

BOOK OF PROJECTS BOOK OF PROJECTS BOOK OF PROJECTS BOOK OF PROJECTS

THE 4TH EDITION

RED SEA INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL

THE BOOK OF PROJECTS

THE NEW HOME

OF FILM

2024

مهرجان البحر الأحمر السينمائي الدولي
RED SEA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
05 ————— 14 DECEMBER, 2024

THE 4TH EDITION

RED SEA SOUK

07—11 DEC, 2024

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WELCOME TO THE RED SEA SOUK, THE NEW HOME OF FILM

RED SEA SOUK 07 — 11 DEC, 2024



We are thrilled to welcome you to the fourth edition of the Red Sea Souk, the leading film market in the region, where creativity and business meet.

Relocating this year to Jeddah's old town, Al Balad, the Souk continues to be your window into the Arab and African film industries and from this year we have opened up our opportunities to talent and projects from the whole of the Asian continent.

The Souk Talks program is a dynamic series of discussions designed to explore the latest trends and challenges in the film industry.

Souk Talents supports those starting out in the Industry and offers access to skills, knowledge and community to help elevate creativity.

The Souk Exhibition continues to expand each year and secure its position as the best place in the region to promote and sell films, host meetings and discover new collaborations.

The Souk program also includes plenty of networking opportunities through Souk Connections and the Souk Socials along with access to industry and public screenings, all in the heart of Jeddah.

The fourth edition of the Red Sea Souk Project Market offers access to 39 fantastic projects from across the Arab World, Africa, and Asia. Feature films in development, production and post-production plus TV series developed through the Red Sea Lab SeriesLab will be presented to you throughout the Souk program.

None of this would be possible without the tireless efforts of our dedicated Souk team. We're grateful for their passion and hard work. And a special thank you to all our readers, viewers, selection committee members and mentors for their contribution to putting together the program and selected projects.

We look forward to providing you with an exceptional Red Sea Souk experience as we continue to expand our film market and celebrate the captivating art of cinematic storytelling.

Holly Daniel,
Souk Director

Zain Zedan,
Souk Manager



Note From the Head of the Red Sea Labs

As we reflect on the past year, it's inspiring to see how The Labs has continued to grow and make its mark on the global stage. One of the standout achievements has been the expansion of our programs into Asia, furthering our mission to nurture creative talent across continents. With a remarkable international presence, The Labs has solidified its role as a leading platform for emerging voices in the film industry.

This past year has been a testament to the power of creativity and collaboration, and we're excited to see the incredible work these storytellers will bring to life as they move forward. We mark our 5th year of the Lodge and our partnership with TorinoFilmLab. We continue to develop 12 projects. Through the generous sponsorship of Film Alula, they had the adventure of a lifetime. Our partnership with Film Independent has been another highlight, fostering cross-border collaborations and providing invaluable mentorship to participants.

Both the Lodge and SeriesLab programs have seen a marvelous selection of talented individuals, and their passion for storytelling has been evident throughout the year. Now is the time to share their stories with the world.

Special thanks to all the mentors and industry professionals who believed in what we do. The Labs continue to be a force for innovation, inspiration, and limitless potential.

Ryan Ashore
Head of the Red Sea Labs

RED SEA SOUK & LABS AWARDS

RED SEA SOUK PROJECT MARKET & LABS AWARDS

All selected projects will compete for jury-granted awards offered by the Red Sea Fund. The awards are:

RED SEA SOUK POST-PRODUCTION AWARD WITH A GRANT OF	\$40,000
RED SEA SOUK JURY POST-PRODUCTION AWARD WITH A GRANT OF	\$15,000
RED SEA SOUK JURY SPECIAL MENTION AWARD WITH A GRANT OF	\$20,000
RED SEA SOUK DEVELOPMENT AWARD WITH A GRANT OF	\$30,000
RED SEA SOUK PRODUCTION AWARD WITH A GRANT OF	\$75,000
RED SEA LABS PRODUCTION GRANT AWARDS FOR FOUR LODGE PROJECTS TOTALING	\$180,000
RED SEA LABS SERIESLAB GRANT AWARD	\$10,000
RED SEA LABS SERIESLAB GRANT AWARD	\$10,000

SOUK AWARD PARTNERS

Ambientlight®

AMBIENT LIGHT

One cash and one in-kind award with the equivalent value of \$20,000 for the following:

- Ambient Light is offering one cash award of \$10,000 for a Project in Development.
- A2J is offering one in-kind award with a value of \$10,000 for post-production services to a Works-in-Progress project.



ART

Two cash awards for Arab world distribution rights consisting of:

- ART Award for one Saudi Project with a Production Grant \$50,000 for a Project in Development or Production.
- ART Award for one Arab Project with a Production Grant \$50,000 for a Project in Development or Production.



CNC

One cash award for a Project in Development:

- CNC Award for one project with an amount of \$8,500 (€8,000 equivalent).

FRESHLYGROUNDSTORIES

Freshly Ground Stories

Two in-kind business and legal affairs awards for projects in development providing:

- Professional business and legal support for each project up to a 12 month period across for any stage in the production cycle, each worth the equivalent of \$5,000.



