would start in Aleppo, and in two weeks things would change for the better. We all loved his enthusiasm but he was wrong. *Those Who Remained* is a journey back home through the life that Khaled still holds on to, the life I have lost.

Director's Biography

Lina Sinjab is an independent filmmaker and a freelance correspondent with the BBC in Beirut. She was also the BBC's correspondent in Syria, where she covered the popular uprising in Syria, Yemen and Libya. In 2018 - 2019, she produced and directed a film about the siege on Aleppo for festival screening, entitled *Madness in Aleppo*, which is currently awaiting festival release. In 2013, she directed a film on Syrian women during the time of the uprising, *Suryyat*, which was nominated for the One Media Award. She directed the film *Voices from Homs*, which was never released. She has produced many films for the BBC, and in 2013, she won the International Media Cutting Edge Award for her coverage in Syria.



LINA SINJAB
Director, Producer

Director / Producer's Statement

I was there when the first protest began and couldn't believe it was happening. I watched people breaking their fear as I broke mine. I paid the price and was detained, and then was forced to leave. I was filled with guilt of leaving people behind in danger, while I enjoyed safety outside Syria. I watched the world watching Syria as I was falling in depression. We became numbers. Death in my country didn't matter anymore. I myself became numb. But deep inside, there was an excruciating pain that I could not live with anymore.

I wanted to tell the story of my home. I wanted to capture what I've missed through the eyes of those who remained. Is it still the same?

Cities are mainly defined by their people; their habits, interactions, and bonds with their surroundings. The war has forced millions to abandon their cities. Damascus is unrecognizable, to me at least. Faces have changed, and most of its residents have left. *Those Who Remained* tries to tell the story of those who managed to stay put.

Since I left, every time I manage to visit Damascus, the link to my city fades away. I became a stranger in my own country. Except for Khaled. Maybe he is the one who keeps holding the image of the life we had; he still has the dream of the life we wanted in Syria. Holding on to him and filming him, perhaps helps me keep my soul alive, the soul I lost when I lost hope.

Producer's Filmography

2019: Madness in Aleppo

2013: Suryyat



DIRECTOR
Amel Guellaty

Color | 100 min
Arabic

TEAM
Amel Guellaty (Director)
Asma Chiboub (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$ 666,620

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$ 47,542

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TUNIS - DJERBA

Tunisia

Log-line

Alyssa and her best friend Mehdi undertake a road trip during which they are confronted with the best and worst of what Tunisia has to offer. Even though they cannot reach their goal, this journey changes them forever.

Synopsis

Alyssa, 19, and Mehdi, 24, have been bonded since childhood by an unambiguous friendship. They lead a harsh life. In fact, Mehdi is the only college graduate in his family, yet he is the only unemployed one. As for Alyssa, she lives with her mother who suffers from depression. She finds herself, consequently, in charge of her younger sister Zeineb.

One day, Mehdi, who is passionate about drawing, finds out about a contest that would allow him to win an internship in Germany. Alyssa sees it as an opportunity to turn their lives around. Thus, they start a crazy road trip during which they'll go through adventures and challenges alike. They steal food from a gas station, sneak in for free to contemplate Roman ruins, have the car break down, spend the night at a condescending posh family's home, take drugs at a nightclub, and even wind up at a police station after Alyssa gets assaulted... Their friendship is put to the test.

In Djerba, our protagonists do not reach their intended goal, but they do come back more mature, and closer than ever.

A year later, harsh reality has taken over their dreams of the future.

Director's Biography

Amel Guellaty is a Tunisian photographer and director. After studying law, she worked as an assistant director with acclaimed filmmakers such as Olivier Assayas and Abdellatif Kechiche. Then, she directed two short documentaries. In 2017, she directed her narrative short film debut, *Black Mamba*. The film was selected for many international film festivals, winning several prizes like The Golden Foal at FESPACO, the Best Fiction prize at the Rencontres du Film Court in Madagascar, the Best Film prize at the Jordan International Film Festival, the Best Short Film prize at the Sochi International Film Festival and Awards, the Jury Award at the Malmö Arab Film Festival, in addition to audience awards in three festivals in France. The film was also broadcasted by Canal+. Guellaty is currently developing her short fiction *Just Like Boys!*, and her feature film project *Tunis - Djerba*.



AMEL GUELLATY
Director

Director's Statement

Tunis - Djerba is born out of the need to tackle the issues of a Tunisian youth plagued by the lack of employment, infrastructure and culture, which sees emigration as the only solution. Alyssa and Mehdi, 19 and 24, have no money and are suffocated by heavy familial problems. *Tunis - Djerba* depicts the harsh reality of these two best friends.

However, I had no desire to write a dark and hard social drama. It was crucial for me to write a comedy, where serious topics are treated lightly and with humor. The morose reality of the characters is counterbalanced by their overflowing imagination: they constantly reimagine and reinvent their environment. Their dreams are intertwined with their daily life. Without specific editing or calibration changes, imagination takes place within the narrative. This brings a surreal and poetic side that contrasts with the topic. Imagination is this outlet, this emergency exit that everyone has, no matter their social background or education level.

The last point I would like to tackle, the dearest to me, is the friendship between Alyssa and Mehdi. It was essential for me to write a man/woman relationship without a romantic or sexual dimension to it. All over the world, but especially in the Arab world, genders are separated. Here, I make a point in mixing the roles, inventing a courageous girl and a sensitive boy, without this being their only trait.

Tunis - Djerba is their story, their road trip, their odyssey through this Tunisia that will show them its best and its worst.



ASMA CHIBOUB
Producer

Producer's Note

When Amel gave me the scenario for *Tunis - Djerba*, I was transported by the lightness of its characters going through the difficulties of life with courage and humor. You have Alyssa, a young rebel, unknowingly feminist, who refuses to fit into a mould. You also have Mehdi, both sensitive and strong, who knows how to dig holes of light in his material and moral darkness, in order to comfort his friend. And then you have this beloved Tunisia, in which we are stuck, whose portrait is painted unapologetically but with tenderness. I began to see the colors and hear the music of this road trip and I thought to myself: I want to be part of this journey!

