

ELGOUNA 
FILM FESTIVAL

1ST EDITION

مهرجان الجونة السينمائي

SEPTEMBER 22 - 29, 2017

CINEGOUNA
Springboard
PROJECTS

ONE OF THE CINEGOUNA PLATFORM PUBLICATIONS

ELGOUNA 
FILM FESTIVAL
1ST EDITION
مهرجان الجونة السينمائي

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WELCOME TO THE CINEGOUNA SPRINGBOARD

Dear Friends;

filmmakers, producers, distributors, sales agents, festival directors and programmers, film institution representatives, and above all film lovers and activists.

It is our utmost pleasure to invite you to the first edition of the CineGouna Springboard, El Gouna Film Festival's own project development forum and what we hope will be a valuable addition to the regional and international film industry scene.

We start this edition on a victorious notion that Arab cinema is on the rise; almost two weeks ago Palestinian actor Kamel El Basha won Best Actor at the Venice International Film Festival for his role in The Insult (also in official competition at our festival), many Arab films have had wide international releases in theatres around the globe, and it has become expected that any official competition of any major festival would have an Arab film in its lineup.

Yet, we believe this rise in production, release, and screening around the world is only the beginning. The best of Arab cinema is yet to come, and we hope that our forum will play its role in its development.

In our selection this year, we tried to choose projects which present narratives crucial to the overall social endeavors in the region, under the festival's tagline Cinema For Humanity. At the same time, we valued projects that offer an innovative, fresh, and daring cinematic approach, with authentic filmmakers' voices. Lastly, we considered how serious and realistic the production premise of the teams are, and how likely are the projects to happen.

We hope that the interactions of our platform will not only provide financial reward, business and cooperation, but also creative feedback and insight, with the goal of advancing the visions and aspirations of the film projects themselves.

CineGouna Platform Team

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

CineGouna Springboard is CineGouna Platform's project development lab, where we offer an opportunity for Arab film directors and producers with films in development or works-in-progress to find creative and financial support.

During CineGouna Springboard filmmakers and producers present their film projects or works-in-progress to potential coproducers, distributors, sales agents, festival programmers, and fund directors. CineGouna Springboard also arranges one-on-one meetings between the filmmakers and the international industry delegates.

Additionally, CineGouna Springboard offers creative mentorship through exclusive sessions with veteran filmmakers and industry mentors; who work with the film teams to shape up their finance and production plans, as well as discuss their unique narrative structures and film language to elevate the potential outreach of the films to the international audience.

Lastly, CineGouna Springboard offers cash and in-kind awards to the best projects in development, as decided by an independent international and regional jury that will meet each film team privately to make their decisions.

AWARDS



\$ 20,000 from El Gouna Film Festival

CineGouna Springboard extends its utmost gratitude to our sponsors and partners who have given their generous support in providing cash or in-kind awards to the best films in development.



\$ 10,000 from New Century Production



\$ 10,000 from Creative Media Ventures "Ebda3"



\$ 5,000 from Mentor Arabia



\$ 5,000 from Film Factory for Movie Production



5,000 for a film in development from AROMA Studios.



\$ 5,000 worth of post-production services from AROMA Studios

MENTORS



Maamoun Hassan

Mamoun Hassan is a film professional and international film teacher. He has written, directed and edited award-winning films and has held influential positions in Britain as Head of Production at the British Film Institute and MD of the National Film Finance Corporation. He has led UN film departments in Lebanon and Zimbabwe.

He has been a Governor and Head of Directing, Producing and Editing at UK's National Film & Television School and Dean of Editing and consultant at EICTV, Cuba. He has given masterclasses at film schools and other institutions in all five continents. He devised and presented Channel 4's Movie Masterclass series, a unique exploration of the film language of classic directors.

Mamoun produced the prize-winning feature film, No Surrender, and co-produced Machuca, Chile's most successful film. He also wrote the screenplay of La Buena Vida, winner of a Spanish Goya and the premier prize at Huelva in 2008.



Kais Al-Zubaidi

An Iraqi filmmaker, film editor and archivist. Kais al-Zubaidi worked as a director in Syria following his training in Babelsberg. In the 1960s Syria had become a center for exiled Palestinians as well as pan-Arabists and it was there that the Iraqi filmmaker Kais al-Zubaidi focused his lens on the socio-political situation of the Palestinians. Kais al-Zubaidi also worked with the PLO film unit in Beirut intermittently.

Most recently, Kais has published an excellent anthology called Palestine in the Cinema (2006). It is an archive of the history of Palestinian cinema and lists over 800 films produced by Palestinian, Arab and non-Arab artists about Palestine and the Palestinian people.

Today he lives in Berlin and supervises the establishment of a national Palestine archive.



Hayet Benkara

A Toronto-based Film Industry Advisor. Who worked 6 years as the Manager of the Sales Office, the unofficial market, at the Toronto International Film Festival. Benkara is now the Manager of STUDIO a new industry year round programme at TIFF Bell Lightbox (tiff.net/Studio). Benkara has also worked for many prestigious film festivals such as Cannes (Producers Network), Berlin (the Co-production market), IFFR (CineMart), the Dubai International Film Festival, the Guanajuato Film Festival (Mexico), Era New Horizon (Poland), the Abu Dhabi Film Festival and most recently the Doha Film Institute.

Over the years, Hayet Benkara has developed a very strong international network and a good knowledge of the international market place. Year round she advises young and more established filmmakers and producers on development, production, co-production, distribution and marketing, and festival strategies.

JURY



Alessandra Speciale

Alessandra Speciale has been a consultant of the African and Arabic Countries at Venice Film Festival and the head of the project of Final cut in Venice, a workshop to support African and Arab films in post production. She is also the artistic director of the African, Asian and Latin America Film Festival of Milan, Italy. She has distributed in the Italian alternative theatrical circuits more than 200 films from the three continents with the Association COE. She has collaborated as programmer for other international film festivals as Locarno, San Sebastian, Kerala and Torino Film Festival. She is also creative documentary filmmakers, her films have been broadcast by television channels such as Tele+, Rai and Arte. Recently she has been elected President of Milano Film Network, an association that unites seven festival in Milan and promotes film distribution film industry events and workshops in Italy.



Nezar Andary

Nezar Andary is an Assistant Professor of Film and Literature at Zayed University in the College of Humanities and Sustainability Sciences. He has worked in theatre and film production and has been curating film festivals and film series. Nezar earned his Ph.D in Comparative Literature from UCLA, with a focus on the representation of Arab history in contemporary film and literature. Nezar was Artistic Director for Anasy Documentary Awards in 2010, and currently is Artistic Director for the forthcoming documentary series Perspectives and Retrospectives in May 2013. Recently in March 2013, he organized a panel on Middle East Film Studies as co-Chair of the Middle East Studies Caucus for the Society of Cinema and Media Studies Conference in Chicago. For the last two years, he has written papers on the relationship of Arab Cinema to recent Arab uprisings.



Hala Galal

Co-Founder & Executive Director of SEMAT Production & Distribution. Wrote, directed and produced more than 100 films of various forms and durations; short, long, narrative or documentary. The long documentary 'Women ChitChat' won the Silver Prize at the Arab Rotterdam Film Festival in 2005. Since 2002, Galal initiated independent cinematic education opportunities for young talents. These workshops provided young potential filmmakers with basics of filmmaking, and helped create networks to support independent filmmaking. Between 2003 and 2006 she organized the festival Caravan of the Euro-Arab Cinema, funded by Euromed Audiovisual II. Also worked a tutor in the project "Access to the International Market" dedicated to young Arab producers, under the auspices of the Spanish project International Media Business School.



**PROJECTS
IN DEVELOPMENT**



200 METERS

COUNTRY

Palestine

TYPE

Feature Narrative

PRIMARY CONTACT

may.odeh@gmail.com

TOTAL BUDGET

\$618,260.00\$

AVAILABLE FINANCE

\$78,260.0

A Palestinian trapped on the other side of the wall tries to reach the hospital for his son. A distance of 200 meters becomes a 200 kilometers journey.

Synopsis

Mustafa and his wife Salwa come from two Palestinian villages 200 meters apart, that are now separated by the wall. A construction worker who often gets permits to work in Israel, he lives on one side while his wife and children live on the other, a situation that starts to affect an otherwise happy marriage. But Mustafa does what he can: Every night he says goodnight to his children by flashing the light on his balcony and watches them do the same.

The story begins when Mustafa gets a phone call from his wife: their son has been hit by a car.

Mustafa rushes to the checkpoint, but there is a problem with his fingerprints. Stressed and sweating, he tries again and again but the machine continues to deny him access, and his permit paper ends up being torn apart. When Mustafa calls Salwa to tell her what happened she doesn't seem to believe him, which puts him into further distress. This is when he decides to contact a smuggler.

Mustafa reaches the smuggler's car where he meets other characters who also want to cross the wall for different reasons, including a foreigner: Anne, a German student filmmaker who is making a film about Kifah, one of the passengers trying to attend his cousin's wedding.

After a rollercoaster of events, Mustafa finally makes it to the hospital. Everything goes back to normal after that point, and again we see Mustafa on his balcony, switching the light on and off, while a far light in the horizon blinks in response.

Director's Statement

I carry lots of memories that I no longer have access to, or perhaps fear to dwell back on. Oppression does alienate you, especially when you start adapting to it. A forced separation aches a lot. 200 Meters is my story and the story of thousands of Palestinians. I believe in the power of cinema and how it can touch our lives in magical ways, and I need to tell this story.

Images of the wall, checkpoints and soldiers are probably what comes to mind when Palestine is mentioned. Although these images will be in the film as well, the focus will be on what such a separation does to us as human beings, shedding more light on the invisible barriers that are created as a result of the physical wall.