ARAB CINEMA CENTER

Two in-kind awards consisting of:

- Arab Cinema Center Award for the producer of one Saudi project to participate in the 2025 Rotterdam Lab.
- Arab Cinema Center Award for the producer of one Arab project to participate in the 2025 Rotterdam Lab.



BEST MEDIA PRODUCTION

One cash award for a project in development or production:

- Best Media Production Award for one project with an amount of \$10,000.



FILMMORE

One in-kind award for a Works-in-Progress film consisting of:

- Full Digital Intermediate for a feature film worth the equivalent of \$32,500.



IMPRONTA Films

One in-kind consultancy award for a documentary project consisting of:

- Four consultancy sessions over a 12 month period worth the equivalent of \$10,000.



ITHRA

One cash award for a Project in Development or Production:

- Ithra Award for one Saudi project with an amount of \$13,333 (equivalent of SAR 50,000).



MBC Academy/Shahid

Three conditional cash awards with the acquisition of Arab world distribution rights:

- \$40,000 for a Saudi project in development.
- \$20,000 for a project in development or production or post-production.
- \$20,000 for a project in development or production or in post-production phase.



ROTANA STUDIOS

One cash and three in-kind awards consisting of:

- \$50,000 cash award for an Arab film.
- Two in-kind awards valued at \$50,000 each in the form of distribution fees waiver for two Arab projects to be distributed by Rotana Studios.
- One in-kind award valued at \$25,000 in the form of free inclusion in content development lab Rotana-Sard for 6 months for a Saudi project.



TITRAFILM

One in-kind award consisting of:

- The TITRAFILM Post-Production Services Award, valued at \$10,000 for a Works-in-Progress project.



MAD SOLUTIONS

One conditional cash award for a Project in Development or Production or a Works-in-Progress:

- MAD Solutions Award with an amount of \$50,000 for worldwide distribution rights.



OTICONS

One in-kind award consisting of:

- The Oticons Award offers an in-kind grant worth of up to \$10,000 to support one of the selected Works-in-Progress (WiP) projects through the Film Music Services provided by the Oticons film music agency including a range of services tailored to the project's specific musical needs.



SHIFT STUDIOS

Three in-kind awards consisting of:

- Two promotion packages for two different Work-in-Progress films each worth the equivalent of \$12,000.
- One full DCP package for an additional Works-in-Progress film worth the equivalent of \$8,000.

AMBIENT LIGHT

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Egypt- USA

Founded in 2016 by Ali El Arabi (CEO, Producer and Director), Ambient Light is an international film production and distribution company based in Cairo (Egypt) and Los Angeles (United States). Ambient Light is producing and co-producing scripted and unscripted films on four continents with the aim to give a voice to the people who are not heard, to empower artists from the MENA region, and to build bridges between the region and American and European markets.



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ARZÉ



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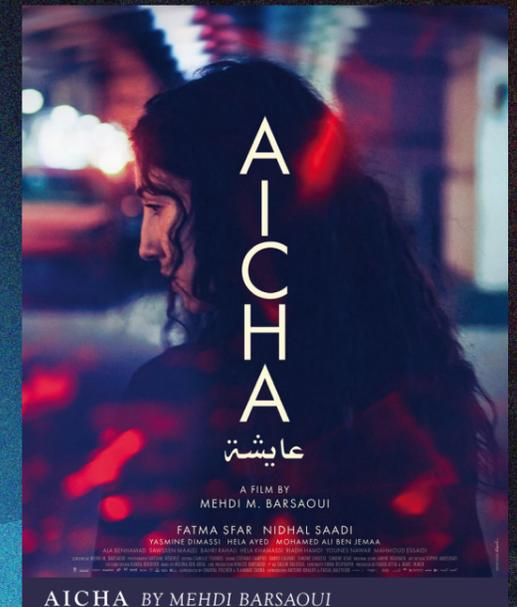


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ART



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TALES ON THE BANKS OF BOSPHORUS BY ZEINA SFEIR

RED SEA SOUK

PROJECT MARKET

JURIES

Red Sea Souk
Projects-in-Development Jury



Elisa Fernanda Pirir

JEDDAH,
SAUDI ARABIA

Elisa Fernanda Pirir was born in Guatemala and moved to Northern Norway in 2007. In 2016, her graduation film from the National Film School of Norway, “Generation Mars,” was nominated for the 43rd Academy Student Award.

She is a Berlinale Talents, Guadalajara Talents, EAVE, Rotterdam Lab, and EWA alumni. In 2023, she was selected as the Norwegian Producer on the Move in Cannes. That same year, she founded her own company, STÆR (Starling).

STÆR presented its first feature documentary, “Calls from Moscow,” at the Berlinale International Film Festival Forum, as well as at the Hot Docs and MoMA festivals. Their co-production, “The Hypnosis,” by Ernst De Geer, won three prizes at Karlovy Vary. In 2023, the short film “Almost Invisible” was nominated for Best Short Film at Bergen IFF, Tirana IFF, Tromsø IFF, and Morelia IFF.

STÆR is co-producing new films, including Nabil Ayouch’s “Everybody Loves Touda” (Cannes 2024), Inadelso Cossa’s “The Nights Still Smell of Gunpowder” (Berlinale Forum 2024), Selma Cervantes’ “Yume,” Juan Andrés Arango’s “Where the River Begins,” Ester Martin’s “A Sweetness from Nowhere,” Levan Koguashvili’s “Guria,” Carlos Reygadas’ “A Wake of Umbra,” Vytautas Katkus’ “The Visitor,” and Annemarie Jacir’s next feature film, “All Before You.”