Feeling confident thanks to our previous experience with *Black Mamba*, the short film directed by Amel and produced under my care, and which continues to enjoy a fine career in festivals (about 50 participations around the world, 15 awards, and its acquisition by Canal+), I am envisioning this project with a lot of joy. I believe that we have developed mutual trust, and I am optimistic about the possibilities of funding for this film.



Producer's Filmography

Atlas Vision is a Tunisian-based production company, which produced several short films such as award-winning filmmaker Amine Chiboub's *Why Me?*, and Amel Guellaty's *Black Mamba*.

Equipped with an editing room and a mixing and recording studio, the company performs post-production services, in addition to producing commercials and TV content, and providing line production services.

Atlas Vision is currently developing emergent directors' feature films, like Amel Guellaty's *Tunis - Djerba*.

2016: *Black Mamba*

2011: *Why Me?*



DIRECTOR
Angie Obeid

Color | 75 min
Arabic, French, English

TEAM
Angie Obeid (Director, Producer)
Vincent Metzinger (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Documentary Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$ 347,752

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$ 63,575

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YALLA, BABA!

Lebanon

Log-line

In their newly bought car, Angie (30) takes her father Mansour (70) on the same journey he made 40 years ago from Brussels to Beirut. The path once taken is no longer the same, and nor would be their relationship.

Synopsis

In 1980, 32-year-old Mansour travelled to Belgium with his friends, bought a car, and set off on a long road trip fuelled by love of adventure and discovery back to Lebanon, a country already tired from five years of a 15-year civil war.

Today, 40 years later, Mansour (70) is a retired geo-historian who still lives in Beirut, and has not traveled ever since. It was only after his daughter Angie (30) left to Belgium to study that strong memories of the most adventurous time of his life have suddenly resurfaced. Angie invites her father to Brussels to look for a new car, and go on the same journey he once did.

The path, once taken by Mansour, is no longer the same. Along the 4,000 kilometers once crossed, countries have disappeared and others were born. Some borders have faded, while others have emerged. Dictatorships have risen and fallen. Wars were extinguished and others broke out, causing deaths, destruction and immense displacement along those same roads he once drove across. And Lebanon, caught between the sea and two conflicts, is no longer accessible by land.

The journey of rediscovering the distance between Europe and Lebanon becomes an intimate discovery of the new father/daughter relationship, beyond the borders of the traditional family context they are usually framed in.

Director's Biography

Born in Beirut in 1988, Angie Obeid obtained a B.A. in film directing and scriptwriting from Notre Dame University in Lebanon (2010), and an M.A. in documentary filmmaking, DOC NOMADS - Portugal, Hungary and Belgium (2018).

She has been working, since 2009, as a producer, director, and editor on numerous documentaries for Al-Jazeera Documentary Channel, in addition to several independent. Her first feature documentary *I Used to Sleep on the Rooftop* (2017) won the Special Mention award at FIDMarseille 2017, and was screened at several festivals around the world. Her short documentary *Pacific* (2019) was selected for Visions du Réel and Hot Docs 2019.

After 10 years of experience as an executive producer and freelance producer, Angie has founded her own independent production house, There Ness Films, through which she aims to develop, produce and co-produce documentary films with passionate stories and strong artistic approaches.



ANGIE OBEID
Director, Producer

Director's Statement

My views have seemed to cause enough dismay and worry to my parents that instead of openly expressing and sharing more of myself, I have started to pull away from them as a way of avoiding any interferences.

Today, having chosen to live in Brussels, at a "safe" distance from home, Lebanon, I find myself wanting to shift feelings of mutual disappointment between my father and I, to feelings of mutual acceptance, understanding, and peace.

My father is the only person in my family who shows signs of longing for a more interesting life and traveling beyond the familiar. He often romanticizes and recalls his experience driving from Brussels to Beirut, in 1980.

In *Yalla, Baba!*, I will embark on a road trip with Mansour, my father, similar to the journey he made 40 years ago. The camera somehow allows me to engage in the harder questions and have a dialogue. By taking this path—which is no longer the same—I see an opportunity to reach out for the young Mansour and understand the decisions he made when he was my age. What I hope for is to have the much needed conversations to find a parallel between us, or even just to agree to disagree.

Yalla, Baba! starts from a particular personal story of a Lebanese father and daughter, which expands to a universal geopolitical level that overviews 40 years of the history of Europe and the world, and questions it.



VINCENT METZINGER
Producer

Producer's Note

It would be an understatement to say that Angie Obeid's first feature *I Used to Sleep on the Rooftop* and her short film *Pacific* made a strong impression on us. The beauty of her frames, the attention to details, the deep empathy for her characters; it was clear that we were facing a director with immense talent. Both films have a very beautiful simplicity that seems to be Angie's signature style. It is the kind of documentary filmmaking we are dedicated in promoting at Savage Film.

The space where her films are set is often confined. In her previous films, it was an apartment or a building. In her new feature *Yalla, Baba!*, the main space is a car. The setup of the film—two people talking mostly inside of a car moving across a continent—is very simple, yet it enables her to embrace and interlace complex topics, such as European history over the past four decades, and intergenerational differences in viewing life. The hui clos between a father and a daughter drafts an intimate portrait of each of them and their relationship, while their path from Brussels to Beirut enables Angie to outline a socio-cultural and political map of contemporary Europe where she now lives, echoing with the Lebanese society in which she has been raised.

Taking from genres such as road-trip and coming-of-age movies, the film tells a father-daughter story that is both very intimate and deeply universal.



Producer's Filmography

Savage Film is a film production company founded in 2007 by Bart Van Langendonck, operating from Brussels in association with Eyeworks Film & TV Drama (Warner Bros. Group). The company established itself internationally with Michaël R. Roskam's film *Bullhead (Rundskop)*, a box office hit in Belgium as well as a César and Academy Award nominee for Best Foreign Language Film in 2012. The film sold to over 20 territories and was awarded at numerous festivals. More recently, Robin Pront's debut *The Ardennes*, another 'Belgian noir', became a box office and festival success as well, while the astonishing docu-fiction *The Land of the Enlightened* by first-time director Pieter-Jan De Pue conquered the world out of its world premiere at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival. In 2017, Michaël R. Roskam's third film *Racer and the Jailbird (Le Fidèle)* was presented at the Venice and Toronto film festivals.