Here in Palestine we got used to adjust to endlessly changing situations, do as told and camouflage our feelings. But this should no longer be acceptable. Freedom of movement is a very basic human right yet it seems to be a thing of fantasy in such a brutal reality.

The main character in this film, Mustafa, has followed the rules and endured humiliation his whole life in order to secure a small chance to be with his family. Yet when those same rules put his family and fatherhood at stake, will he continue to obey them?



Ameen Nayfeh

Filmmaker

Born in Palestine in 1988.

In 2012 he graduated with an MFA from the Red Sea Institute of Cinematic Arts in Jordan with the goal of telling authentic stories from his region. He wrote, produced and directed award winning short films, and has been freelancing for film and TV production for the past 3 years.



May Odeh

Producer

May Odeh is a director and producer known for Searching for Napoleon (2006), Diaries (2011), Izriqaaq (2013), Roshima (2014), and Drawing for Better Dreams (2015).

She has worked on the production and distribution of many Palestinian fiction films and currently has a production company based in Ramallah, Palestine. Odeh has a Master's degree in film and production from Lillehammer University College in Norway.



ODEH Films

Production Company

ODEH Films is an independent film production and distribution company created in 2011 in Ramallah, Palestine. ODEH Films' main focus is producing auteur-driven creative documentaries and narrative features, in addition to providing production services for filming in Palestine.



7th DAY BUTTERFLY

COUNTRY

Egypt

TYPE

Feature Narrative

PRIMARY CONTACT

daydream.artproduction@gmail.com

TOTAL BUDGET

\$540,000

AVAILABLE FINANCE

--

When he lost his lover and his path he started his journey towards himself.

Synopsis

On a rainy, stormy night, the city loses its glamour while the protagonist loses himself in its streets, searching for his lover who has just abandoned him.

As he wanders, he finds traces of her in everything that once united them: streets; photographs; even the smell of coffee.

She is looking for him as well, but she has decided to depart in order to remain with him and inside him for eternity. She has left to the furthest end, leaving him only a souvenir near the sacred tree of lovers.

Throughout his tireless search, the city opens up its secrets to him, allowing him to confront reflections of his soul in other people who have lost their loved ones and are stuck in this world just like him, awaiting salvation.

When he loses his beloved and his path, the protagonist begins a new journey that leads him in the end to face his psyche, which he had been seeking and escaping all at once. Only then does the fog lift off the city, and do the butterflies come out of their cocoons.

From the innermost endings, new beginnings flourish.

Director's Statement

This film is about love as an act of resistance; its characters seek love as salvation from the crisis of existing in this world. The film narrates ending love stories for new romances to begin; the cruel transformations that characters undergo liberate them from the fears that chain them, powerfully pushing them to confront their destinies.

Endings make room for new beginnings: the heroine's departure leads the hero to a journey where he confronts his fears and finds himself; the killing of the homeless child's only companion leads him to find another one.

The art I wish to produce narrates stories that elicit worry. In our society, if a woman loves a man, she is to commit to him for life; it isn't acceptable for a married man in his sixties to seek new love; nor is it expected of homeless children to rebel against their atrocious living conditions, ignored by all. These are the stories I wish to recount. The aim underlying my art is to question mainstream thoughts and values and to find



Karim Hanafy

Filmmaker

Karim Hanafy graduated with a B.A. in Philosophy from Cairo University in 2002. He directed his first short film, *Too Late*, in 2005. A year later, Hanafy founded the Cairo Jesuit Cinema School, a grant-funded workshop that offers training and production support for independent filmmakers, in collaboration with the Association for Scientific and Cultural Renaissance. He served as school director and main lecturer from 2006 to 2012, and ever since has been worked as a senior producer at Alhurra TV, as a show runner on a number of programmes for which he won several international awards. Hanafy was awarded a production grant by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture for his screenplay *The Gate of Departure*, which later became his first feature film, earning him several awards and remarkable critical acclaim.



Mohamed Samir

Producer

Mohamed Samir graduated from Egypt's Higher Cinema Institute with a B.A. in Film Editing in 2002. He worked as a film editor for many years and in 2007 founded DayDream Art Production as a post-production company, before starting his own career as a producer in 2010. He also taught in the Cairo Jesuit Cinema School from 2008 till 2011, conducting many focused workshops in film editing and in production. In 2014, he was appointed by late acclaimed Egyptian film critic Samir Farid to be the Artistic Director of the 36th edition of the Cairo International Film Festival. Samir has also been part of several international learning experiences that have helped further his understanding of the needs of the Egyptian independent film industry, including the EuroMed Audio Visual program in 2013. He is also an alumnus of the 2012 Berlinale Talents and a fellow of FILM INDEPENDENT in Los Angeles. Samir's main focus as a producer is first and second time filmmaker projects, as well as collaborating with directors who have a different approach to cinema from what is common in the commercial film industry.



Day Dream Art Production

Production Company

DayDream Art Production is a Cairo-based production entity operating in the Middle Eastern market and focusing on producing art house and auteur films.

Founded in 2007 by experienced film editor Mohamed Samir, DayDream was initially created as a production and post-production house to facilitate the expanding scope of his projects and to develop a community of professionals who share his filmmaking ideals.

DayDream's first feature film production was veteran Egyptian director Mohamed Khan's *Factory Girl* (2013), which was met with remarkable regional success upon its release. Currently, DayDream focuses on producing films that have a special narrative and visual approach, mainly by first or second time filmmakers.

DayDream aims to support artists working in the audiovisual sector in general, and is known to be a solid backer of many kinds of cultural events. In 2012 and 2013, DayDream co-produced two independent theatre plays, in addition to producing five short films. DayDream also sponsored many film events, such as the 48 Hours Film Competition and the Panorama of the European Film.



ABO ZAABAL 1989

COUNTRY

Egypt

TYPE

Feature Documentary

PRIMARY CONTACT

kismet@see-ra.org

TOTAL BUDGET

\$45,800

AVAILABLE FINANCE

\$3000

Two parallel lives tell the story of historic events of resistance movements in Egypt. Through the story of a father and a son a journey into the lives of activists from the 70s till the Jan 25 revolution unfolds.

Synopsis

Through the eyes of a young boy visiting his imprisoned father, a story of defiance is told; the story of the socialist movement in Egypt and its struggle, focusing on a defining moment in its history: the events of 1989 in Abo-Zaabal, where 52 men were severely tortured in prison after months of workers' strikes. Through a recreation of the events, the film will bring the audience into the lives of these men and their families.

Two parallel stories will unfold, that of the father and another of the son. The older generation will speak of their loss, failure and defeat throughout their struggle. However, their children tell us a different story.

Feeling neglected, yet proud of their parent's cause, these kids grew up disoriented. They resented their parents' failure, yet when presented with an opportunity of defiance to make it up for them, they did not hesitate to follow in their footsteps. Many of these men's children came together and joined activists' movements, forming an integral part of the January 25 Revolution. Where do they go from here now that the revolution has not brought the change they hoped to accomplish for their parents and to themselves? Is it the end for them too?

At the end of these two journeys, both the parents and children reflect on their hopes and fears, their passion to support a cause engraved in their souls, the reality of their responsibilities, and the duty to avoid the pitfalls of the past pitfalls.

Director's Statement

My childhood was spent in the midst of an activist household. It marked me and a number of other friends for life. For many years I struggled with mixed feelings. I kept moving between resentment and sadness to pride and compassion. The older I get, the closer I become to the events that shaped my father and a big number of his friends: the events of 1989. I remember how hard visiting my father in prison was, it is imprinted in my memory. However, the hardest of all was experiencing the change that happened to him after his release. With the worldwide fall of Communism I witnessed many give up. I felt that we were the generation with defeated parents. I chose to work as a documentary filmmaker so I would never lose the drive to continue telling people's stories of defiance. I will recreate the events stored in my memory with an 8mm camera in flashbacks. I will blend the past with archival footage in a feature-like drama. At the same time, through a live stage performance by one of the men who were with my father, I will bring in the different characters with their stories and emotions. The stage will act as a parallel world where we all reflect on our lives.



Bassam Mortada

Filmmaker

Bassam Mortada is a filmmaker, trainer, activist, and cofounder of See Media Productions. A graduate of the Cairo Jesuit Cinema School, Mortada chose to produce and direct documentary films independently. As a director, he has worked with a number of activists, human rights organizations and informal movements to help document their life, struggle and work. In 2008, Mortada joined Al Masry Media Corporation, then an independent media company aspiring to create a space for independent reporting, where he trained, directed and produced short documentary videos. Later on, the small crew was able to produce important investigative stories that broke important stories and went viral. His first feature documentary Reporting a Revolution (Al-Thawra Khabar, 2012) premiered at the 2012 Berlinale and screened at a number of film festivals around the world. Mortada then started his own independent production company, See Media Productions, dedicated to working on neglected narratives, social injustice and activist biographies. Mortada's short documentary Waiting for His Descent (2014) won the First Prize for Documentary at the Jesuit Film Festival.



Kismet Elsayed

Producer

A producer, photographer, project manager and co-founder of See Media Productions. Elsayed graduated from the American University in Cairo with a degree in Political Science, before working as a photojournalist and managing a number of projects in the field of media. She led multidisciplinary teams to accomplish various projects in media production and publishing, including developing an interactive portal platform that combines social media, web TV, and citizen journalism. Her work in Al Masry Al Youm also involved organizing workshops for photo and video journalists, screenings films and curating photography exhibitions.