Georges Schoucair

JEDDAH,
SAUDI ARABIA

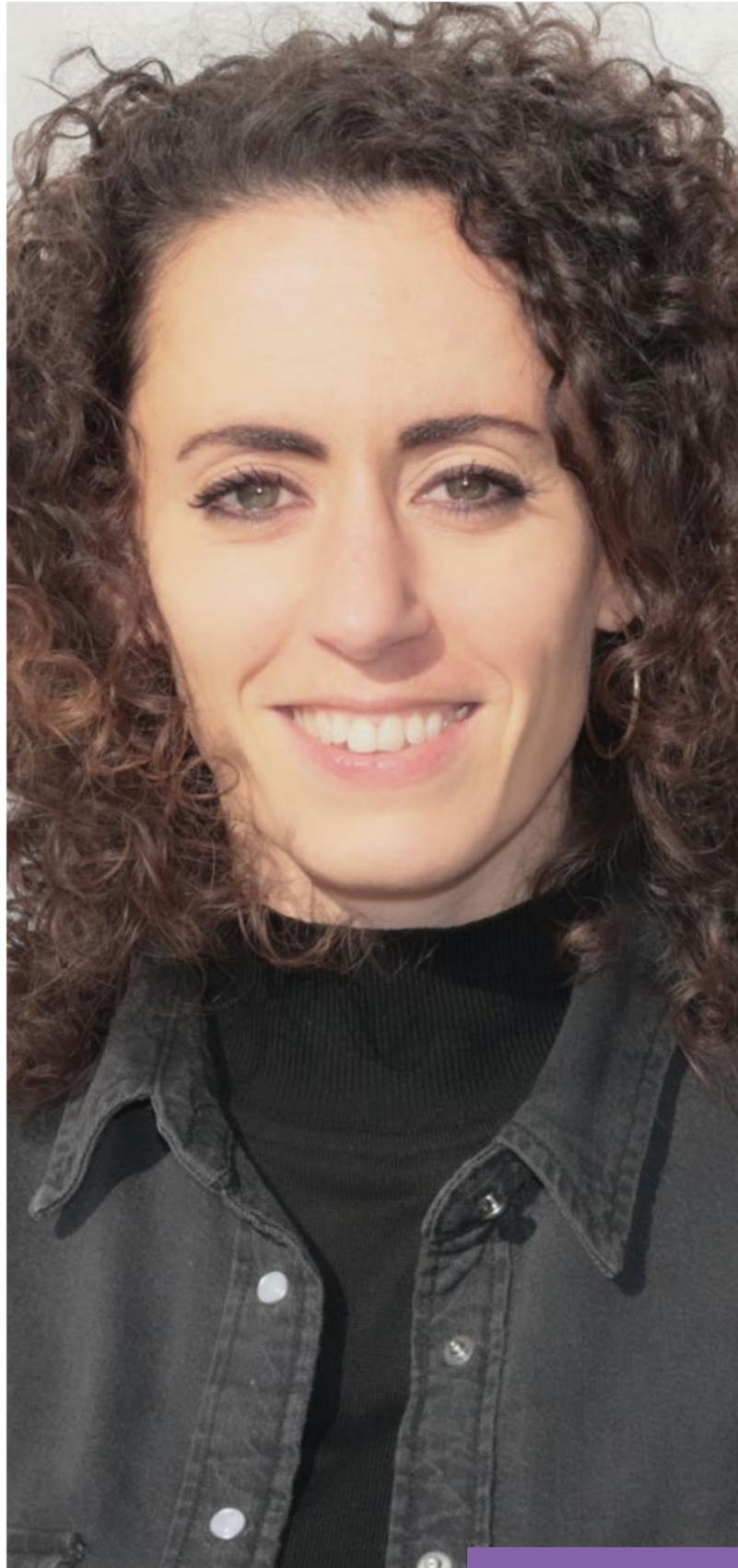
Founder and CEO of About Productions, Georges Schoucair developed and produced critically acclaimed and award-winning independent movies and has actively contributed to the establishment of an attractive and globally acknowledged environment for film investments in Lebanon and to the development of Lebanese cinema.

As a producer, Georges was able to develop strong relationships with prominent Arab and international film professionals and closely worked with award-winning directors. His films have been screened at prestigious film festivals such as Cannes, Berlinale, Toronto, Venice, Locarno, and Karlovy Vary.

In parallel to About Productions, Georges co-founded MC Distribution, which releases independent films in the Middle East and North Africa, and has served as the vice-president of Metropolis, the only art house cinema in Beirut, since 2008.

His most recent endeavor is founding Shortcut Films in 2016, which has co-produced many acclaimed films like "Félicité" (2017), "Wajib" (2017), "Rafiki" (2018), "Beauty & the Dogs" (2018), "It Must Be Heaven" (2019), and "A Son" (2019).

In 2019, Georges was invited as a member of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences in the Executive Branch, representing the Middle East.