Savage Film produces fiction films and documentaries with subjects just as versatile as its directors' backgrounds. Daring or controversial, Savage Film projects often balance on the boundaries of genres, be it fiction, documentary or art.

- 2019: Me Miss Me
- 2018: Nos batailles
- 2017: Racer and the Jailbird
- 2016: The Land of the Enlightened
- 2015: The Ardennes
- 2011: Bullhead



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FILMS IN
POST-PRODUCTION



DIRECTOR

Maysoon Pachachi

Color | 120 min

Arabic

TEAM

Mysoon Pachachi (Director)

Patrice Nezan (Producer)

TYPE

Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET

US \$ 1,500,000

CONFIRMED FINANCING

US \$ 1,200,000

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ANOTHER DAY IN BAGHDAD

Iraq

Log-line

Sara and her neighbors let us into their everyday lives in a middle-class district of Baghdad. Marked by physical and moral mutilations, saddened by the war, and facing extreme ambient violence, each of them tries to find the thread of their existence.

Synopsis

In a typically mixed Baghdad neighborhood in 2006, a community of ordinary people try to live their everyday lives amidst the threat of unpredictable violence. At the heart of these intersecting stories we find Sara, a single mother and novelist, who regains her will to write after witnessing the forced exile of her Christian neighbor and best friend Sabiha.

Sara leans over her computer, frantically searching on the Internet: how many people are dead today? In the meantime, her 7-year-old daughter, Reema, sleeps with the sound of mortar fire or machine gun bursts. Sara writes numbers on pieces of paper that she sticks on a map of Baghdad on the wall. She thinks that maybe, by keeping track of all the attacks, she can predict where the next one will happen.

With the news of Saddam Hussein's sudden execution shortly before the new year, Sara and her neighbors brace themselves for an uncertain future. Yet, like a miracle, each is able to sustain a fragile sense of hope.

Director's Biography

Maysoon Pachachi is a London-based film director, editor and producer of Iraqi origin. She holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy at the University College London and studied film under Thorold Dickinson at the Slade School of Art, where visiting lecturers included Jean Renoir and Gillo Pontecorvo. Her documentary films include *Iraqi Women - Voices from Exile* (2000), *Iranian Journey* (2000), *Bitter Water* (2002), *Return to the Land of Wonders* (2004), and *Our Feelings Took the Pictures: Open Shutters Iraq* (2009). She is a founding member of Act Together: Women's Action for Iraq. In 2004, with London-based Iraqi filmmaker, Kasim Abid, she set up the Independent Film and Television College, a free-of-charge film training center in Baghdad.



MAYSOON PACHACHI
Director

Director's Statement

Today, there are many challenges to the existence of a tolerant and diverse society. There is a large number of Arab immigrants around the world, most of whom did not want to leave their homes, but were forced to do so; fleeing war and oppression, or simply poverty created by an unjust economic system. Little of the complexity of the geopolitical background—the effect on people's psyches and the desperation in which they have lived—is taken into account.

In our film, we explore and illuminate the dilemmas people face in regards to staying or leaving. The intention of our movie is to show the real and daily lives of people who might one day, unwillingly, become migrants, and are often unknown and misjudged outside of Iraq and the Arab world. Iraqis have lived through decades of dictatorship, war and sanctions, and since the invasion of 2003, ongoing extreme daily violence and chaos. Their lives are ruptured and full of loss, without any breathing space to process and repair.

The media and the Internet increasingly expose us to violent events. But what do we really know of the lives of the people caught up in these disasters? Almost nothing. What is missing is a sense of lived personal experience, allowing us to see these 'victims' or 'enemies' as people, like ourselves. I want to create small moments of lyricism. There is also quite a lot of humor in the film—another kind of resistance.



PATRICE NEZAN
Producer

Producer's Note

At the Cannes Atelier 2012, we met Maysoon Pachachi, an experienced documentary director, working in Iraq and the Middle East (Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Iran) for Arte, Channel 4 and ZDF. We were immediately allured by her documentaries and her militant commitment; she created a film workshop allowing young female Iraqi filmmakers to take their first steps, in 2004 in Baghdad. Her determination to use a documentary approach and rich elements of the real world in the writing process of a fiction film also convinced us.

Since this Iraqi project could hardly be financed mainly by the Arab world, it was initially supported by European countries like France and Germany. Given the originality of an Iraqi woman's view of her homeland, the co-producing countries and Eurimages unanimously supported the project.

Kuwaiti producer Talal Al Muhanna supervised the filming in Iraq. Today, the post-production and VFX are handled by our French production company Les Contes Modernes and sound post-production is planned with NeueMediopolis in Leipzig.

We do not hide that producing this film is exactly the reason why we were urged to be involved in the cinema industry. Having worked on documentaries for more than 15 years to share the contemporary culture with a wide audience, our objective is now to produce this kind of generous movies in their approaches, demanding and creative in their forms—films that participate in the exchange of ideas in our societies.



Producer's Filmography

Les Contes Modernes (The Modern Tales) is a production company based in France, aiming to take part in intellectual debates within our contemporary societies by means of fiction, animation, creative documentary and transmedia.

The company federates auteurs and artists of various horizons—such as film directors, visual artists, choreographers, graphic novelists, philosophers, game designers and more—who question the world surrounding us in all its complexity, and put the aesthetic search at the heart of their creations. Our artistic process, which favors body movement more than dialogue, is an attempt to draw a universal language, in order to step across the borders.

Les Contes Modernes supports projects that develop a humanistic, empathetic and creative approach on the world of today and tomorrow.

2019: Corpus Christi

2018: The Tower

2014: Like the Wind



DIRECTOR
Ali El-Arabi

Color | 80 min
Arabic

TEAM
Ali El-Arabi (Director, Producer)
Dina Emam (Producer)
Aya Dowara (Producer)
TYPE
Feature Documentary Film
TOTAL BUDGET
US \$ 1,152,733

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CAPTAINS OF ZA'ATARI

Egypt

Log-line

Mahmoud and Fawzi are two friends living in the Za'atari Refugee Camp, Jordan. While facing the difficult reality of their lives, they dream of playing soccer professionally. When a world-renowned sports academy visits the camp, both have a chance to fulfill this dream.

