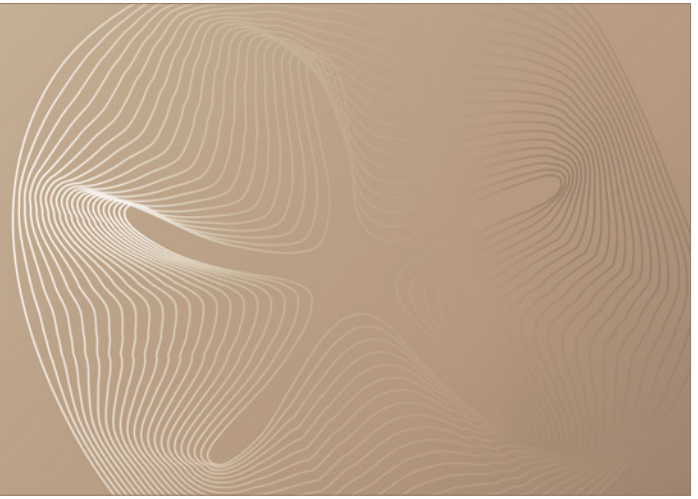


ELGOUNA
FILM FESTIVAL
1ST EDITION
مهرجان الجونة السينمائي



EL GOUNA STAR



THE WILD FRONTIER
DREAM TESTEMONIES



	Marina Theater	Audimax (TU Berlin)	Sea Cinema 1	Sea Cinema 2	Sea Cinema 3
11 AM			11 AM Redoubtable 107 min R: 18+		
12 PM					
1 PM					
2 PM					
3 PM			3:00 PM I Am Not Your Negro 93 min	2:45 PM Three Peaks 94 min R: 18+	2:30 PM A Gentle Creature 153 min R:16+
4 PM		3:30 PM The Music of Silence 114 min			
5 PM					
6 PM			6:00 PM I Have a Picture... 75 min Q&A moderated by Elias Khlat	5:30 PM Closeness 118 min R: 18+	
7 PM	6:40 PM The Insult 102 min Q&A moderated by Intishal Al Timimi	6:30 PM Sheikh Jackson 90 min Q&A moderated by Teresa Cavina			6:30 PM Chasing Coral 93 min
8 PM					
9 PM			9:00 PM Cairo Station 88 min	8:15 PM The Wild Frontier 225 min Q&A moderated by Elias Khlat	
10 PM	9:30 PM Volubilis 106 min	9:30 PM Son of Sofia 111 min Q&A moderated by Nicole Guillemet			9:15 PM Manifesto 95 min Q&A moderated by Teresa Cavina
11 PM					
12 AM					

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■ OPENING & CLOSING FILMS

■ FEATURE NARRATIVE COMPETITION

■ FEATURE DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION

■ SHORT FILMS COMPETITION

■ OFFICIAL SELECTION OUT OF COMPETITION

■ SPECIAL PRESENTATION

“WILD FRONTIERS ”: THE UNKNOWN EPISODE OF ODYSSEY

The wild frontiers (L'HÉROÏQUE LANDE .. LA FRONTIÈRE BRÛLE) is the latest documentary by French filmmakers Nicolas Klotz and Elisabeth Perceval who shared a nomination for the Golden Leopard in Locarno International Film Festival 2011 on their film “Low Life”. Their new cooperation started as an adventure “with a Camera; without funding, without producer, but with the desire to discover the unknown episode of Homer’s Odyssey today” as Nicolas Klotz described the film in an interview in the Canadian magazine Hors Champ.

The epic documentary film follows the emergence and downfall of the Calais Jungle migrants camp where nearly 7,800 people lived, before the French authorities decides in winter 2016 to expel 4.000 migrants from the south zone pushing them to rebuild a new life in the northern zone. Eight months later the state annihilated the entire territory and dispersed its 11,000 inhabitants to the four corners of France.