Louise Bellicaud

In 2015, Louise Bellicaud created In Vivo Films with Claire Charles-Gervais, an arthouse-driven film production company that supports and accompanies talents from all over the world. Louise Bellicaud has produced “Abou Leila” (2019) by Amin Sidi-Boumediène, selected at Cannes Critics’ Week; “Dos Estaciones” (2022) by Juan Pablo Gonzales, selected at Sundance – World Narrative Competition; “Un Varon” (2022) by Fabian Hernandez, selected at the Director’s Fortnight; “Levante” (2023) by Lillah Halla, selected at Cannes Critics’ Week; and “Horizonte” (2024) by César Augusto Acevedo, selected at TIFF in the Discovery Program section.

Currently shooting “Hijo Mayor,” the debut feature film of Argentinean director Cecilia Kang, Louise Bellicaud will, in 2025, begin production on three other feature films, including the second feature films of French-Algerian director Amin Sidi-Boumediene, “The Last Days of RM,” and Moroccan director Alaa Edine Aljem, “Eldorado, The Taste of South,” as well as “Fagadaga,” the debut feature film of Senegalese director Yoro Mbaye.

RED SEA SOUK

PROJECT MARKET

JURIES

Red Sea Souk
Works-In-Progress Jury



Christophe Leparc

JEDDAH,
SAUDI ARABIA

Managing Director of Quinzaine des Cinéastes (Directors' Fortnight), Festival de Cannes, France. He is also the Head of Cinemed, Mediterranean Film Festival of Montpellier, France; and a board member of the European Film Academy since 2019. Leparc has been working in the film industry since 1990, specializing in the organization and programming of film festivals. Notably, he has worked for the International Women Directors' Films Festival of Créteil, the Mediterranean Film Festival of Montpellier (Cinemed), and Semaine de la Critique, Cannes. Since 2007, he has been serving as Managing Director of Directors' Fortnight, the other sidebar of the Cannes Film Festival.



Fyzal Boulifa

JEDDAH,
SAUDI ARABIA

Fyzal Boulifa is a British-Moroccan director and screenwriter. He has made many short films, including “The Curse” (2012) and “Rate Me” (2015), and two features, “Lynn + Lucy” (2020) and “The Damned Don’t Cry” (2023). He has recently co-written Mahdi Fleifel’s “To a Land Unknown” (2024). He is based between London and the north of Morocco.



Martika Ramirez Escobar

JEDDAH,
SAUDI ARABIA

Martika Ramirez Escobar is a filmmaker and cinematographer based in the Philippines. Her first feature film, “Leonor Will Never Die,” had its world premiere at Sundance, where it won the Special Jury Award for Innovative Spirit. It screened to a full house at TIFF’s Midnight Madness, where it won the Amplify Voices Award. At Sitges, Martika won the New Visions Best Director Award, among other festival accolades. In 2023, the film was nominated for the 38th Independent Spirit Awards for Best International Feature.

Martika is an alumna of Berlinale Talents, Oxbelly Writer’s Retreat, Asian Film Academy, Talents Tokyo, Docs by the Sea, and Southeast Asian Film Lab. She is also a recipient of the Purin Pictures Film Fund and Next Masters Support Program grant.

Her works reflect a unique relationship with cinema, exploring the intersections between fiction and human experiences through a tender, playful, and imaginative lens.

Martika is currently working on her second feature film, “Daughters of the Sea,” which is supported by La Fabrique in Cannes and the Hubert Bals Fund.

RED SEA LABS

SERIESLAB JURY



Diego Ramírez Schrempf

Diego has established himself as one of the most important producers in Colombia and Latin America. He was executive producer on “Falco”, winner of an International Emmy award in 2019. In addition, he was co-creator and showrunner on “Green Frontier”, one of Colombia’s first original series for Netflix. He was also a production supervisor on the renowned “Narcos”, one of the most-watched shows in the world. In 2023, “La Cabeza de Joaquín Murrieta” premiered on Prime Video, a series where he also was co-creator and showrunner. Diego is an executive producer on “One Hundred Years of Solitude” for Netflix, the biggest show ever made in LATAM, and he is currently working on new premium shows for Netflix, Amazon, Apple and Vix among others.



Nadia Tabbara

JEDDAH,
SAUDI ARABIA

Nadia Tabbara is a screenwriter and creativity coach who is currently based in Los Angeles and Beirut, working to diversify the film and TV landscape with Arab voices across the world. In her career, she has produced more than four regional TV series and her show “Awake” is the only Lebanese TV series that has ever been broadcast across all continents, most recently picked up by ARTE. She wrote and directed a fictionalized short film in the Internationally Emmy nominated series “Beirut: 607”. She is also a published author of a book on the creative process and an editor of a collection of creative non-fiction stories about the Beirut explosion. When she’s not creating her own films and tv series, she writes for various international writers rooms. She has sold her ideas to every major broadcaster in the region as well as leading streamers. Her newest endeavor is a podcast titled “Scripted/Unscripted,” set to launch in late 2024 and currently competing at international festivals.