Synopsis

Two friends, Mahmoud and Fawzi, have been living in the Za'atari Refugee Camp in Jordan for five years. Though neither of them has a sense of what the future holds, they focus their energy together on their first love—soccer. Without a proper soccer field and equipment, they lead a makeshift soccer camp within the camp. Despite the dire circumstances, they remain determined and practice day in and day out, believing firmly that playing professionally is their ticket to freedom.

When Aspire Academy, one of the world's leading sports academies, arrives at Za'atari to pick players for an international tournament in Doha, they quickly identify Mahmoud as a talent and fly him there, while Fawzi is left behind.

In Doha, Mahmoud and his team are taking in the experience, while Fawzi is facing the difficult reality in the camp. Unexpectedly, the Aspire coaches decide to fly Fawzi in to join the team.

The best friends, along with their tight-knit team, train and compete in the most important soccer matches of their lives, while their families back in Za'atari watch via a weak satellite connection. After the final match, they speak at a press conference. On behalf of the displaced people of Syria, they make it clear that people need an opportunity, not pity.

Three years later, as they grow into young men thinking about getting married and starting families, they remain stuck in Za'atari. While they have both matured in many ways, they are still troubled by fears of an insecure future.

Director's Biography

Ali El-Arabi is a documentary director and producer based in Cairo. He started his career as a producer and director at Dream TV in Egypt, where he worked on various documentaries such as *The Lady of the Girls*, *Witness and Martyr*, *What's Hidden is Greater*, *Dreaming of a Constitution* and *6th of April Youth Movement*. In addition, he trained reporters on how to shoot news pieces. He went on to produce documentaries for ZDF, Stern TV Germany, and National Geographic in the MENA region.

In 2015, El-Arabi founded Ambient Light Films, a Cairo-based production company that focuses on various topics relevant to the MENA region, such as refugee displacement and women and children's rights.

El-Arabi holds a bachelor's degree in integrated marketing and communications from Mansoura University. *Captains of Za'atari* is his first feature documentary film.



ALI EL-ARABI
Director

Director's Statement

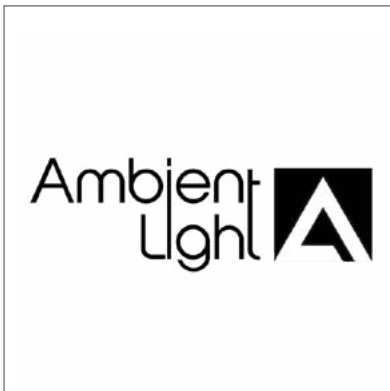
I'm Egyptian, coming from a simple background in a rural area of Egypt. I have always wanted to tell stories, not of the misery of life, but rather of dreams, hopes and dignity. This film's story merges with my personal life in many ways. Working as a war correspondent in the Middle East, I visited refugee camps around the region and learned that people do not just need food and healthcare, but a chance. They have been denied an opportunity, due to their status as refugees. That's why I decided to return to Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan, to explore how their needs could be given a voice. We shot this film over five years to show the regular and seemingly mundane dramas that play out in the day-to-day lives of Za'atari residents—a microcosm through which we can explore the questions of where people find their strength, and what they are missing. The story of *Captains of Za'atari* is centered around the actions, reactions, and emotions of Mahmoud and Fawzi, two friends fighting against the odds to achieve their dreams. Our ambition is to keep their friendship and personal details at the forefront, against a background of the political and social scope in which they are immersed. This way, we hope to create a connection and universality between the viewer and our two main characters; without allowing the layer of politics to place these two friends in a world that is distant to most potential audiences.



DINA EMAM, AYA DOWARA
Producers

Producer's Note

While *Captains of Za'atari* is still in early editing and the story needs to be restructured, I believe it has all of the elements of a powerful, universal film. This film isn't about Syria, though it is on two Syrian teenagers living in a refugee camp. Whenever one watches a documentary about the grave situation in Syria or any other war zone, the general response is usually to feel sorry for the people that have to live through these catastrophes. What if though, us feeling sorry for them wasn't what they wanted? Whether they live in a war zone or on the streets of Manhattan, feeling sorry for those who are less fortunate than us is a disservice more than anything else. I believe in motivating and actively supporting, rather than pitying. *Captains of Za'atari* is about two friends with the will and determination to work together towards achieving their dream of playing soccer against all odds. It's a film that I believe will motivate, inspire and empower anyone who watches it. We are all fighting our own battles and working against odds, whether personally or professionally, but the one thing that unites those who overcome is the will to succeed.



Producer's Filmography

Established by producer and director Ali El-Arabi, Ambient Light produces both documentaries and fiction films. The company's main focus is humanitarian issues and character-driven stories that relate to marginalized segments of society, which are left voiceless, such as women, children, minority communities and refugees. The company also works in conflict areas, capturing and exploring the stories that unfold there.

- 2014: Underaged Marriages, The Great Kurdistan, Refugees in Their Nation
- 2013: Unsafe Abortions, Refugees in Djibouti
- 2012: Witness and Martyr, Dreaming of a Constitution
- 2011: 6th of April Youth Movement, I Was a Child



DIRECTOR
Sherief Elkatsha

Color | 80 min
Arabic, English, Swahili, Amharic

TEAM
Sherief Elkatsha (Director)
Christopher McElroen (Producer)
Erica Laird (Producer)
Jehane Noujaim (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Documentary Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$ 332,410

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$ 110,000

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FAR FROM THE NILE

Egypt, United States

Log-line

For an experiment in collaboration, 12 African musicians tour America to bring attention to the global water crisis. As they perform across a divided country, their own cultural differences underline the challenges of working together, no matter how critical the message.

Synopsis

Far From The Nile is a verité journey that follows 12 African musicians on a 3-month tour through America's heartland. They speak different languages, come from different countries, are trained in different musical styles and traditions, and have never worked together before.

They have been united by The Nile Project, a musical collective raising awareness around the issue of water scarcity in Africa. For most of them, it's their first time in the U.S., and they land in the country just days before the first travel ban is issued.