Elsayed's own photography and video work has been published in Al masry Al Youm, Egypt Independent and Mada Masr. Her latest photography project is comprised of long-term photo essays about people living with Hepatitis C and their limited access to health services. She is also the producer of Reporting A Revolution, which premiered at the 2012 Berlinale, and screened at a number of other international film festivals. She also co-curated an exhibition titled "Reporting a Revolution, Continued," which showed in a number of European cities. She is the main producer and film project manager in See Media.



See Media

Production Company

Due to the feeble state of Egyptian media today, stories of social injustice, state negligence and human rights abuse are seldom covered. Consequently, the founding group of See Media decided to produce stories that are neglected. The production plan is based on a series of films and reports that profile people, places and causes in a well researched, in-depth storytelling format. The stories are chosen based on their social relevance and under representation in mainstream media. The See Media team is also building a publishing platform that will host the films in addition to written and photo essays with different types of relevant information. So far, See Media has produced one feature length documentary and two shorts.



BACKSTAGE

COUNTRY

Tunisia/Morocco

TYPE

Feature Narrative

PRIMARY CONTACT

kalbrane@gmail.com

TOTAL BUDGET

\$1,103,650

AVAILABLE FINANCE

\$15,000

They finally reach the doctor's house in the small hours, and the new day ushers forth a totally different dynamic in the group.

Synopsis

During the penultimate performance of a dance company's show at the Maison de la Culture in a little village in the Atlas Mountains, Hedi, one of the six dancers in the company, injures Aida, his partner on and off the stage, while the other dancers look on in horror.

The village neither has a doctor nor a nurse, and so the company is forced to take to the road and go to a neighboring village to seek help for Aida. The full moon lights their way as they take this perilous detour to ensure the last, most important performance show goes according to plan.

Their adventure begins in a forest, after the minibus breaks down and the group continue their journey to the village on foot. Seif, the youngest dancer, goes missing, and the company breaks up into smaller groups to search for him. This brings us closer to each of the characters, and allows us to get to know their true personalities and individual preoccupations.

The dancers finally reach the doctor's house in the small hours, the new day ushering forth a totally different dynamic in the group.

Director's Statement

I spent much of my youth on stage, first as a professional dancer and then as an actress. I was lucky to have several 'families.' Onstage, accidents happen – a slap, a shove, or worse. Putting on a show and going on tour creates a certain intimacy on and off the stage. Too often, backstage intrigues between partners, of which the audience and director are often blissfully unaware, do happen. This is where the real drama plays out, and why I decided to put the camera mainly offstage. I had two major areas of interest: women's bodies that allow them the singular opportunity to carry a child, and how this turns them into machines dictated to by society or their biological clocks, giving them almost no choice but to follow the natural order of things – to have children; and bisexuality, which is still taboo, or mistaken for homosexuality. I wanted to explore these issues in a context that was familiar to me, the world of dance. My intention is to underline how much time we are wasting worrying and warring with one another, and how by not living in the present moment we are letting real life pass us by.



Afef Ben Mahmoud

Filmmaker

Tunisian director and actress Afef Ben Mahmoud dashed into an artistic career from the age of 12. At 14, she joined Sihem Belkhodja Contemporary Dance Company where many well-known choreographers including Selma and Sofiane Ouissi trained, touring Tunisia and Europe with numerous shows until 1999. At 17, she ran the Tunisian National Ballet for Kids, where she gave dance courses and created/directed performances.

From 15 to 22, Ben Mahmoud also participated as a dancer in all musical shows by famous Tunisian stage director Fadhel Jaziri, co-directing a dance ensemble in his major show, Al Hadra, at age 20.

Ben Mahmoud then dedicated herself to her acting and filmmaking career, working on numerous TV series, video clips and films, among them the female lead in Making Of (2006) by Nouri Bouzid. Throughout those years, Ben Mahmoud directed three short fiction films, and is currently developing her first feature, Backstage.



Khalil Benkirane

Producer

Khalil Benkirane graduated with a degree in Film studies from San Francisco State University in 1995. He was appointed Artistic Director and then Executive Director of The Arab Film Festival, Cinemayaat, in San Francisco from 1998 to 2002. He later moved to Morocco, where he directed and produced his first feature documentary, The White Thread (2007). In 2008, Khalil relocated to Qatar, where he produced over 75 documentary and narrative films for Al Jazeera Children. In early 2011, he joined the Doha Film Institute where he currently heads the Grants Programme. Khalil is a founding member of The Cinemathèque de Tanger (CdT) and a previous board member of the Young Arab Theater Fund (YATF).



COSTA BRAVA

COUNTRY

Lebanon

TYPE

Feature Narrative

PRIMARY CONTACT

myriam@abboutproductions.com

TOTAL BUDGET

\$1,029,402

AVAILABLE FINANCE

The Badri family lives an idyllic life of isolation in the Lebanese mountains away from the Country's rot. When the government decides to build a landfill on the land of their house, they are devastated.

Synopsis

The Badri family lives an idyllic life of isolation in the Lebanese mountains, away from the country's rot. When the government decides to build a landfill on the land plot where their house is built, they are devastated. As the trash of an entire country piles up on their doorstep, the hidden tensions among the family arise, shaking their existence to its core.

Director's Statement

I was born the year the Lebanese Civil War ended. In these post-war years, I observed the fear of my parents' generation, a desire to dissociate. My parents couldn't deal with the trauma, so they never talked about it; were overprotective; and secluded my sister and I. They convinced us the only safe place was home. However, when their marriage grew crippled, our safe place exploded, driving us to reinvent our home and enter the real world.

Ever since then, Lebanon has been struggling to find its balance again. Grudges and corruption culminated in the irreversible garbage crisis that started in 2015. Ironically, since then, the child in me created parallels between the country and my home. Every time Lebanon suffered, my family suffered. My home was a microcosm of Lebanon. Costa Brava tells the story of a family living a utopian life of isolation in the mountains, away from a rotten world. The father believes this is the way to protect his family. However, when the government chooses their land as the new landfill of the country's trash, their utopia cracks. This invasion drives them to extreme versions of themselves, awakening repressed feelings, and making them realize the rot had reached their insides as well.



Mounia Akl

Filmmaker

Mounia Akl is a director and writer from Lebanon living between Beirut and New York. She holds a bachelor's degree in architecture from the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts (ALBA) and an MFA in Directing from Columbia University. Apart from directing, Akl has taught film directing at the NHSI Film Summer Institute at Northwestern University, Chicago, and was a preceptor in Screenwriting at Columbia University, New York, where she was also Richard Peña's teaching assistant. Her previous work includes four short films, two web series and recently Lights, an omnibus feature film made of six chapters directed by six directors, including herself, produced by Breaking Wave Pictures, a collective she co-founded in New York. Her short film, Submarine (2016), was in the official selection of the 69th Cannes Film Festival (Cinefondation), South By Southwest, Toronto International Film Festival and Dubai International Film Festival, where it won the Muhr Jury Prize. Submarine was also awarded the James Bridges production grant and the Kodak Motion Picture Production Grant. In 2017, Akl took part in the Lebanon Factory, co-directing the short film El Gran Libano, which opened the Directors' Fortnight at the 70th Cannes Film Festival and will screen at the Sarajevo Film Festival and BFI London Film Festival, among others. Akl was just recently chosen by the Cannes Film Festival's Cinefondation to be one of the six directors to take part in the five-month writing residency for her first feature film project, Costa Brava.



Myriam Sassine

Producer

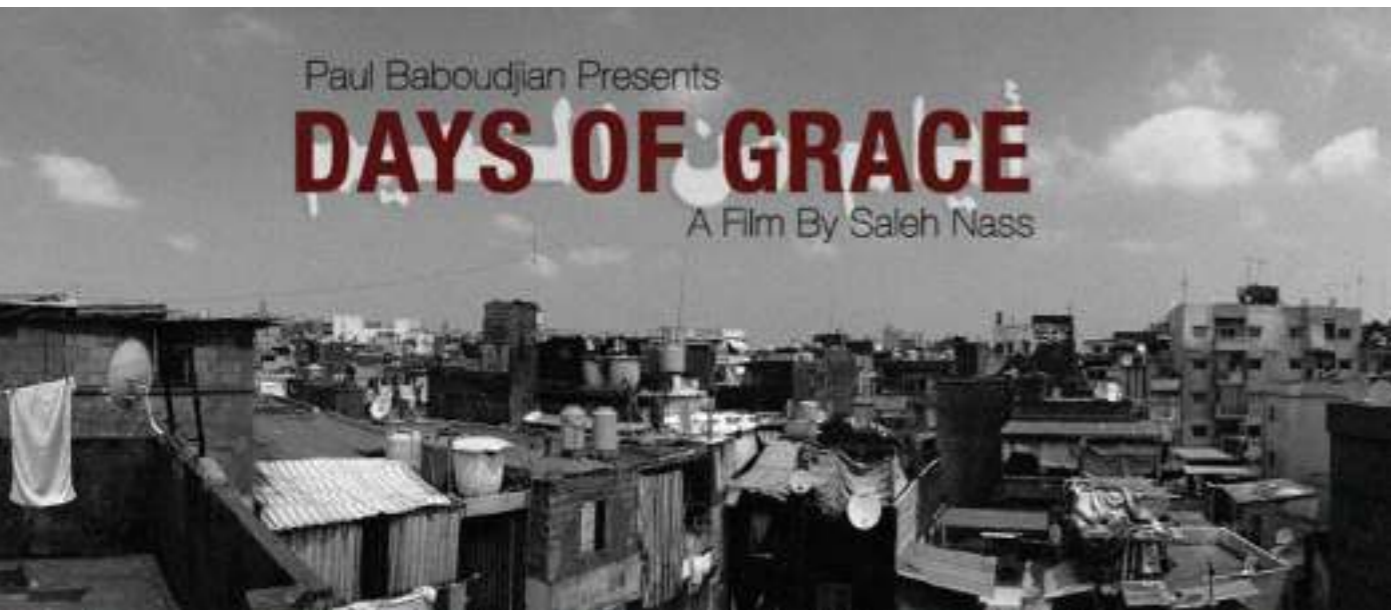
Myriam Sassine majored in Cinema Studies at the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts (ALBA) in 2005, and received her MA in Cinema Research from the Institut d'études scéniques et audiovisuelles (IESAV) in 2009. In 2005, she started working as a story producer on several reality shows such as the Arab versions of international formats from Reveille Productions, Fox and Endemol. She directed a documentary, The Palestinian Cause in Lebanese Cinema (2009), and a short video, No Connection (2006), which was selected for the 2007 Tribeca Film Festival and screened in various festivals and galleries worldwide. Sassine has also worked in content development at Lucky Monkey Pictures (USA) and About Productions (Lebanon). In 2012, she became an Associate Producer at About Productions, producing her first feature documentary e muet in 2013, which was directed by Corine Shawi and premiered in the International Competition at FID Marseille. She then produced A Time to Rest by Myriam El Hajj in 2015, which screened in many international film festivals. Sassine participated in the 2011 DocMed programme for Arab producers, the 2012 Torino Film Lab Interchange Programme, and the 2014 Berlinale Talents programme. She is the COO of Schortcut Films, dedicated to co-producing international features, and the Executive Director of Maskoon Fantastic Film Festival, the first fantastic film festival in the Middle East, the first edition of which took place in September 2016.