However, beyond the incident, the film is exploring and exposing the tragic paths and aspirations of

the camp dwellers who are surrounded by a siege in a far jungle deliberately hidden from the public awareness. “Even if everyone knew where the jungle was; Even if we did not know where the jungle was; The territory and its hybrid community was there so close to us; But its opacity made it furtive; Forests, places of disappearance and camouflage; Can grow in the heart of a ghetto or in transit generated interzones” writes the opening scene however on the background a speeding camera displays the endless high siege which surrounds the jungle and hardly reveals what is behind.

The 219 minutes film is divided into four parts that tracks the life story of the jungle camp: Birth of a Nation; Wake up brother jungle finished; Phoenix; The border is burning. The camera is moving freely among the camp dwellers where everyone feels its existence. In some moments, it randomly records the normal life of the people in details. It enters their little shops, kitchens, rooms, and primitive playgrounds. You can hear their laughs, arguments, local music and even their phone calls to their

loved ones at home. You can watch them dancing, cooking, playing football, and trying to let their little kites fly in the sky. The camera is their familiar gust where their ultimate wish is to have a space to speak up and to be listened to. The film is also full of testimonies for people from different parts of the world: Ethiopia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea. Some of them are newcomers, and some others are in the camp for long or short months. All of them share the same dream to go to England, and the same motivation to seek freedom and justice as both words were repeated by many in the testimonies. They also share the same hopeful attempts to cross the borders which most of them fail.

The wild frontiers (L'HÉROÏQUE LANDE .. LA FRONTIÈRE BRÛLE) had its world premiere in the FID Marseille – Marseille’s International Film Festival. It obtained a special mention of the French Institute of the online critiques in the same festival.

Nahed Nasr

“I HAVE A PICTURE” EXTRA LIFE

In the opening shot of I Have a Picture, the camera shows us a photograph that looks fairly old while a voice recounts the names of those photographed. We get the sense that it belongs to a film crew in the thirties or the forties of the 20th century when the voice introduces us to Palestinian producer, director, and actor Ibrahim Lama, one of the film industry’s pioneers in Egypt. The voice goes on to introduce crew members before a finger stops at a certain face and we hear him say: “Motawe Eweis.”

Is it a journey in the history of Egypt’s film industry, or in its characters’ memories, or in its maker’s mind? Probably all of that at once. In his first feature documentary I Have a Picture: Film No. 1001 in the Life of the Oldest Extra in the World, director Mohamed Zedan manages to mold his personal obsessions with the story of making his film and the utterly charming lives of his protagonists, veteran extra Motawe Eweis, and assistant director Kamal El Homossany in one amalgam.

The film kicks off with archival footage of old Egyptian films accompanied by a monologue narrated by the director, where he tells us about his story with cinema and the beginnings of his obsession with Eweis. With the help of his friend, El Homossany, Zedan manages to find Eweis, and the journey of making the film starts.

The film aspires to be more than just a well-made portrait of his characters. In addition to the massive memories about the history of film and even the social history of the Egypt in the 20th century that the protagonists display, the film digs even deeper.



It questions life on the verge of the spotlight; the life of those who will go unremembered even though they contributed to the making of a whole nation’s collective memory: film.

El Homossany has worked as an assistant director under some of the most prominent directors in the history of Egyptian cinema, yet he never really aspired to be a director himself in a career that spanned several decades. He tells us so in a regretful tone, but he justifies it his decision saying that directors spend most of their time looking for funds for their next project, while assistants are always in demand for consecutive productions all around the year. As for Eweis, he spent more than half a century working as an extra in the industry, saying one line or two per film, sometimes none at all, yet he doesn’t seem bothered with the idea. These facts plays into greater dramatic effect when the process of making the film turns into constant attempts from El Homossany’s side to fulfill his film direction

aspirations by taking over the film, while Eweis can’t seem to get used to the idea that a documentary is being made about him. In another context, Zedan gazes at his characters in wonder and awe, and the film gives us the opportunity to look into the interesting conflicts inside Zedan’s, head between his weariness of the idea of artistic achievement in the first half of the film, and his recognition of the true value of passion towards cinema in the second half of the film, regardless of actual accomplishment.