As the characters roam, ride, practice and perform, we experience the highs and lows of the group's discovery of America at a conflicted point in history. Through this lens, larger issues around gender, politics, religion, and socio-economic differences are explored.

The project's message around the fate of the river that sustains over 450 million is a plea for collaboration and collective action. Eleven countries share the "thin blue vein of geographical fate," which is the iconic Nile River.

Using the common language of music as a platform for change, the message of unity is an inspiring and hopeful one—one that ultimately moves beyond the Nile basin. As the personal experiences of these characters illustrate, collaboration of any kind across boundaries is intensely challenging. Is it possible for these 12 artists to embrace their commonality and unite as musicians? And with so much of the world pulling people apart, can we collectively learn from their experience?

Director's Biography

Sherief Elkatsha is an Egyptian-American director working on his upcoming film *Far From the Nile*. His first documentary *Butts Out* (2006) received the Best Documentary Award at the 2006 New England Film and Video Festival. Elkatsha co-directed *Egypt: We Are Watching You* (2007), as part of the *Why Democracy* series.

His documentary *Cairo Drive* (2013) was awarded The Best Film from the Arab World at the 2013 Abu Dhabi Film Festival. The film competed in festivals around the world, was awarded the Grand Jury Prize at the 2014 DOC NYC, and received a special mention at the Open City Docs in London. In 2014, Elkatsha was commissioned by the EYE Film Institute Netherlands to make his short film *Krokodillen*.

In 2018, he was commissioned by Center Stage to work on a short documentary touring the USA with the traditional Egyptian musical band, Mohamed Abozekry & Karkadé.



SHERIEF ELKATSHA
Director

Director's Statement

I am an Egyptian-American filmmaker who was born in the United States, grew up in Cairo, and currently lives in Brooklyn, NY. As someone raised between the West and the Middle East, my cultural identity has always felt somewhere in the middle, making me interested in bridging cultural gaps on both sides of the Atlantic, and in a continual exploration of what unifies us as people—regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion.

My passion for documentary filmmaking was sparked by the events of September 11, 2001. As a young man beginning his career, new to the city; on that day, I knew that as an Egyptian, an American and a New Yorker, my world—and the entire world—had changed forever. It was clear that I had to be part of the conversation.

In 2016, I was introduced to The Nile Project, and was instantly mesmerized by their unique musical style shifting between language and regional style effortlessly, by their method of coming together to compose and perform music, and was struck by how each of these characters had their own story and something different to offer the ensemble.

I am drawn to the idea of people coming together to find a common language, share, and collaborate. Can we work together across borders, for our common good? At a divided time in our collective history, the message of the film is needed now more than ever.



CHRISTOPHER MCELROEN
Producer

Producer's Note

I was first introduced to Sherief Elkatsha through his film *Cairo Drive*, a biting and entertaining portrait of Cairo as seen through the pandemonium of its streets. Cleverly using the nightmarish traffic conditions to make a broader statement about the zeitgeist of a nation, Sherief's film is a beautiful balancing act of wit, irony and contradiction that gracefully captures the essence of humanity—all through the lens of traffic.

As the Artistic Director of the American Vicarious, a not-for-profit generator of creative content that aspires to reflect on America's ideals and realities uniting and dividing its people, I am drawn and committed to supporting Sherief and his current film *Far From the Nile*.

The subtlety of Sherief's voice, his ability to reflect with humor and compassion, and his experiences as a first-generation American makes him the ideal artist to explore this divisive and tribal moment. With *Far From the Nile*, Sherief has the potential to explore the microcosm of tribal tendencies and how we might overcome them.

I am confident that this film should and will be made. Sherief is a natural storyteller with an infectious energy. He creates with a deep and personal sense of need, resulting in a truthful and innovative artistic voice. He lives his life with a voracious curiosity and an accessible kindness that naturally translates into his creative work.



Producer's Filmography

Katsha Films is an independent documentary production company, which focuses on character-driven films and bridging the gap between the East and the West to challenge and break stereotypes.

2018: Mohamed Abozekry and Karkadé

2014: Cairo Drive

2008: Egypt: We Are Watching You

2006: Butts Out



DIRECTOR
Remi Itani

Color | 67 min
Arabic

TEAM

Remi Itani (Director)
Dima Al Joundi (Producer)

TYPE

Feature Documentary Film

TOTAL BUDGET

US \$ 125,000

CONFIRMED FINANCING

US \$ 95,000

Primary Contact

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A LONG BREATH

Lebanon

Log-line

A man swings between extremes, trying to reconcile opposing forces within him, torn between the duty to piousness and the temptation of hedonism. On one hand, there is a worried mother and an expecting wife; on the other, a world of war, addiction and prison.

Synopsis

Ibrahim, a 28-year-old resident of the violence-ridden neighborhood of Bab Al-Tabbaneh in Northern Lebanon, is a man apart. Struggling to carve a steady, healthy direction in his desolate environment, he bounces from job to job, and from subculture to subculture, looking for a ray of light that can help guide his way out of the darkness.

But then, light breaks through. A sliver of hope seeps into Ibrahim's life when he meets Mahasin, a woman who represents his often-smothered desire to lead a righteous life.

She represents perhaps his only viable path to redemption, the only way out of the dead-end world that his environment has offered him. And for a short time, Ibrahim is well on that path; Mahasin becomes pregnant with his child, and Ibrahim now has to face the reality that he will eventually become a father.

Soon, the pressure and the reality of his new responsibilities begin to take their toll on Ibrahim. Mahasin dreams of a wedding, and Ibrahim would lift the world for her. But the financial weights rupture his newfound peace.

The old temptations return, and once again, Ibrahim finds himself plunged back into the world he tried so desperately to escape. He disappears, he drinks, he cuts himself to run from his fear of his future, and what he perceives to be his inevitable failure.

As he falls deeper and deeper into an ocean of desperation, he watches, as the bonds to his salvation become thinner and thinner, closer and closer to shattering completely.