About Productions

Production Company

ut Productions produces feature films and documentaries, supporting Arabic-language movies with a distinctly Arab voice that expresses the identity of the region. The company was established in 1998 by Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, later joined by Georges Schoucair, who became About Productions' producer shortly after the release of their first feature film. feature films.



DAYS OF GRACE

COUNTRY

Lebanon, Bahrain, Qatar

TYPE

Feature Narrative

PRIMARY CONTACT

info@tharwaproductions.org

TOTAL BUDGET

\$420,000

AVAILABLE FINANCE

\$80,000

A young Syrian man is faced with a dilemma. He has only 5 days to get his papers or face instant deportation to a war zone. With problems on every turn, will he do anything to stay in a city that has taken more refugees than it can afford?

Synopsis

A young Syrian man is faced with a dilemma: he has only five days to acquire his papers before he faces instant deportation to a war zone. With problems at every turn, what can he do to stay in a city that has taken in more refugees than it can afford?

Director's Statement

The story came out of a need of mine to show an emotional and empathetic story of a "young man vs the world" where things don't quite work the way that we want them to.

I wanted to highlight a human story away from politics and war and at the same time set it in Beirut, a city that has taken on the largest number of Syrian refugees to have fled their country. As a person that's half-Bahraini and half-Lebanese with immigrant routes, I can empathise a lot with characters that are like fish out of water. Beirut is not a destination but a half-way stop, an impermanent place where these refugees are supposed to stay only temporarily. But for how long?

I feel that a gritty human film about a character's struggle can tell you more about a situation than any political or activist film. This should be a simple, real story of a human being trying to go forward in a tough modern life, against all odds.

"It is in God's nature to terrify us in order to lead us to safety." - Rumi



Saleh Nas

Filmmaker

A graduate of Television Production from Bournemouth Media School and current MA in Film candidate at Raindance in the UK, Saleh Nas's award-winning shorts Game, Central Market and PickUp were official selections in many film festivals worldwide.

Nas is the co-founder of an active production house in the Gulf region, and has directed music videos for British artist Sami Yusuf and indie artist Ala Ghawas. He is also the editor of Bahrain's first feature film in 10 years, The Sleeping Tree, which premiered at the Dubai International Film Festival in 2014.



Paul Baboudjian

Producer

Baboudjian started his career working both creatively and managerially in the media industry (advertising, television and films). He developed a rich international experience producing short films and documentary projects in various countries in the Mediterranean area. Among others, he produced the award winning Here Comes the Rain (Black Pearl Award at the 2010 Abu Dhabi Film Festival), and supported two of the most successful recent documentaries in the Arab world: Grandma, a Thousand Times (2010) and A World Not Ours (2012).



Tharwa Productions

Production Company

Tharwa Productions is a boutique company with services dedicated to support film productions, television commercials, corporate films and documentaries. The company's edge is a strong artistic sense merged with an intimate knowledge of the culture and people of the region.



NOURA IN WONDERLAND

COUNTRY

Tunisia

TYPE

Feature Narrative

PRIMARY CONTACT

hindedo@yahoo.fr

TOTAL BUDGET

\$789,686,45

AVAILABLE FINANCE

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Noura meets the love of her life Lassaad while her husband Sofiane is in jail. Upon his release, the two lovers decide to flee.

Synopsis

Noura meets the love of her life, Lassad, while her husband, Sofiane, is in jail. She raises her three children alone, and works in a laundry room. A few days before the divorce Noura has asked for is granted, the lovers' project of living together is jeopardised by Sofiane's release. This is when Noura and Lassad decide to flee.

Director's Statement

I see women, veiled or not, walking in the popular districts of Tunis, with a personal «lid» over their heads; a concrete topping, a bit like the famous wet cloud that often follows characters in cartoons. The lid isn't made of cement or any other material, but of looks, judgements, intolerance, religion. I see a woman in a pink velvet tracksuit, crossing the street in a hurry, and in her eyes there is a glimmer that gets to me. It's Noura. Instinctively, I decide to follow her.

In the Arab world, we sing for love. From Om Kalthoum to Berber songs, men and women sing for love: pain, jealousy, emotions, romance. But when it comes to carnal lust, to its reality, especially out of wedlock, taboos and double standards settle in. Love becomes a «sin.»

Yet everyone has felt love and lust, and it is through these universal feelings that the viewer will enter Noura's story.



Hinde Boujemaa

Filmmaker

Hinde Boujemaa is a Tunisian director living in Tunis. After studying special effects in Brussels, she worked as a technician on various films for more than ten years. In 2005, she decided to make a career shift, attending trainings and workshops with Jean-Claude Carrière, Emmanuel Bourdieu and Jacques Fieschi. In 2012 she made her first feature documentary, *It Was Better Tomorrow*, which made it to the Official Selection of the Venice Film Festival and won the Muhr for Best Director at the Dubai International Film Festival. In 2014, driven by her activism, she directed four short films for a Tunisian campaign launched to fight against gender inequality. During that same year, her short fiction film *And Romeo married Juliet* won the Muhr Best Short Film at DIFF, Best Short Film at Alexandria Film Festival, Best Short Film at Oran film festival, Best Short Film and Best Actress at the Verona Film Festival, as well as Best Short Film at Journées des réalisateurs Tunisiens. Boujemaa is currently preparing for her feature fiction film *Noura in Wonderland*.



Imed Marzouk

Producer

Imed Marzouk was born in 1973. After studying international commerce at the Institut des Hautes Etudes Commerciales (HEC), he obtained a degree in Marketing. In 2000, he joined Canal + Horizons Tunisie where he worked as production manager, and in 2002, he founded the production company Propaganda with Nejib Belkadhi. Marzouk has produced several shorts, including *Tsawer* by Nejib Belkadhi (2005), *Walid Mattar's Tendid* (2010) and *Offrande* (2012), *Linge Sale* (2010) by Malik Amara, and *And Romeo Married Juliette* by Hinde Boujemaa (2014), as well as several documentaries, including Belkadhi's *VHS Kahloucha* (2006), which was selected at the Cannes Film Festival and the Sundance Film Festival and won the Gold Muhr at the Dubai International Film Festival, and feature films, such as *Bastardo* by Belkadhi (2013), which screened at the Toronto International Film Festival and won Best Film at the Africano Film Festival in Milano and Best film at the Latin Arab Film Festival in Buenos Aires, and *Leyla Bouzid's As I Open My Eyes* (2015), which won the Gold Muhr at DIFF, Best Film at London's East End Film Festival, and Best First Feature Film at Festival du Film Francophone in Namur.



Propaganda Production

Production Company

Propaganda Production is a Tunisian broadcasting company founded in 2002 by Imed Marzouk and Néjib Belkadhi.



THE BALCONY OF PARADISE

COUNTRY

Jordan

TYPE

Feature Narrative

PRIMARY CONTACT

ayah.jardaneh@gmail.com

TOTAL BUDGET

\$400,000

AVAILABLE FINANCE

\$40,000

A Palestinian trapped on the other side of the wall tries to reach the hospital for his son. A distance of 200 meters becomes a 200 kilometers journey.

Synopsis

Uncomfortable in her own skin, Donya, a lonely travel agent in her forties, is a TV home-shopping addict living in a dark basement apartment in the Paradise Building in the slums of old Amman, where she is often harassed for not abiding by society's conservative standards. She is in a sexual relationship with her employer, Mazen, a playful man in his fifties, and constantly tries to convince herself that they will eventually get married.

Donya's life is shaken by the intrusion of Hayat, her new, young and beautiful co-worker. Saddened by Mazen's infatuation with her, Donya goes to extreme measures to lose weight and look prettier.

Hayat, meanwhile, is captivated by the seventh-floor apartment of the Paradise Building. The landlord, a mean man in his sixties, agrees to give Hayat the apartment under one condition: that she obeys the building's rules. When Hayat disregards them, he banishes her from the seventh floor to the basement with Donya.

Donya is pregnant. To her disappointment, Mazen rejects her and fires her from work. Certain that she will be stuck in the slums forever, Donya admits that she was wrong to disobey society's rules, changing her behaviour and attire and striking a deal with the landlord. Desperately trying to redeem herself, Donya spirals down a self-destructive path where she can no longer distinguish between her illusions and her reality.