The “picture” is a core idea in the film. On one hand, it refers to the treasure of production photos that Eweis possesses, which stands as material evidence of his memories and a witness to more than half a century of filmmaking in Egypt. On the other hand, Eweis’s countless appearances in moving pictures stand as an attestation to an unconditional devotion that leads to unexpected triumphs.

Mohamed El-Hajj

DON'T CAGE YOUR MINDS

AHMED EL FISHAWY:



The events of "Sheikh Jackson" date back to 25 June 2009, when news of the pop legend Michael Jackson's death shook the world. One person to whom it was a particular blow was a Salafi sheikh and mosque imam nicknamed Jackson all through his years of study. But what could be the connection between such a person and the pop legend? Will he manage to resume his life normally from now on?

Or will his memories and relationships with those he loved return to him and overtake his conscience.

Is he the sheikh or is he Jackson? Could he be both within a single man?

To find out about this, the secret behind his choice for the role and his relations with Salafis – especially in the light of the film poster showing him as a Salafi sheikh executing a Jackson move – The Gouna Star met with film star Ahmed El Fishawy.

How were you nominated for the lead role?

I have been fast friends with the film's writer and director Amr Salama since we worked together on the film "On a Day Like This", after which we had both hoped to work together again. That dream started to come true when the idea for "Sheikh Jackson" came to Omar Khaled [El Fishawy], a young man in my family, and he took it to Amr Salama without telling me anything. He presented the idea to Amr, who liked it a lot. The idea touched him so deeply as an author and a

filmmaker that he decided to make it into a film, especially since it touches on both religiosity and the world of the university campus, with all the different intellectual currents it contains. It's also about how a human being can go through more than one experience in their life, and occasionally have their ideas, religious and artistic convictions change. In very general terms, I think what the hero of the film goes through is similar to what I've been through in my own life: rearranging my ideas, discovering myself. I don't mean there is any connection between my life and the story of the film at all, but once Amr was done with the screenplay he sent it to me as his first choice of lead. I accepted the offer as soon as I read the script.

Before its commercial release, the film made important appearances at international festivals – it closed the Torino Film Festival and is opening the first round of the Gouna Film Festival – as well as being nominated for the Best Foreign Film Oscar. How do you feel about this?

I think this has brought various benefits to all parties concerned. As filmmakers, we were pleased with such significant steps and the debate it generated in reality and on social media once the first trailer and poster were released. Its screening at the festivals of Torino, Gouna and London and its Oscar nomination all suggest a pleasant and positive leap for Egyptian art, encouraging the West to regard Egyptian films

with respect and ensuring it is talked about at international forums.

Some say that films suitable for screening at festivals are appropriate for specialists and the cinematic elite but seldom appeal to commercial cinema audiences or the box office?

"Sheikh Jackson" achieves the difficult balance of carrying important human ideas that exercise the mind and the intellect while at the same time coming across to the ordinary audience as enjoyable and entertaining, well suited to commercial screening. I think Amr Salama manages this well in his films; he did it before in "Excuse My French" and "Asmaa".

You appear on the poster wearing a jilbab and a long beard while you perform one of Michael Jackson's best-known dance moves, which gives the impression that this is a work that confronts religious extremism.

The film has no connection with terrorism whatsoever. The central idea is one human being's search for himself and rediscovering himself at different stages of his life.

Were you not concerned that the poster might anger Salafis?

In reality the reaction was very positive, the reaction from the audience in general on social media. I assure you "Sheikh Jackson" is not in any way against a group or a current. It simply calls on people not to cage their minds in rigid moulds.