Jennifer Chen

JEDDAH,
SAUDI ARABIA

Jennifer Chen is the head of Channel Zero Studios, where she oversees the development and production of international scripted series and feature-length films. Committed to storytelling, Jennifer transforms concepts into compelling entertainment. Previously, Jennifer served as VP of Programming for Channel Zero's suite of Canadian broadcasting networks. Her career began in international sales at the Canadian Film Centre (CFC), followed by her role as General Manager of Ouat Media, where she specialized in acquiring and distributing short films, including Oscar-nominated and award-winning titles. Her production credits include "The Puzzle Lady", "Boot Camp", "Wynonna Earp" (Season 1), and "The Pinkertons". A lifelong Francophile since her cinema studies at the Sorbonne, Jennifer also cultivated a love for diverse culinary traditions. She holds an MBA from Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management and a BA in Film from the University of Waterloo. Jennifer is currently a board member of Women in Film and Television + Toronto, where she champions mentorship and industry empowerment.

BEST MEDIA PRODUCTION

BEST MEDIA
PRODUCTION
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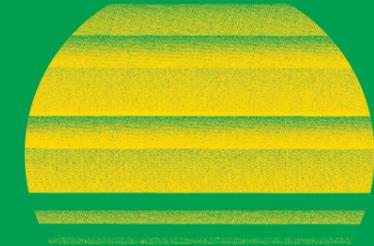


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RED SEA SOUK PROJECT MARKET

THE LODGE

The Red Sea Labs presents the 5th edition of the Lodge residency program in collaboration with TorinoFilmLab and sponsored by Film AIUla. This year, the Lodge selected 12 feature film projects from Saudi, Arab, African, and Asian regions for an intensive long-term program.

Participants gain invaluable opportunities to collaborate with top-notch instructors who help them develop their films and realize their creative visions. The program focuses not only on script development but also includes producer coaching that covers various aspects of professional growth, production, financing, sales, and marketing. Participants can also collaborate with experienced filmmakers and industry professionals from around the world in areas such as directing, cinematography, editing, sound, post-production, and sales.

Following the development phase and meetings with industry professionals, Lodge filmmakers will pitch their projects at the Red Sea Souk, with winning projects sharing a prize pool of \$180,000. The Red Sea Labs offers a variety of programs designed to nurture and enhance the skills of individuals with unique perspectives in film and episodic storytelling, supporting talent development throughout the entire creative journey.

About TorinoFilmLab

TorinoFilmLab is based in Turin (Italy) and organized by Museo Nazionale del Cinema. It is supported by Creative Europe – MEDIA sub-program of the European Union and Ministero della Cultura, and is linked to the main film institutions established in Turin and Piedmont. The Lab supports international talents and audiovisual professionals through training for film professionals, development of feature films and TV series, support to international production and distribution, and networking opportunities, thanks to the co-production market, the TFL Meeting Event, and many other occasions. All of that until the film is ready to fly solo.

THE LODGE PROJECTS-IN- DEVELOPMENT

Projects:

Assa, a Fish in a Bowl
Blue Card
Close Rose Close
Hadd

I Didn't Sign Up for This
I'll Smile in September
Jaysan
Manjano

Pepo Kali
Tarfaya
Terbakar
The Silent Ones

Assa, a Fish in a Bowl

Genre: Drama, Social Realism

Country: Lebanon, France, Denmark

Language: Arabic, Amharic, French



LOGLINE

In Beirut, Yasmine, an Ethiopian live-in maid, faces a crisis as her son goes missing back home. Trapped by her inextricable role and without her passport, she must find a way to escape.

SYNOPSIS

Yasmine, a 32-year-old Ethiopian woman, has spent the past decade in Lebanon, struggling with poorly paid jobs. She begins a new one as a live-in maid for Rami and Leila, caring for their home and their two-year-old son, Wael. This steady job is crucial for her.

Against the backdrop of a country on the brink of war, Yasmine finds a sense of belonging. She grows attached to this not-so-perfect family: Leila, anxious about her future, battles for independence from her controlling mother-in-law, while Rami feels trapped working in his father's business.

When Yasmine receives news that her son has run away and is missing, she craves support to return home and find him. Yet Rami and Leila don't trust her urgency and refuse to let her leave. Yasmine feels betrayed by those she trusted.

When a tragic accident occurs, Yasmine seizes her opportunity. She takes her chance, and buys a ticket to Ethiopia, knowing this is a one-way back.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

I wrote this story based on my own experience living in Lebanon, surrounded by migrant workers from different countries. Since a young age, I was curious about how our society maintained clear boundaries between us.

From the use of a uniform, of "Madam" and "Sir" to talk to their employers, waiting in the kitchen for leftovers, there were many established ways to separate two worlds, justifying all sorts of abuses.

Through the perspective of Yasmine, I choose to tell the story of an ordinary family who, for the first time, welcomes a live-in maid, bringing her into the very core of their privacy. Her presence begins to expose the underlying issues in the family. Despite the bonds that start to form between employer and employee, the power dynamic remains unbalanced.

This film aims to explore human behaviors and societal contradictions, shedding light on the often invisible lives of domestic workers.

Filmmakers' Biographies



DIRECTOR/WRITER: DAHLIA NEMLICH

Dahlia Nemlich is a French-Lebanese award-winning director. Dahlia received the silver FIFOG and the Khayrallah Prize in 2022 for her first short film Roadblock. She won the Golden Yusr at the 3rd edition of the Red Sea International Film Festival for her second short film, Somewhere in Between, winning the award for Best Short Film. Since then, the film has won eight other awards such as Best Director at Aswan Women FF, the FIFOG d'Or in Geneva, an Audience Award at Paphos FF, and Best Screenplay at the Casablanca Arab FF.