Director's Statement

This film is about what it means to be a woman living in an oppressed society. It's about what is expected of women, how they are portrayed in media, and the rules society sets for them.

I grew up in the Jordanian capital Amman. In masculine society bounded by religion and cultural rules. Guys would brag about their sexual experiences while girls safeguard their virginity. Women are categorized, judged or shamed by their appearances.

The Balcony of Paradise is a feature narrative psychological drama/fantasy with current time events. In this film the main character is harassed by people in her neighborhood for not going by the society rules.

The film will be grounded in the social realism of the place and its people. Mainly depending on the natural light of the place to capture its oldness and grimness.

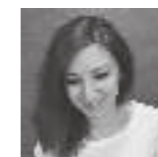
Hopefully, this will give the film an oddly real and captivating feel where ugliness will earn the label "art" in The Balcony of Paradise.



Amr Abdelhadi

Filmmaker

A Jordanian director/writer, Abdelhadi holds a B.A. in TV and Film Production. Since 2006, Abdelhadi has worked as a Promotion Producer and won five gold and six silver PromaxBDA Arabia Awards. Together, Abdelhadi and Samar Al Azzeh co-wrote their short fiction film Familial Fever, which Abdelhadi also edited and directed. The film was selected in the International Competition at the 2012 Locarno Film Festival, and won the FIPRESCI Critics Prize at the Dubai International Film Festival in the same year. Abdelhadi and Al Azzeh are currently co-writing their first feature narrative, The Balcony of Paradise, which Abdelhadi will direct. The screenplay was selected at EuroMed Audiovisual Lab and the RAWI Scriptwriting Lab.



Ayah Jardaneh

Producer

Ayah Jardaneh is a producer and line producer based in Jordan. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Information Technology from Carleton University and a diploma in Interactive Multimedia and Design from Algonquin College, Canada. She also acquired certificates in producing from New York Film Academy, a PGA certificate, and a 3D intensive course at VanArts. Jardaneh started her career in film by joining the Royal Film Commission in Jordan. She then worked on numerous productions including Under The Shadow, 2017 BAFTA winner for Outstanding Debut, and The Parrot, recipient of the 2015 Film Prize of the Robert Bosch Stiftung.



Talebox Production

Production Company

A Jordanian company specialized in the production and creation of audiovisual content and media as well as brands, franchises and advertising. Established in 2016, Talebox brings forth storytelling in its finest form by digging deep into the genesis of a story, exploring the best means of telling it, and transforming it into captivating visuals.

It's hard to forget someone
who gave you so much
to remember

The House of Silence

'In Development'



THE HOUSE OF SILENCE

COUNTRY

UK / Iraq/Algeria

TYPE

Feature Narrative

PRIMARY CONTACT

zainabhariri2@gmail.com

TOTAL BUDGET

\$1,246,750

AVAILABLE FINANCE

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On her sixth birthday, Aya's life changes dramatically. As her father, Dr. Ghalib (27), leaves her at the school gates, she is completely unaware that it is the last time she will see him.

Synopsis

The events of the film are based on a true story.

Baghdad, 1979. Saddam Hussein's regime is in its infancy.

On her sixth birthday, Aya's life changes dramatically. As her father, Dr. Ghalib (27), leaves her at the school gates, she is completely unaware that it is the last time she will see him. That evening, with her party in full swing, Aya waits anxiously at her window for his return. Disappointment and sadness give way to frustration and anger, as her family desperately seeks an explanation for his absence. As the hours pass, it becomes clear that something is wrong.

Throughout the following days and weeks, the family home is looted and vandalized by loyalist soldiers. The family is surveilled, harassed and subjected to brutal intimidation and interrogation. Aya longs for answers about her father, relentlessly questioning her mother and grandparents, but she is quickly hushed into silence. Her father's name fades away, becoming a forbidden word, but his memory remains strong with Aya.

As the Baathist grip on Iraq tightens, the streets of Baghdad become a breeding ground for paranoia and persecution. Saddam's domineering presence looms over Aya, scrutinizing her every move. Ridiculed by her friends and unable to satisfy her yearning for the truth, Aya retreats to a world where she can find the answers she so desperately seeks; a place where she can speak with her father. But even in a fantasy world, Aya discovers a heartbreaking reality; she cannot escape the consequences of a tyrannical dictatorship.

Director's Statement

In 1979, Ghazi Al Hariri was arrested, imprisoned and executed for his role in a plot to assassinate Saddam Hussein.

I first heard the story of Dr. Ghazi from his daughter, Zainab Al Hariri. My first meeting with Zainab was emotional; the story of her father was fascinating. Yet what struck me harder was Zainab's own story; the story of a young girl who lost her father for reasons she could not begin to fathom. As she shared her experiences, it elicited feelings of sadness, pain and grief that are difficult to express. Images flashed in my mind; a young girl desperately awaiting the return of her father.

Victims of Saddam's tyranny struggle to overcome their personal traumas. There are thousands like Zainab all over Iraq, people who lost loved ones without explanation and were told to let the past rest. But for Zainab, telling her father's story is a form of closure. Even though this story is personal and unique, in filming it I hope to give a voice to the countless victims of injustice.

Unfortunately, the final days of Dr. Ghazi have been lost to history. But Zainab's memory of that time remains vividly clear. For that reason, I have chosen to make a film about her perception of the events. In capturing the story of that young girl, I want to capture her childlike optimism, naivety and hope through a fantasy world; a world of the lead character's creation.



Karim Traïdia

Filmmaker

An Algerian director and writer. Traïdia studied sociology in Paris and Cinema at the Dutch Film Academy of Amsterdam. His graduation film, Impotence, won several awards in Europe.

Traïdia's first feature film, The Polish Bride (1998), won the Golden Calf for Best Director and Best Actress at the National Film Festival (Utrecht), the Audience Award at the International Film Festival of Rotterdam, and the Prix Europe in Berlin, and was nominated for a Best Foreign Language Film Golden. The film also won the Grand Golden Rail at the Cannes Film Festival. Two years later, Traïdia directed Speakers of the Truth, which won the Best Film and Best Actor awards in the Valencia International Film Festival, as well as several other international awards.



Zainab Al-hariri

Producer

Zainab Al-Hariri was born in Baghdad, Iraq. Following a move to the UK, she completed a BA in Film and Media Production at Leeds Metropolitan University. She started her film career as a post-production producer assistant in Leeds, gaining extensive experience working in the industry on a number of film projects. She later held the position of post-production producer and supervisor at Human Film (UK); a multi-award winning film production company based in Leeds. Highly trained in all aspects of filmmaking, Al-Hariri has also worked as a senior editor on numerous internationally acclaimed feature, documentary and short film projects.

As an Iraqi national, Al-Hariri is passionate and proud of her origins and strives to internationally promote cultural understanding. She is actively involved with Iraqi and Arab groups in the UK, organizing cultural and charity events to raise awareness within the immediate community and bridge cultural divides. This ethos stands out in her work in the film industry as well.

Al-Hariri is currently taking on a new challenge, as she prepares for her first feature film as a writer and producer, a story close to her heart set in her native Iraq.



Iraq Independent Film Center

Production Company

The main objective of the Iraq Independent Film Center is to foster cinematic culture in Iraq through the active promotion, development and enhancement of cinema, in order to overcome the present cultural crisis the country is witnessing due to ongoing political turmoil. IIFC promotes an independent cinematic identity, aims at enforcing modern concepts in the Iraqi film industry, and works to prevent filmmakers from submitting to any kind of authority. In addition, the center works on the production, publication and circulation of printed works on cinema, as well as the development and renovation of movie theaters in cultural and trading centres according to international specifications.



THE LAST RESCUE

COUNTRY

Egypt/ U.S.A

TYPE

Feature Narrative

PRIMARY CONTACT

tamer.ezzat2005@gmail.com

TOTAL BUDGET

\$4,211,461

AVAILABLE FINANCE

With ISIS on their tail, Khalil and Jake must round up the children and find a way across the border to freedom and what may be their last chance at personal redemption.

Synopsis

KHALIL RASHEED is a seasoned Lebanese-American freelance journalist working both sides of the Lebanese-Syrian border. Appalled by the atrocities he sees, Khalil hatches a plot to rescue the innocent children of the besieged village of AL Waer. It's not all altruistic – Khalil's conscience is burdened by the memory of a drunk driving accident in his son was killed.

Before returning to Syria, Khalil gets a call from JAKE WESTIN, a swaggering but fading Hollywood action star desperate to save his failing career. Westin offers Khalil 100,000\$ to shadow him as research for his next movie role. Jake will be a hindrance, but Khalil agrees because the money may help.

In Syria, Jake comprehends for the first time the devastation of the war, even while developing a friendship with the beautiful Dr. RAJA, a Syrian-American doctor who bravely returned to her parent's home village to treat the wounded.

With ISIS on their tail, Khalil and Jake must round up the children and find a way across the border to freedom and what may be their last chance at personal redemption.

Director's Statement

This film is dedicated to the people of Syria who fell victim to a political conflict that they don't have a hand in due to global politics in today's world. As a result, the approach to making this film will concentrate on showing the human stories and the chaos that reaps innocent lives randomly. The protagonist here is an Arab who is not the stereotypical portrayal of the Middle Eastern cliché in western movies. He is not a terrorist or a rich Shiekh but rather a character made of flesh and blood; a proactive character driven by inner human conflicts. The film will show the brutality of death and will try to find beauty in simple forms of life like a blossoming flower in the middle of the rubble; like the children that Khalil and Jake are trying to rescue. The film is also an entertaining and enlightening journey taken through the story of Jake and Khalil; an odd couple. Jake is a fish out of water and is a source of discomfort to Khalil and a hindrance in his way to achieving his ultimate goal. Eventually Jake and Khalil bond and start seeing eye to eye. This moment is where the whole film is going towards achieving the main dramatic goal; rescuing the children and giving them, and the audience, some hope.