How do you see the new El Gouna Film Festival, which is opening with “Sheikh Jackson”, and what are your expectations for it?

Because of my mother and father I've been attending festivals in Egypt since childhood, and in truth it used to sadden and depress me how badly organised these events tended to be, with fights and chaos in some rounds. And I would

hear the comment that such failures make the events unworthy of Egypt's name. But now that I've seen how well organised the Gouna press conference was and followed what's going on in the way of organisation and planning, I am truly hopeful that this festival will prove a dazzling success that lives up to Egypt's name. Not only will it be organised but it will also overcome

many of the shortcomings seen in some rounds of other Egyptian festivals. I also hope it draws the world's eyes to Egypt, where we have a long-standing and beautiful film industry. It deserves to be seen in the framework of well organised and dazzling festivals that make us proud. And I am very optimistic about the Gouna Festival will be just such a festival.

Interviewed by: Sherif Abdel Hadi



“SON OF SOFIA”: REALISTIC FANTASY

“I like to explore realism via fantasy. It is a game of metaphors and symbols that I really like to use.” this is how the Greek film director Elina Psykou described her concept of filmmaking in an interview with Cineuropa portal. Son of Sofia, her latest film which won the Best International Narrative Feature award in Tribeca Film Festival 2017 where it had its world premier is another realistic fantasy. The film is Psykou’s second feature film after The Eternal Return of Antonis Paraskevas (2013) which won five and nominated for 6 international film awards. In both the films, personal reality and social context of the characters are mixed with elements of fantasy.

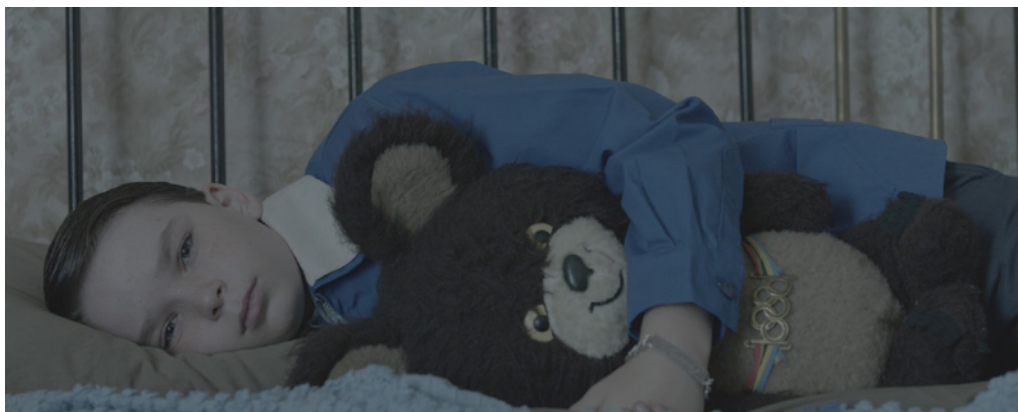
In Son Of Sofia, Micha (Victor Khomut) is a 11 years old Russian boy joins his migrant mother Sofia (Valery Tscheplanowa) in Greece after two years of separation and also after the death of his father. In the first scene, the kid meets his mother in the airport with plenty of sweet dreams about the reunion. His dreams come false from the beginning when he knew that he will not live alone with his mother because Mr. Nikos (Thanasis Papageorgiou) will be their third partner. A series of disappointments and disillusion follows as he later discovers that Mr. Nikos who is the same age of his grandfather is no one but the new husband of his mother.

For Elina Psykou the film director, in an interview with Cineuropa, Micha is a symbol to Greece “Both Greece and the young protagonist live in an illusion, an illusion that will come to an end very soon”. The story of the film happens in 2004 during the Athens summer Olympic Games, an era the director considers as transit in the history of the country “What follows this period is something totally new and very tough for Greece”. On the other hand, although the sociopolitical elements of the film, it is a human and universal story about the complexities of turning from childhood into adulthood, and about the mothers’ inner conflict between what to reveal and what to keep as a secret and for what price. “What’s the one thing that you keep from the people closest to you? And why are you afraid of revealing it?” the film director answers a question about the key question of her film in wearemovingstories website.