She is currently developing her first feature film, Assa, a fish in a bowl, selected at LIM residency (Le Groupe Ouest) in 2022, LabMed (Meditalent), Torino Boost it Lab, and CineGouna Platform in 2023, and The Red Sea Lodge in 2024. The film, produced by Marine Vaillant through Special Touch Studios, recently received a development grant from Region Sud.



PRODUCER: MARINE VAILLANT

Marine Vaillant, a Khâgne graduate in History and History of Arts, volunteered for four years at the Sundance Film Festival before becoming a globe-trotting producer. Her experience includes working with Les Films des Tournelles on notable features such as Where Do We Go Now? (Nadine Labaki), Rengaine (Rachid Djaidani), Riding with Moliere (Philippe Le Guay).

Sharpening her skills to produce, while developing her taste for fostering new talents, she created Dewberries Films, to produce short films. She has produced award-winning short films, including Les Chenilles by Michelle and Noel Keserwany, winner of the Golden Bear 2023. Roadblock, directed by Dahlia Nemlich won the Silver FIFOG and the Khayrallah Prize in 2022. Somewhere in Between, Nemlich's second short, won over 9 awards and has been acquired by Canal +.

With Special Touch Studios, Vaillant produces feature films and documentaries that bridge the East-West cultural gap, mirroring her diverse career.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Special Touch Studios
Address: 15-17 La canebière, 13001
Marseille, France
Phone: + 33 6 82 94 21 04
Contact email: mvaillant@specialtouchstudios.com

CO-PRODUCER

Company Name: Zentropa
Productions APS3
Country: Denmark

CO-PRODUCER

Company Name: The Talkies
Country: Lebanon

Estimated Budget (USD): 1,250,000
Financing Acquired: 77,500

FINANCERS

Special Touch Studios
Zentropa Productions APS3
The Talkies
PACA Region in France
Golden YUSR
Ambient Light - prize at
the Cine Gouna Springboard

Blue Card

Genre: Drama

Country: Sudan, Egypt

Language: Arabic



LOGLINE

A guilt-ridden Sudanese refugee in Egypt takes a demeaning job while awaiting resettlement, but an unexpected bond with an Egyptian street food vendor pushes him to confront his past and reshape his future.

SYNOPSIS

After the latest war breakthrough in Sudan, Abdullah (24) abandoned his family in Khartoum to rescue himself. After they refused to leave the city, he fled illegally to Egypt; after reaching Cairo, He embarked on a friendship love story with an Egyptian street food vendor, colleague, and roommate, "EZZ" (32), whose life revolves around the dream of traveling to Europe. Abdullah's proud character was tortured into accepting a job as a caregiver in an elderly nursing home where he is responsible for the personal hygiene of the guests and making his bread. After receiving the news of his family loss, the Sudanese neighborhood vibes where he lives become unbearable as it triggers his feeling of guilt, so he is determined to exploit his case, fabricating a story of suffering to the UNHCR to be eligible for refugee resettlement to Europe to meet EZZ there eventually. His relationship with a mysterious guest with a tragic past, Muhab (75), evolved after he got his blue card, leading to redemption and acceptance making a decision to stay in Egypt and returning to Sudan later.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

Blue Card is a film that profoundly touches on the feelings of displacement and searching for one's true self. It's not just about the struggles of being a refugee but also about feeling lost and disconnected.

As the director, I felt compelled to tell this story because it reflects my journey. People surrounded me when I moved from Sudan to Cairo, but I still felt alone. Abdullah, the main character, experiences this feeling of being caught between two worlds. His story is my story of seeking a place to belong and understanding who we are.

Paula, the writer, and Amjad, the producer, are essential to bringing this film to life. Paul's writing beautifully captures Abdullah's struggles and dreams, drawing from experiences. Trying to find hope and meaning. Amjad's role as a producer helps us show these experiences with honesty and care, highlighting the shared pain and hopes of many. Visually, the film contrasts the busy, overwhelming life in Cairo with Sudan's comforting, familiar memories. The camera follows Abdullah closely, showing his internal battles. Connections he makes with others. Simple symbols, like the blue card and the origami, represent his efforts to find hope and redefine himself. Blue Card is more than just a film; it's a heartfelt exploration of finding one's place in the world and understanding the impact of feeling out of place. It's about the universal search for home and the courage to keep going, even when everything feels uncertain.

Filmmakers' Biographies



DIRECTOR: MOHAMED AL'OMDA

Mohammed Alomda, a Sudanese director and producer for over ten years, co-founded StationFilms, producing "You Will Die at Twenty" (Venice winner), "The Burdened" by Amr Gamal, and "Goodbye Julia" (Cannes 2023). He also led programming at Sudan Film Factory and Sudan Independent Film Festival.



WRITER: PAULA THABET

Paula Thabet is an Egyptian screenwriter and creative director who won the 2020 Sawiris Cultural Award among 2,300 screenwriters. He has written over 2,025 minutes of drama across 45 episodes and earned the MENA Effie Award for his work in advertising.