Tamer Ezzat

Filmmaker

originally graduated as a Physics & Electronics Major at the American University in Cairo in 1994. He started as an actor on stage but soon turned his attention to filmmaking. In 2001 he received a Fulbright fellowship to study at the Center for Advanced Digital Applications (CADA) at New York University, earning a Certificate in Digital Special Effects. At the same time, he pursued a diploma in film directing at the New York Film Academy (NYFA.)

Following September 11, 2001, Tamer shifted his attention to a documentary about Egyptians living in the New York, "Everything Is Gonna Be Alright!" Upon returning to his native Cairo in 2002, Tamer directed and produced numerous documentaries for Orbit Satellite Network, Dream TV, and Aljazeera & Aljazeera Children. His feature film "The Place I Call Home" was officially selected by more than 13 festivals, receiving four awards.

Tamer's second feature, "The Ring Road," premiered at the Cairo International Film Festival. Variety said, "Ezzat is at his best when helming and scripting intimate scenes. [His] lensing incorporates a judicious amount of handheld camerawork, capturing the unsettled feel so necessary to maintaining a sense of constant stress."

Tamer is currently in pre-production for his new feature "When We're Born" due for production in 2017.



Eric Adams

Producer

A producer, screenwriter, journalist and author. He wrote the script and produced (consulting) the feature film "Supremacy" (2015), starring Danny Glover and Joe Anderson, and he co-wrote and produced "Archie's Final Project" (aka My Suicide) (2011). Archie's Final Project won 21 major international film festival awards, including the Crystal Bear in Berlin.

Eric is also the author of six books, including the suspense/thrillers Birdland (Hodder & Stoughton) and Plot Twist (St. Martin's Press). He wrote and directed "To Save A Child," an award-winning documentary on suicide, as well as a number of other documentary and short films. As a journalist, Eric has written for dozens of national and regional periodicals, including The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, Wired, and Salon.

Eric relies on his journalism background to develop film projects that explore contemporary social issues while remaining commercially viable. In recognition of his efforts, Eric was recently named a Djerassi Screenwriting Fellowship finalist by the San Francisco Film Society.



Sleeperwave Films

Production Company

Dedicated to producing searing thrillers and thought-provoking dramas, Sleeperwave Films has gained a reputation as a developer of high-quality, audience-driven feature films. Past films include "Archie's Final Project" (2009 Berlin Crystal Bear winner) and "Supremacy," (2015 African Academy Award winner). Current projects include the romantic escape thriller "Vanished," US/Bangladeshi co-pro «Rickshaw Girl,» and the Syrian refugee action/drama «The Last Rescue».



TRANSIT

COUNTRY

Egypt

TYPE

Feature Documentary

PRIMARY CONTACT

sameh_gamal@figleafstudios.com

TOTAL BUDGET

\$316.000

AVAILABLE FINANCE

\$69.000

This turning point eventually reached the Syrian workers, and despite the start of the sea season (the season of riding the waves of the Mediterranean Sea in search of European lands), as called by the refugees.

Synopsis

It is happening now as it was in all of her stage>s since her baptism till nowadays, the city of Alexandria considered Seductive and false transit station for a both kinds of passengers, for whom stayed till the everlasting , or whom they left her with a repercussion not less than the everlasting presence, this days Alexandria labyrinth>s are tempting a new comer -

a Syrian refugee - .

The Shami House restaurant in Alexandria represents a study sample of the lives of Syrian refugees in Egypt. The film follows the daily life of the restaurant, which leads to disclosing what hides behind the façade of familiarity. The restaurant's workers often say that Egypt is a temporary crossing point on their journey; however, other signs show that their presence in Alexandria is in fact a turning point.

Is Egypt, the country that can barely accommodate its own people, really the destination of these transients?

Is it a crossing point or a turning point?

This turning point eventually reached the Syrian workers, and despite the start of the sea season (the season of riding the waves of the Mediterranean Sea in search of European lands), as called by the refugees.

Director's Statement

Alexandria is considered one of the most important transit cities for refugees crossing from neighboring and African countries to Europe. This is when I started to pay attention to my position amidst the transients as I was living in the so-called transit life even though I was born in this city –Alexandria-. With the passing of time, and with the gradual arrival of refugees, I began to notice their presence through the Syrian dialect that never fades away. However, the meeting of Syrians this time was done from behind a curtain that isolates them from communicating with the Egyptian people who are known for their curiosity about expatriates, especially Arabic speaking expatriates with whom they can communicate easily. The Syrian refugees piqued the Egyptian people's curiosity more than their predecessors, as they had been used to witnessing Libyan tourists in Alexandria, followed by Iraqi refugees. The arrival of Syrians, however, resulted in emotional indifference.

The motivation began with the desire to make a film about the life of Syrian refugees in Egypt, but later took on a different course with regards to the film industry that tackles the suffering of Syrian refugees and the prevalent international dialogue during these days.

However, through close observation and the increase of temporary transit stories and escape plans across the sea, a new field of research was revealed that transcends the past of the film's characters, and moves towards the observation of a life on the edge without a supporting centre



Islam Kamal

Filmmaker

A visual artist and a filmmaker who studied painting in the Faculty of Fine Arts in Alexandria University. He also studied filmmaking in SEMAT's workshop at the Jesuits Cultural Centre in Alexandria in 2004. He worked as a multimedia specialist at the Faculty of Fine Arts from 2003 to 2006. He also worked as the coordinator of film studies at the Jesuits Cultural Centre and a specialist in arts centre in Bibliotheca Alexandria in 20082009/.

Since 2004, he has been working as a director of photography for several digital video films. He directed himself several short films and five documentaries. Since 2006 he has been the head of video production department in FigLeaf Studios. His films got screened in many International museums & "Berlinale - Forum Expanded, a board member of CineDelta an annual one year study cooperation project, aimed to support Egyptian documentary independent films production in Alexandria, Egypt.



Sameh Gamal

Producer

Since the graduation from Faculty of Commerce, Alexandria University in 2012, Pursued studies of drama and film-making. Chosen to participate «El-Hamra» Drama Science Program in Tunisia 2013 - where participants from over 16 MENA Region and Africa countries participated for 3 years under the authority of Professor Ezz Aldin Ganoun.

Graduated From CineDelta Documentary film school 2016 . A one year program funded by EU.

Member of Fig Leaf Studios main board in Alexandria, where mainly working as a Director, Writer and Producer. Also focusing on culture management operations as a co - founder of ZAWYA ALEXANDRIA it's an art house cinema in Alexandria for independent movies. Media Consultant for UN AIDS , The program for MENA Region and North Africa. Lecturer at Jesuite Film School Alexandria.



Figleaf Studios

Production Company

Fig leaf Video and Audio Productions is a full service, professional production company based in Alexandria since 2005 that can guide a client from concept and scriptwriting to shooting, editing and broadcasting. Figleaf also supports independent, low budget production and considers independent cinema as a driving force for future cinema production in Egypt and the whole world. Fig Leaf utilises its professional capabilities to cooperate, help and guide either independent artists or organisations supporting them in enriching Egyptian independent filmmaking. Fig Leaf Studio is not a production company with the common definition but it's a huge network between Artists Curators Writers Directors Musicians and Cultural Managers nationally and internationally working together on international projects since 2005 , growing up the network inside Egypt and outside.



TWO ROOMS AND A PARLOR

COUNTRY

Egypt

TYPE

Feature Narrative

PRIMARY CONTACT

shbncin@yahoo.com

TOTAL BUDGET

\$400.000

AVAILABLE FINANCE

\$240.000

After his wife's death, Khalil, 70 years old, realize that his routine life is about to end without having explored much. So he decides to make a trip to Panama.

Synopsis

Ten whole years have passed since Khalil Suleiman has retired after a long full of

routine career. Unlike his wife Ihsan Khalil considers that his life has already ended, So he's thinking of investing the money that he'll earn in a few months from his money collective (40,000 LE) into buying a separate cemetery plot, that will unite him with his family after death. Ihsan wants to renovate the house and enjoy her being. So Mr. Khalil pretends to give in to her insistence, but without giving up on trying to convincing her. Suddenly Ihsan dies and Khalil is left alone in confronting people, after spending a whole life trying to avoid them. Khalil realizes that he has never in his life left Cairo and that in fact he never travelled anywhere. He thinks that he cannot die without having seen any other country in his life and so he decides to take the plane for the first time in his life. Loneliness, on one hand, and the travel arrangements on the other, force Mr. Khalil to get involved in his neighbor's lives although he didn't know any of them except for Abdel Aal, a photographer who got retired after being diagnosed with cancer. He meets with his neighbor Ms Azza, living across his apartment, a retired belly dancer. He also meets with his neighbor Yasser, a religiously committed young man, unfertile afraid of undergoing an artificial insemination procedure because he believes it is forbidden in his religion, And his neighbor "Irene", who is an introvert Veterinarian. He starts the trip preparations but he got faced with obstacles related to his health, not having a passport, he don't talk any language but Arabic and finally his son's objection. Mr. Khalil receives the money from the collective and he is very close to his dream travel, after making everyone around him happy... But Yasser's wife suddenly gives birth and the little baby gets admitted to the nursery which is very costly. Mr. Khalil gives the money he received to Yasser, and goes back to his life that has been turned upside down.

Director's Statement

• Has Suleiman grown taller ?

And so Wondered Suleiman's father, when visited by his 30 year-old son Suleiman.