The ambiguity of the present, the past, and the future; The characters’ relationships with their countries: Greece, Russia, Georgia; Their language and their identities; The connections between what is personal and what is sociopolitical, a dilemma that is solved by the use of fantasy. There is a thin thread connects the real with the unreal, the factual with the dreams. The film is full of fairy tale like scenes of animals and beasts where the characters reflect their dreams, frustrations, and fears; And where the director plays her favorite game of provoking her audience to think and to re-think.

In addition to Tribeca’s award, Son of Sofia also won the International Confederation of Art Cinemas (C.I.C.A.E. Award) from Sarajevo Film Festival 2017 and the special Jury Award from Los Angeles Greek Film Festival (LAGFF) 2017, in addition to two further international nominations.

Nahed Nasr





“DOOB: NO BED OF ROSES”: PAINTING A SIMPLE STORY

“Death breathes life into love.”

This sentence from Mostofa Sarwar Farooki’s “Doob: No Bed of Roses” is an indication of the feeling that dominates the work from start to finish. From a very ordinary, clichéd story, the director takes us to meditative spaces beyond the obvious and even the unsaid. His means to this is a camera that captures moments not in chronological order but according to the resonance of feeling. The structure of the film is unlike mounting drama, which creates a degree of confusion at first. But before two long a pulse is established that, based on the dichotomy of quiet and calmness vs tension and confrontation.

This social drama is based on real-life story that caused a stir in Bangladesh, when the well-known film director Javed Hasan, aged 50, finds himself at the centre of a media storm after a false piece of news is published reporting a relationship between him and his son’s teenage girlfriend. This fabrication, which destroys the stability of Hasan’s family and forces him to leave his house, eventually turns into truth when Hasan really does have a relationship with the girl in question and ends up marrying her – as if in response to a buried desire the false news brought to the surface.

Playing Javed Hasan, that complex, melancholy man forced into extremely sensitive psychological spaces by the events of the film, is the international actor Irfan Khan. Though this is a character who breaks his own home and abandons his children, the viewer can only sympathise with his loneliness and perplexity.

The story is extremely conventional and on the surface resembles thousands of scandal narratives reiterated by the tabloids, at cafes and homes by way of gossip. To most directors, indeed, it is a fatal trap that might result in the film no sooner being born than dying. But Farooki takes it to highly skilled and aesthetic creative spaces. The film of course does tell a story, but the story is not a conflict resolved with a structured beginning, middle and end. It is rather a series of paintings, at once disparate



and interconnected, placed side by side to create a mural which, though made of the same substance as the conventional story, has an entirely different flavour. And this is the creative feat of the film, which is at once simple and complex.

It opens with a seemingly happy family in the midst of a breathtaking landscape; the father’s relationship with his daughter seems rather more loving than average, with a profound friendship underlying it. Such peace and quiet in the opening scenes is disrupted only by a moment between the man and his wife, who upset by him waxing nostalgic about their past snaps, “As if we had no present!” Before this moment, the man had been repeating to his daughter, “When we travel far we come close to ourselves.” Sentences of this kind in the opening scenes give the film a

philosophical and spiritual dimension, making it seem like an enquiry into life and death and the meaning of existence. For example, “God permits people to die when they stop talking to the world and to those they love.”

When the story begins, it is not told chronologically but in the form of a superficially disconnected composition charged with the characters’ unease. In one scene, for example, the face of the protagonist’s wife in the mirror the day she finds out he has died. The scene benefits a lot from visual art. “No Bed of Roses” thus manages to be that rare thing: a simple story deepened by the performance of Irfan Khan and turned into a far from superficial work of visual art by its director.

By Nejat Belhatem