PRODUCER: AMJAD ABU ALALA

Amjad Abu Alala, a UAE-born Sudanese director and producer, studied filmmaking at UAE University. His film "You Will Die at Twenty" won the Lion of the Future at the Venice Film Festival and was Sudan's first Oscars® submission. Head of Programming at Sudan Independent Film Festival and producer of Cannes-awarded "Goodbye Julia."

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Station Films Cinema Production Co. LTD
ADDRESS
House n°336,Block9,
Alazhari, Khartoum, Sudan

Phone: +2-01289999199
Contact Email: Amjad.film@gmail.com

Estimated Budget (USD): 600,000
Financing Acquired (USD): 170,000

FINANCERS

Private Investment
25% of Director / Producer fees,
MAD World

Close Rose Close

Genre:
Drama/Psychological Horror

Country:
Saudi Arabia

Language:
Arabic



LOGLINE

Newlywed's Rawan marriage begins to crumble as a dark shadow presence reemerges from her forgotten past, threatening her pursuit of a normal life and forcing her to confront long-buried secrets.

SYNOPSIS

After a traditional wedding, Rawan believes she is stepping into a new chapter of her life. But her happiness is short-lived. On her wedding night, she blacks out, only to wake up with a haunting presence following her—a shadow that seems to grow darker and closer with each passing day. As Rawan struggles to maintain a normal life and keep her marriage intact, the shadow begins to unearth repressed memories from her childhood. The more she tries to ignore it, the more the darkness consumes her, revealing disturbing secrets about her family and her past.

As the tension builds, Rawan finds herself trapped in a claustrophobic world where her marriage, relationships, and mental state are all on the brink of collapse. The shadow haunting her is not just a symbol of her past trauma, but a force pushing her toward a terrifying revelation. The ultimate truth she uncovers threatens not only her sense of identity but also her very survival.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

As the director of Close Rose Close, my focus is on the emotional and psychological journey of our protagonist, Rawan. The film delves into how deeply buried trauma—specifically the trauma of child sexual abuse—can distort one's sense of reality, turning familiar spaces into terrifying landscapes.

By using psychological horror, I intend to explore how fear and memory emerge from the hidden past, creating a claustrophobic atmosphere that pushes the character to the edge. The shadow that haunts Rawan is not just a figure of horror, but a manifestation of her repressed experiences, forcing her to confront the truth she's been avoiding.

Inspired by filmmakers like Ingmar Bergman, I'm drawn to minimalism and symbolism, using silence, light, and shadow to heighten the sense of psychological disintegration. Close Rose Close is ultimately about the courage to face what we've kept silent and suppressed, and the hope for healing the remaining scars.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER/DIRECTOR: RULAN HASAN

Screenwriter and director. Started her career in 2016 by co-writing "Doon" on VIU; "Bashar Stories" on Netflix; "Alayla" comedy Series on SBC; and writer of the Netflix Original "Whispers" (Drama/Mystery, 2019); and "The Exchange" (S2) on Netflix. Writer and Co-Director of "The Wishlist" short film, winner of Honor Golden Valley Global Cinfest, November 2020. Senior writer on "Chromosome" show. Head writer "Fates Hotel" on Shahid. Co-writer of "Takki" S3 on Netflix 2021. Writer of "Abd" feature film, winner of Best Scenario, Best Edit, and Best Film in Saudi Film Festival 2023. As a music creative director, she worked on several music videos with several artists like WEGZ, BigSam, and DJ Desert Fish. Rulan dedicates herself to "Rights House", where she helps nurture and enable new talents. Rights House registered and won in the Saudi Film Festival Year 2022, "The Slave" Feature Film - "Kabreet" Short Film by Salma Murad. She directed "Don't Sleep" and is getting ready to Direct "Assatur".



PRODUCER: FAHAD SAMMAN

Fahad Samman is a seasoned music producer and director with over 12 years of experience in the music industry. He began his creative journey in music videos, where he honed his skills in visual storytelling and sound design, before transitioning into filmmaking. Fahad co-founded Rights House, a production company and writing community dedicated to nurturing aspiring filmmakers across Saudi Arabia. Drawing on his extensive background in music and sound, Fahad brings a unique approach to film production, where sound plays a crucial role in enhancing the psychological tension of his projects. Notable works include "Kabreet", directed by Salma Murad, which won Best Short Film at the 9th Saudi Film Festival; and "The Post", set to screen at the Red Sea International Film Festival 2024. Through his work, Fahad seeks to elevate Saudi cinema by fostering local talent and creating emotionally resonant stories with a strong auditory and visual impact.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Rights House
Address: Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
Phone: +966566191915
Contact Email: info@rightshouse.com

Estimated Budget (USD): 1,404,007.48
Financing Acquired: 0

FINANCERS

NA

Hadd

Genre: Drama

Country: Saudi Arabia

Language: Arabic



LOGLINE

Despite immense tribal pressure, Saeed refuses a ten-million-riyal offer to forgive his son's killer. As a conspiracy threatens his daughter's wedding, he makes a daring, last-minute move at the execution ground to outsmart the corrupt and reclaim his family's honor.

SYNOPSIS

Saeed and his family are joyfully preparing for his daughter Amna's wedding in southern Saudi Arabia. The celebrations are cut short when Saeed's only son, Mohammed, is killed in a senseless fight with Musfer, a member of the groom Khalid's tribe. The court sentences Musfer to execution.