Those were the words that summarized my second short film (my graduation project at the High Cinema Institute). This film was the second installment in a short film trilogy that I have always longed to make before my debut feature... "The Day trilogy" : Three short films about my close relationships. "Rise and Shine" : The beginning of the day...about my mother. "At Day's End" : The middle of the day...about my father. "At Night" : The end of the day...about my love. My obsession wasn't with making films about those persons, it was more of an urge to reincarnate my relationship with them and what they represent to me through the films. And then there was "At Day's End", in which I dealt with my relationship with my father.... or I'd rather say : Self-assessed my attitude towards it, for the film to be a reformulation of the relationship afterwards, a relationship that I have had always tried in vain to deal with in a film. Then finally I found what I have always searched for, in a short story by Ibrahim Aslan called "At Day's End". It was part of a series of short stories published weekly in "Al Ahram" newspaper...How strange! The story even carried the name of the same part of the day!! And even more strange was the father-son relationship there : exactly the same as my experience!! This story is mine and its going to make it as my next film...There goes the story and there goes the film : "At Day's End". fall 2009 ... Now, my first feature film. I am searching for my first feature and I can't find it...or in better words : I don't know what I really want to make. Aslan continues publishing his short story series every Wednesday in "Al Ahram", daily life situations involving Suleiman's father and mother in their narrow space, Winter 2009.. Still searching for my first feature film...it seems that I have come closer to what I want. It's the drama of daily life....but how? -Aslan publishes his short story series in one volume under the name "Two chambers and a living room", "Shouldn't you have called it "Two rooms and a parlor" Mr. Ibrahim?"- He answers, after a moment of his usual silence: "No, it's good that way, two chambers and a living room" - "As you like, Mr. Ibrahim"

I read the whole series of short stories in one volume. It wasn't just a book of short stories, or an exquisite piece of literature, the characters are alive and carefully studied, drifting together in their limited space...and as I finished reading, I had two feelings : First, that there was something missing in my short film "At Day's End", and that there was still some space in that book that the film didn't unleash. Second, I felt that there was someone in the world of literature who was speaking with my own tongue. In literature, ASLAN sees things just like I see them in cinema. It is the very normal daily life drama which I have always loved, which may lack major events or plots but is filled with emotions, it's all about the normal and simple details that overwhelm us when we stop at and watch closely, whether in cinema or in literature. Here is where I find Aslan turning dust into gold. The simplest characters and events that we all pass by and see every day are easily turned by him into great literature. That also is what I find common with my taste in cinema, this formula is what attracts me the most, and this is what I haven't had the bravery of even thinking about making, for major production related issues that belong to the cinematic environment in Egypt. I recall one of the biggest directors in Egypt who was a member of the jury that watched my graduation project, telling me literally : "Your film is beautiful, but don't you ever think that you'll be able to do "that" when you graduate and are about to make mainstream features"

But now, and like many other things that have changed in this country during the past two years, I think it's time for this change to reflect on the film industry. I also think it's time for me to make movies that I would love to watch, even if the cinematic environment refuses this.

- To the daily life drama which I love,

- To the tiny details that make up our lives and yet we just neglect,

- To father-son relationships,

I make my first feature film: "Two rooms and a parlor"



Sherif El Bendary

Filmmaker

Born in 1978, Egyptian filmmaker Sherif El Bendary lives and works in Cairo. El Bendary graduated from the Faculty of Applied Arts in 2001 then he pursued studying film directing at the High Institute of Cinema in Cairo. He graduated in 2007 with an honorable mention and received his diploma in 2010 from the High Institute of Cinema, where he has been teaching film directing since 2008. In 2004 El Bendary started working as Assistant Director in feature films and in TV commercials. During 2008 and 2009 El Bendary directed six documentaries in various Arab Country. His first short fiction film "Rise & Shine" produced by the Egyptian Film Center in 2006 was officially selected in more than 75 film festivals in 33 countries and won 15 awards. El Bendary's second short film was his graduation project "At Day's End" produced by the High Institute of Cinema in 2008 and was officially selected in more than 50 film festivals and won 14 awards. He prepares since two years, a feature adapted from the Novel "two rooms and a parlor" for Ibrahim Aslan, and directed his first award winning feature : "Ali the Goat and Ibrahim"



Racha Najdi

Producer

A cultural manager, radio host and a producer in the field of cinema. She works currently as Arts and Culture program Manager at Al-Ismaelia for real estate investment, and radio host on NRJ Egypt. In the past few years, she worked as a Band manager with Salalem and Sharmoofers in addition to working as a freelancer producer on different projects. She worked with Wika (Cairo) on the production and distribution of Nadine Khan's first feature film Harag w Marag (Chaos and Disorder, 2011)

On the year 2011/2012- she managed the Express Fund at the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC), a competitive program providing one-year of funding to artists from the Arab World.

Najdi studied Public Relations and Advertising at the Lebanese University in Beirut and in 2009 she got a Master's degree in Cultural Management and International Cooperation from the University of Barcelona. Between 2003 and 2007 she coordinated numerous workshops on topics ranging from photography to cartoon film making, to documentary film making. She helped organizing the film festivals Palestine in New Cinema (2002/2004-) and Children of the Margin Create their own World (2001, 2003, 2005), both held in Beirut. Lately she is working on Sherif el Bendary's feature, "Two rooms and a Parlor:" and the short movie of Pedros Temizian: "The Trip".



Film Clinic

Production Company

Film Clinic was founded in 2005 and is managed by the renowned Producer and Scriptwriter Mohamed Hefzy. Film Clinic is now considered one of the leading production companies in the MENA region that not only creates unique features but also empowers talents to do so.

We have a passion for the filmmaking industry as we enjoy operating in all its diverse fields on both national and international platforms. Our philosophy is to blend the creative, vibrant ideas of the young generation with the expertise of the best in cinema in order to present strong movies to audiences of exquisite taste and an equal admiration to the beloved silver screen.



**PROJECTS
WORK IN PROGRESS**



COUNTING TILES

COUNTRY

Lebanon

TYPE

Feature Documentary

PRIMARY CONTACT

cynthia@road2films.com

TOTAL BUDGET

\$185,996

AVAILABLE FINANCE

\$135,000

When a troupe of clowns arrive to the Greek island of Lesbos to welcome the incoming refugees, they find themselves greeted with closed gates.. Cynthia, the clown Sabine's sister, joins them on their journey, which slowly becomes a reflection of their own tale of displacement during the Lebanese civil war.

Synopsis

In February 2016, a group of clowns travel to the Greek island of Lesbos on a mission to bring laughter to the transient waves of people escaping war. Unwittingly, they instead bear witness to the effects of new policies enacted by the European Union, which aim to restrict the refugee influx and with it the intended efforts of individual volunteers. Cynthia, being the narrator and the sister of one of the clowns Sabine, she questions the implied limits of one's will to help. Why are the clowns not allowed to enter the camps and greet refugees on the shore? Why aren't they allowed to bring some lightness into the heavy hearts of the displaced? Through an intimate conversation between Cynthia and Sabine, both sisters revisit their own memories of displacement during the Lebanese Civil war: different times; the same waves of terror, the same bitter taste of war.

Director's Statement

In October 2015, my sister, Sabine, went to the Greek island Lesbos, as a clown of the troupe Clowns Without Borders. She performed for the refugees who were making the dangerous journeys by the sea. Media organizations from all over the world were covering the events. Overwhelmed by the excess of media interventions, I needed to observe and ... understand. In February 2016, I decided to follow my sister on her next trip. Once there, all of my plans and intentions changed; we were denied access to all camps. We ended up waiting ... and waiting not sure for what. I felt like a refugee myself, anxieties were caused by a returning war and I felt an urgent need to go "back home". Going back home meant entering memories of war, of my family and I, getting displaced from one place to another. All of these memories were awakening while I was filming the clowns waiting, and wondering. When I was 2, my parents fled the Lebanese civil war and went to Athens. Today, 40

years later, history is repeating itself, with different people and myself in that same place

looking at it from a different perspective.



Cynthia Choucair

Filmmaker

Filmmaker

Born in Beirut in 1975, Cynthia Choucair graduated from ALBA in 1998 and obtained a master's degree in film directing from lesav-USJ in 2002.

She directed 8 short and medium, fiction and documentary films.

Her film Al Kursi was selected in more than 35 festivals worldwide and won several prizes. In 2007 she has established her own production house, Road 2 films, where she produces documentaries, fiction films and cultural TV programs for Arab TV channels. Cynthia Choucair is a member of the Lebanese Cultural Association Beirut DC.



Lara Abou Saifan

Producer



Road 2 Films

Production Company



HAMMAM SOKHN

COUNTRY

Egypt

TYPE

Feature Narrative

PRIMARY CONTACT

hammam.sokhn@gmail.com

TOTAL BUDGET

\$50,000

AVAILABLE FINANCE

--

Seven women are trapped in enclosed, stifling spaces.

Synopsis

Seven women are trapped in enclosed, stifling spaces. The streets are erupting; homes, shops and alleyways lie anxiously in wait. Communications are shut down, answers offered only through TV screens. Our characters attempt to escape their current confines, perhaps desperately, perhaps half-heartedly. In the end, they are all forced to adapt, caught up in their own individual, extraordinary battles.