Director's Biography

Remi Itani is a Lebanese film director who obtained her bachelor's degree in communication arts from the Lebanese American University, and went on to graduate from London Film School. She started her career as a documentary director for Al Jazeera Documentary Channel. She participated in numerous writing and directing workshops, among them a filmmaking workshop with Werner Herzog in Cuba. Her work has been selected for more than 20 international film festivals.



REMI ITANI
Director

Director's Statement

Ibrahim responds to the worlds within him all at once, the world of the past, the present and the future; he participates in telling his story, and eventually begins to portray the landscape and political economy of this neighborhood. Ibrahim's story is not unique; he is not an exception but rather another face in a vast sea of people living in a marginalized community on the Lebanese border.

Like Ibrahim's internal struggle, the film's visual style also is permeated with a tension between opposing forces. The camera is torn between modes of observational objectivity, which follows and listens to its subjects like an intrigued visitor.

It is these sets of tensions—observational versus poetic, interiority versus exteriority—that play and speak to the tensions and polarities that govern Ibrahim's actual life. This way, the style of the film, divided and undecided, reflects Ibrahim's own sense of being torn. And in the middle of these sets of tensions, sits Ibrahim. The film's own shattered ground becomes the soil of his anxieties.



DIMA AL JOUNDI
Producer

Producer's Note

Crystal Films is a film production company that has been focusing, for many years, on social injustice and humanitarian issues.

Ours is an urgent social-political story, which highlights unconventional character-driven life.

We believe that artful storytelling and strong artistic vision can have a powerful impact on cultures, and change societies' viewpoints.

Remi Itani, our director, has been following Ibrahim's life in his surroundings since 2014, and this way of approaching the reality of her protagonist made a big difference in the storytelling process. It presents an original, different and authentic style of filming misery, violence and silence.

As a company, by getting involved in such a challenging film, we commit to the opportunity of achieving lasting changes, by reaching vast audiences worldwide.



Producer's Filmography

In 1998, Dima Al Joundi established Crystal Films, a film production and distribution company and the pioneer of the first Europa Cinema Theatre in the MENA, along with her partner Cinéart Belgium.

- 2009: El-Shooq
- 2008: Hadewijch
- 2007: Khalass
- 2005: Maid for Sale



DIRECTOR

Ismaël Ferroukhi

Color | 100 min

Arabic, French

TEAM

Ismaël Ferroukhi (Director)

Lamia Chaïbi (Producer)

Denis Carot (Producer)

TYPE

Feature Narrative Film

TOTAL BUDGET

US \$ 826,228

CONFIRMED FINANCING

US \$ 565,586

Primary Contact

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MICA

Morocco

Log-line

Ten-year-old Mica lives in a slum on the outskirts of Meknes. A friend of his parents', a handyman in a tennis club in Casablanca, takes him as his apprentice. Mica discovers a whole new world where a new life awaits him.

Synopsis

Ten-year old Mica lives with his sick mother and father in a slum in the suburbs of Meknes, which is destined for destruction. A friend of his parents', a handyman in a tennis club in Casablanca, takes him as his apprentice and plays a big role in his life as his mentor and his only father figure. Mica finds himself propelled into a whole new world which he knows nothing about, where a new life awaits him.

Mr. Slimani, a rich and sophisticated man and the owner of the club, dreams of making his son Omar a tennis champion. To this end, he hires Sophia, a former tennis champion, as a private trainer. But Omar has little talent and no passion for the sport. Mr. Slimani reprimands his son for every one of his successive failures.

On the other hand, Sophia will eventually notice Mica's potential, and decide to take him under her wing.

Director's Biography

Ismaël Ferroukhi is a French-Moroccan film director and screenwriter. Born in Kenitra in 1962, Ferroukhi migrated to France in his youth and grew up in a small city in the south. He gained exposure in 1992 with his short film *L'exposé* (1993), which won the Kodak Short Film Award at the 1993 Directors' Fortnight in Cannes, and the Special Jury Award at the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival. His feature film debut *The Great Journey* (2004) received the Lion of the Future "Luigi De Laurentiis" Award for a First Feature Film at the 2004 Venice Film Festival. His 2011 film *Free Men* was screened at the Cannes Film Festival, and won the Jury Award for Best International Film at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival.



ISMAËL FERROUKHI
Director

Director's Statement

Affected by the brutality of the social inequalities in Morocco, where I am originally from, I became interested in the fate of the youth whose only dream is to escape to Europe.

Mica traces the journey of a poor child who wants to improve his situation in a society where inequality is the common law. He is torn from his family in the countryside to work in a tennis club, facing a world he knows nothing about. He will have to deal with repeated humiliation and oppression, but thanks to two key encounters, he will realize that he can change his own destiny.

By sketching the portrait of a young, courageous and endearing character, I wish to make a positive and poetic film, whilst it's still grounded in reality. *Mica* will be a success story, because despite its difficulties, Morocco is a country that is progressing. I want to show that one can dream of a better life without fleeing the country.

Although it is clear that the stakes for *Mica* are far greater than that of sports, it is thanks to tennis that Mica will be able to change his life, thus showing how sports can be a means of social advancement in today's world.

With *Mica*, I want to make a universal film, aimed at an audience of all ages. It is a story about apprenticeship; full of hope, solidarity and humanity, which all seem essential in the modern world. This is why this project is particularly dear to me.



LAMIA CHRAIBI, DENIS CAROT
Producers

Producer's Note

When Ismaël came to propose *Mica* to us, we didn't hesitate for a minute to go at it. We loved *Free Men* and were very impressed by *The Great Journey*—another coming-of-age story in which, with a great economy of means, he managed to highlight all the complexity of the relationship between a father and a son, apparently belonging to the same culture, but actually living in two worlds where everything opposes each other.

Ismaël Ferroukhi showed us in this film that he knew how to pierce souls, to explore the intimacy of his characters. There is, in his way of filming, a lot of space for silences, looks, and it is through them that he makes emotions emerge.

Mica is also an initiatory story—that of a young boy who is condemned by everything and who will get out of misery and succeed; thanks to his sensitivity, his curiosity, his desire to help his family, and also thanks to a helping hand. A simple and moving story, which shows the strength of will and determination.