Director's Statement

This film is an extension of a personal experience that I have been through between the 26th and the 28th of January, 2011, with a group of women, one of whom was writer Rasha Azab – my partner in the scriptwriting process. Through the film, we attempt to process unique moments that had an unprecedented, unmatched impact on our consciousness, moments where bridges were created, merely by chance, between the open squares and closed spaces, moments where all parties involved were determined on excluding women, using harassment, violence, intimidation and even blackmail. Our stories may seem ordinary in other contexts, but they represent women's defiance and fight for their very existence. Before the concept for this project was conceived, I worked as an assistant director on over two dozen documentary and fiction films and series. This extensive experience gave me the insight to know that this project had to take narrative form. Now, we have accomplished 50% of the shooting, edited 90% of the first story and gained enough perspective to realize a deep, profound treatment. What remains is 6 days of shooting before going into post-production. Seven years in the making, Hammam Sokhn is finally in the home stretch.



Manal Khaled

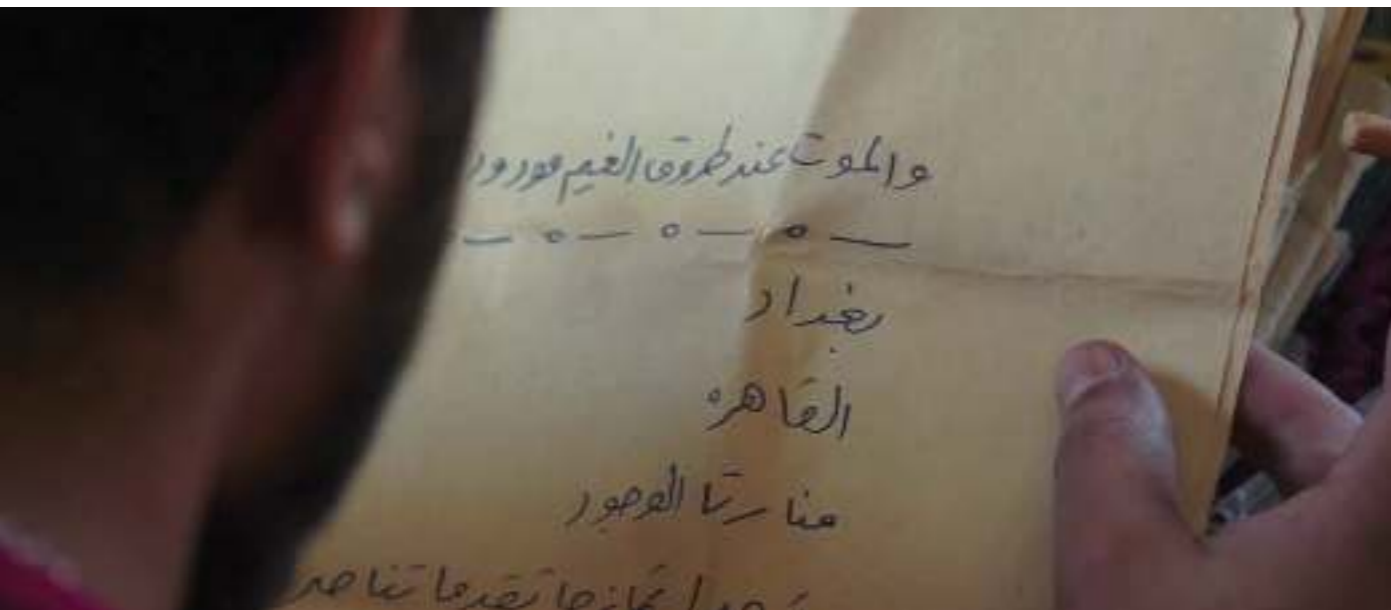
Director

With a small, borrowed camera in hand, she took off to Gaza, Palestine, in 2008 only intending to document her personal trip. Out of it came her very first documentary: Bab el-Genneyya. Manal Khaled is an Egyptian filmmaker. She studied philosophy and has completed a number of filmmaking, screenwriting and critique courses. Manal first started out through Misr International Films, assisting prominent filmmakers such as Saad Hendawi, Kamla Abo Zekri, Hani Khalifa and Mohamed Ali. Her early works consisted of documentary and short fiction films, before she moved on to feature-length fiction films. In the field of independent cinema, she shot and directed her first documentary in Gaza, Palestine, in 2008. Manal has also been working at the Egyptian Television Network since 1993. After a decade and a half working as assistant director to some of the most prominent Egyptian filmmakers, she made the decision to direct her first feature narrative film. Hammam Sokhn, for Khaled, is both a personal and cinematic journey.



Rasha Azab

Associate producer and Screenwriter



IN THE SEARCH OF ESSAM ABDALLAH

COUNTRY

Egypt

TYPE

Feature Documentary

PRIMARY CONTACT

rashagawdat@gmail.com

TOTAL BUDGET

\$142,686.67

AVAILABLE FINANCE

Through the journey, he try to find what had fallen into oblivion during the 80's and discover the absent reality.

Synopsis

For years Yasser has been trying to gather the works of the poet Essam Abdallah, that has been forgotten. The research leads him to questions about his childhood, his generation memory who suffers from the weakness of it collective memory. Through the journey, he try to find what had fallen into oblivion during the 80's and discover the absent reality.

Director's Statement

I belong to a generation that lived amidst drastic changes, and when I began to look into the past, I was shocked at the insufficient information and lack of documented material, and at the difficulty of the research process in general. There are no traces left of Essam, who lived for forty five years working tirelessly to found his lifetime project for the Arabic song, and to spread as much work as he could throughout his lifetime. A similar story has dreadfully taken place when I embarked on my search for Essam along with my partner, Mohammad Rabie. For when we began to get a grip on some evidence of Essam, Rabie went to an early grave at the age of thirty-three without having the opportunity to complete his own project. His traces departed along with him except for a humble amount that my memory still retains. I was alarmed by the dreadful reality: it seems to me that a certain sequence of events recur like a curse; like a chasm that opens from time to time to devour anyone who realizes this reality or comes closer to it. These are people who are destined to streak through life briskly.



Yasser Naeim

Filmmaker

Yasser Naeim

Egyptian filmmaker, Born in 1977, Yasser Naeim, who graduated from Aim Shams University in 1998 with a B.Sc. of Commerce, he always had a passion for storytelling and directing. After enrolling in Art Lab for Cinema Directing at the American University in Cairo in 2004, Naeim started his career working as a production assistant, production manager and later as a line producer and later on as a director for several Al Jazeera documentary projects. Collaborative and creative, he worked as a freelance line producer in 3 independent shorts and one feature narrative film: "In The Last Days Of The City", by Tamer El Said, Which was premiered in Berlin Film Festival 2016. Yasser chose the independent film route and directed the documentary "Improvisation" in 2010, Naeim developed his script writing skills by co-writing many TV series, sit com episodes and films with other colleagues, Then he participated in many script writing/development workshops with international mentors and tutors. In 2012, Yasser co-wrote the film «Winter Of Discontent» with the director Ibrahim El batout, at the same time he worked as a 1st AD in this film, which was premiered in Venice Film Festival 2013, Later he started writing his 1st feature film as a writer/director, so he started a one year lab with the French script doctor "Jacques Akchouti" to develop his film "The Unleashed». 2013 After the postponement of the film, Naeim started filming his creative documentary "In the search for Essam Abdallah" which is based on long research, he is a producer/director for his documentary (work in progress). Naeim have been working in the field of film & TV production for more than 13 years, as an experienced director/producer/scriptwriter he did a lot of consulting work for more than 15 feature and short films, which formed the independent film scene in Egypt today, he did also many filmmaking workshops as a mentor in Cairo and other governorates in Egypt. He worked as The Artistic Director for The Jesuit Cinema School in Cairo, 2014-2016-.



Rasha Gawdat

Producer



Blue Fang

Production Company

YOMEDDINE



YOMEDDINE

COUNTRY

Egypt

TYPE

Feature Narrative

PRIMARY CONTACT

abshawky@gmail.com

TOTAL BUDGET

\$50,000

AVAILABLE FINANCE

e bravely decides to leave the colony for the first time since he was abandoned there as a child, and embarks on a journey across Egypt to his hometown to find out why his father never kept his promise to return.

Synopsis

BESHAY, a middle aged Egyptian leper, lives in an aging leper colony in the middle of nowhere among a handful of unfortunates forgotten by the outside world. He has built a comfortable life for himself selling reusable garbage. After the death of his beloved wife, he bravely decides to leave the colony for the first time since he was abandoned there as a child, and embarks on a journey across Egypt to his hometown to find out why his father never kept his promise to return.

Alongside his apprentice, a Nubian orphan nicknamed OBAMA (10), and his beloved donkey,

HARBY, they travel through the labyrinth of Egypt where they find friends and enemies in

unexpected places. When they reach their destination, Beshay and Obama's newly formed

understanding of home, family and humanity is put to the test.

Director's Statement

Yomeddine is an amalgam of stories I had heard during the filming of my documentary, The Colony, which chronicles the stories of the residents of the Abu Zaabal Leper Colony in Egypt. The film's characters opened their hearts and homes to me, and I came to realize that leprosy is more a social issue than a medical one, and has pushed the residents into seclusion. Yomeddine will be the first film to feature a leper as the main character, giving him a chance to be defined by his humanity, not his disease. The idea is to not look away from the outcasts we encounter in the film, but to see past their appearances and focus on their character. Despite the seemingly heavy content, Yomeddine is treated in a light-hearted manner, highlighting Beshay's spirit in the face of misery -- a universal trait of Egyptians as a whole.



Abu Bakr Shawky

Filmmaker

Abu Bakr Shawky is an Egyptian-Austrian filmmaker. His short films have screened at festivals around the world including New York Film Festival and Palm Springs International Film Festival. He has participated in the European Forum Alpbach and Prague's Forum 2000, where he was a panelist on media and human rights in post-revolutionary Egypt. Abu Bakr studied Political Science and Filmmaking in Cairo, and received an MFA in Film Directing at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts in 2016. Yomeddine is his first feature.



Dina Emam

Producer



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