Producer's Filmography

Lamia Chraïbi is the founder of the production companies Moon a Deal Films, created in 2011 in Paris, and La Prod, created in 2007 in Casablanca.

2019: Urgent, Achoura

2018: Stateless, Jahilya, Yesterday, Ima Malka

2016: Mimosas, Section 35

2015: The Sky Trembles and the Earth Is Afraid and the Two Eyes Are Not Brothers

2012: The Sea Is Behind, A Film, The Rif Lover

2011: The End

2009: Angels' Terminal



DIRECTOR
Ali Essafi

Color | 75 min
Arabic, French

TEAM
Ali Essafi (Director)
Fatima Matousse (Producer)

TYPE
Feature Documentary Film

TOTAL BUDGET
US \$ 213,314

CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$ 155,421

Primary Contact
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OUR DARK 70S

Morocco

Log-line

Our Dark 70s is an archival footage project that uncovers the artistic creativity of Morocco's 70s. Through a collage technique, the film unearths the creativity of an era that has long been censored.

Synopsis

In Morocco, the seventies were the first time in its post-colonial history when struggles and dreams for change began to surface. Most importantly, this period saw the best in artistic and cultural production. Morocco had just recently gained independence, but it quickly became caught up in the power struggles of the Cold War. The new king, Hassan II, chose to award himself absolute power, putting in place an infernal system controlled by the army and the police, of which he was the supreme chief.

Before and during the colonial period, Moroccan artists were totally underexposed, except for musicians. For the first time, Moroccan art was the expression of a free individual will. At the same time, the rest of the world was experiencing a libertarian wave. A collective emulation took shape, made of dreams and projects that were intolerable for the despotic regime.

Our Dark 70s is an archival footage project that uncovers the artistic creativity of Morocco's 70s. Assembling fragments of work—film, photography, music, theater plays, comic strips and more—with interviews of the protagonists, the film will tell the story of this very unique time in Morocco's history, known as “the years of lead.” Through a collage technique, the film unearths the creativity of an era that has long been censored.

Director's Biography

Born in Morocco, Ali Essafi studied psychology in France, then entered the world of filmmaking. His works as a director include *General, Here We Are!* (1997), *The Silence of the Beet Fields* (1998), *Ouarzazate Movie* (2001) and *Shikhat's Blues* (2004), which have all been widely screened in the international festival circuit. He later embarked on lengthy research on the North African film and visual archives. These have been transformed into feature films, and his latest film *Crossing the Seventh Gate* (2017) premiered at the 2017 Berlinale Forum.



ALI ESSAFI
Director

Director's Statement

The content of the narrative does not seek to establish historical truth. Rather, it focuses on the human dimension and personal experiences. Even so, by relating their own stories, the characters bring us closer to the general atmosphere that weighed so heavily with the country.

Their stories are similar to hundreds of others, including the story of my elder brother. That is why I made the choice not to film the characters, and why I refrained from visualizing them. It's the way I adopt to make sure that these particular accounts would be heard, also for being representative of the path of an entire generation, of an entire era! Their emphasized storytelling—through voice-over—strengthens their presence without disturbing the perception of the general context as conveyed by the other archival material.

The story evolves through a collage, connecting dreams to other dreams, and clashing the dreams with brutal realities. A multi-voice story that resembles a choral film. Voice-overs that seem to come from elsewhere; both real and ghostly. They are present without necessarily being visible, emerging and disappearing at the whim of events.

The archives serve as a main protagonist—they do not serve to illustrate the audio stories; I use them more as an additional narration track, which allows for a layered reading of the events. They are not shown in an objective context, and do not claim any historical objectivity.



FATIMA MATOUSSE
Producer

Producer's Note

We first discovered and admired Ali Essafi's work back in 1997, with his film *General, Here We Are!*, a film about colonial veteran soldiers from the French army. We both come from French ex-colonies, have a shared history, and also had an immediate artistic connection. We dedicate ourselves to projects that focus on the transmission of oral memory, and challenge the usual clichés about southern countries.



Producer's Filmography

Cinemaat Productions was inaugurated in 2006 to address the lack of production structures that support the research for new cinematic languages in Morocco (documentary, non-fiction, experimental etc.) It was created by Ali Essafi and Hakim Belabbes, who have common references in terms of documentary film (non-fiction) and memory preservation. This is a structure that allows us to produce our own projects, and serves as a platform for young artists in training and production, to realize their early work.

2017: Crossing the Seventh Gate

2011: Wanted!, Casablanca en rouge

2010: Abdelkrim & the Rif War, Woujough / Faces

2009: Ces mains-là / Those Hands

2008: Three Brothers

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POST-PRODUCTION



DIRECTOR
Sandra Madi

Color | 95 min
Arabic, French

TEAM
Sandra Madi (Director,
Producer)
TYPE
Feature Docu-Narrative Film
TOTAL BUDGET
US \$ 140,000
CONFIRMED FINANCING
US \$ 5,000

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WE WILL SIT UNDER THE FIG TREE

Jordan, Palestine

Log-line

A journey through some of Jean-Luc Godard's raw footage that he once filmed in the Middle East. An era that reshaped the lives of millions of Arab people in the later years and decades.

Synopsis

Sandra knows very few things about what happened during the events of Black September. Like most of her generation, her parents' answers have never been fulfilling, and with whomever she has spoken about this, they have preferred to change the subject! For years, she has been questioning the reasons behind this collective denial related to that segment of history.

In 1970, Jean-Luc Godard visited the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon, in order to make a film called *Until Victory*. For 40 years, *Until Victory* remained unfinished. The French auteur of the Nouvelle Vague cinematically explored the Palestinian conflict for the first time in this unfinished documentary. The project was co-financed by the Arab League during the height of Godard's militant filmmaking, accompanied by director Jean-Pierre Gorin and the Dziga Vertov Group. The production was halted shortly after the filming began due to both financial difficulties and the fact that several of the film's characters, who belonged to the Palestinian Liberation Organization, were among the Palestinians that were killed during the infamous Black September.

Sandra, the director of the film, is a Palestinian artist who was born and raised in Jordan. She will film her journey searching for this footage and uncover the mystery behind its fate. What were the real reasons that pushed Godard to never finish his film? Through this quest, we will be sailing back in time as we catch a glimpse of this forgotten footage, and through its images, the memory of an important era will be reborn.

Director's Biography

Sandra Madi is a Palestinian film director, actress, producer and screenwriter born in Amman, Jordan in 1976. She graduated from the Arab Institute of Film in December 2006. Throughout her career, she has performed in numerous plays that toured many cities in the Arab world and Europe. Having trained at professional workshops, Madi was awarded three times as best actress. In addition to working as a radio presenter, she served as a director and producer in many local and international production companies and agencies.



SANDRA MADI
(Director, Producer)

Director / Producer's Statement

I have always been interested in the topic of collective memory, because I believe it is somewhat responsible for forming the present consciousness and awareness of any nation. I noticed this interest of mine during different stages of my professional life, and as I was born and raised in Jordan—where there is a huge gap between the people and their past—I have always had this sense of alienation.

How were people so detached from what was directly tied to their identity? This 'past' in question is not that far in time. Grave events took place, big changes occurred about 40 years ago. Even though it's not very easy to trace it back now, I believe that Jordadians have a hidden collective awareness kept in a black box, buried deep.

Documentary filmmaking usually depends on protagonists that narrate the story we want to tell. In my film, I will trace places instead; the locations of these historic events will be my main platform. But where are the people? They are hiding behind their fears somewhere; sometimes forgotten, sometimes disappointed and hopeless. Or maybe they simply choose to forget. My protagonists will emerge from cinematic archives, where they have been 'stored' for years. Now they will shine again, like a bolt of lightning that illuminates the darkness of a long, cold night.



Producer's Filmography

Sandra Madi established Red Carbon Productions in 2006. Based in Amman, Jordan, the company produces a variety of films, in addition to TV programs and commercials.

2014: Saken

2013: Nahr El-Bared Talks Back

2011: Nahr El-Bared Detention Camp

2008: Perforated Memory

2006: Full Bloom

2005: Far Away from Here

CINEGOUNA SPRINGBOARD SCHEDULE

		TIME	TITLE
23 SEP MON SCRN. 3- SEA CINEMA	Pitch Session of Films in Post-production	10:00 - 10:40	FAR FROM THE NILE
		10:45 - 11:25	ANOTHER DAY IN BAGHDAD
		11:30 - 12:10	A LONG BREATH
		12:15 - 12:55	CAPTAINS OF ZA'ATARI
		13:00 - 13:30	Lunch Break
		13:30 - 14:10	MICA
		14:15 - 14:55	OUR DARK 70'S
		21.00	CineGouna Opening
24 SEP TUE G30- TU BERLIN	Pitch Session of Projects in Development	12:30 - 13:00	HARVEST
		13:00 - 13:30	LOOKING FOR SA'ADAH
		13:30 - 14:00	TUNIS - DJERBA
		14:00 - 14:30	Lunch Break
		14:30 - 15:00	YALLA, BABA!
		15:00 - 15:30	PLUM SEASON
		15:30- 16:00	THE FOUNTAIN OF BAKHCHISARAI

 BY INVITATION ONLY

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		TIME	TITLE
25 WED SEP G30 - TU BERLIN	Pitch Session of Projects in Development	12:30 - 13:00	THOSE WHO REMAINED
		13:00 - 13:30	SEVERED HEAD
		13:30 - 14:00	STRAIGHT TO THE GOAL
		14:00 - 14:30	Lunch Break
		14:30 - 15:00	ETHEL
		15:00 - 15:30	DAUGHTERS OF ABDUL-RAHMAN
		15:30- 16:00	IT'S A SAD AND BEAUTIFUL WORLD
		16:00- 16:30	WE WILL SIT UNDER THE FIG TREE
26 THU SEP MARINA THEATRE		16:00- 18:00	CineGouna Platform Awards Ceremony + Reception

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U.S. Embassy, Cairo

FILM INDEPENDENT

U.S. EMBASSY IN CAIRO AND FILM INDEPENDENT PARTNERSHIP AT EL GOUNA FILM FESTIVAL

The U.S. Embassy in Cairo is partnering for a third year with El Gouna Film Festival, joined this year by Film Independent.

Film Independent will bring film executives, Missy Laney, Director of Development at Adult Swim; Jordana Meade, Director of Distribution at ITVS; and Digital Distribution Strategist Rebecca Sosa to be on an industry panel on digital distribution, moderated by Producer Myriam Sassine.

American writers, directors Amman Abbasi (*Dayveon*) and Marvin Lemus (*Gentified*), who will be joined by Ayten Amin (*Villa 69*), will lead a four-day short film screenwriting workshop for Egyptian film students. The workshop will be part of the CineGouna Bridge professional development program.

Film Independent and the U.S. Embassy will give two awards valued at \$15,000 each at the CineGouna Springboard Platform. The first award will be the **Film Independent Spirit Awards Residency for a Screenwriter**, a week-long residency of curated programming, along with project-based meetings, including a script consultation and meetings with screenwriters in Los Angeles, as well as attendance at the Film Independent Spirit Awards and Directors Close-Up. The second award will be the **Film Independent Forum Residency for a Creative Producer**, a week-long residency of curated meetings with industry executives and producers in Los Angeles, as well as attendance at the weekend long Film Independent Forum, a conference dedicated to helping producers get their projects off the ground.

The U.S. Embassy will also sponsor the Cairo Symphony Orchestra's "Hits of Hollywood" performance at the "Cinema in Concert".

Film Independent is the nonprofit arts organization that champions creative independence in visual storytelling and supports a community of artists who embody diversity, innovation and uniqueness of vision. In addition to helping filmmakers make their movies and build an audience for their projects and producing the Spirit Awards, Film Independent works to diversify the film industry. Film Independent President Josh Welsh, who will be on the CineGouna jury, and Louay Khraish, Project Manager of International Programs, will be representing Film Independent at the El Gouna Film Festival.

The U.S. Embassy in Cairo's Minister Counselor of Public Affairs, Helen LaFave, and Cultural Attaché, Rachel Leslie, will both be in attendance.

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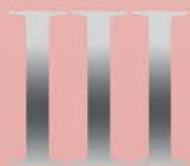
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