In the aftermath, Musfer's tribe offers Saeed ten million riyals in blood money for forgiveness, but Saeed refuses, seeing it as an insult to his son's memory. His rejection sparks relentless pressure from jahiya (mediation groups) acting on behalf of the tribe. They confront him publicly, demanding forgiveness, but Saeed stands firm.

Corrupt members of Musfer's tribe spread rumors to tarnish Mohammed's reputation and manipulate Saeed's wife, Mahra, into believing that forgiveness is the only way to save Amna's marriage. Feeling betrayed by Khalid's passive involvement, Amna decides to withdraw from the marriage, shaking the family even further.

As tensions rise, Saeed retreats to his farm to find peace. Confronted by Musfer's mother and emotionally drained, he makes a rash decision. However, as the execution date approaches, Saeed makes a bold choice: he forgives Musfer but refuses the blood money, outsmarting the corrupt and restoring his family's dignity.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

I used to pass by the execution square in Mecca—which was adjacent to the neighborhood mosque—when I was a child. However, I never witnessed an execution there. But I can't forget the time when I left the Friday prayer with my father, and people had gathered to witness the execution, with the sound of police cars in the background. I could sneak a peek at what was happening inside the square before my father noticed, hurried me into the car, and then sped away.

This square and that day leave unanswered questions in my memory. Even after learning the basic information about it... I kept asking: Why don't they pardon him? Will there be peace after the execution? What will the feelings of the murderer's family be? Can his father bear to attend and watch the execution scene? Will they harbor resentment towards the victim's guardians for not pardoning them?

Filmmakers' Biographies



DIRECTOR: JAMAL KUTBI

Jamal Kutbi began his journey in high school, cultivating a love for storytelling that captures the essence of people's lives through images and emotions. His film "Khaled Al-Sheikh Between the Thorns of Art and Politics," which he wrote and directed, received special recognition at the 2023 Red Sea International Film Festival under the "Arab Spectacular" category.

He has worked as an executive producer at Thamanya Publishing and Distribution Company, overseeing productions for the "Genome" and "Jawab" series. Additionally, he contributed as a story developer for the film "Ashura Day in Qatif" and directed "The Man Who Knows the Killer by His Feet." Jamal also directed "Hadi Souan," highlighting the achievements of the first Arab runner to secure a silver Olympic medal.



WRITER: MOHAMMED JUAYD

Mohammed Juayd began his filmmaking journey during his university years, producing his first film followed by three documentaries. He then joined Thamanya where he contributed to the writing of various projects. His passion for cinema was ignited through extensive theater experience, earning him awards in writing, acting, and directing. United by a common theme, his work reflects a deep exploration of stories worth telling. Through his films, Mohammed seeks to illuminate unique narratives that capture the complexities of human nature, often revealing the contradictory choices that define our lives.



PRODUCER: ABDULRAHMAN ALKILANY

Abdulrahman Alkilany is a passionate film producer, director, and writer with over 14 years of experience. He has produced and directed more than 130 short films and documentaries from over twenty countries, showcasing stories that matter. His recent documentary, "Eyes of Gaza," was featured at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA), reflecting his dedication to impactful storytelling.

With a master's degree in Cinema and TV, Abdulrahman founded FishEye Films in 2016, where he focuses on projects that highlight forgotten stories and explore human experiences. His work blends his love for cinema, sociology, and history, inviting audiences to connect with diverse perspectives.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

FishEye Films
Turkey, Istanbul
Phone: 0090535585493
Contact Email: kilanyab@fisheye4media.com

Estimated Budget (USD): 2,200,000
Financing Acquired: 0

FINANCERS

NA

I Didn't Sign Up for This

Genre: Drama/Dark Comedy

Country: Saudi Arabia

Language: Arabic



LOGLINE

Nadene, a dazzling superheroine in her universe, navigates the challenges of single motherhood while confronting the heartache she thought she had long buried.

SYNOPSIS

"I Didn't Sign Up for This" follows the journey of Nadene, a single mother of three children, Ferdous, Omar, and Reem, each with different needs, in Saudi Arabia living with her mother, Noor. Nadene selflessly prioritizes her children over her own well-being. Juggling daily challenges, Nadene reaches a breaking point when summer ends and her sister flies back to France to complete her PhD leaving her alone with the load of the kids. The sudden departure of the nanny is the straw that breaks the camel's back, pushing and forcing her to confront and heal from past pains. Nadene finds herself in overdrive mode while parenting her teenage daughter and dealing with things she doesn't want for her in the future.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

As a mother myself, balancing the responsibilities of parenting, motherhood, and storytelling while challenging male patriarchy in Saudi Arabia isn't easy. From the '80s till now, women have been on a courageous journey of breaking barriers and proving their worth. Amidst the chaos of daily life and the echoes of past struggles, we stand tall. As they say, "Jeddah is run by single moms."

In crafting Nadene's story, I aim to amplify the voices of women fighting against the remnants of male patriarchy and its aftermath. Through Nadene's character, we dive into the empowering path, celebrating the bravery, resilience, and unwavering spirit of women who continue to inspire change. Through Nadene's character, I aim to share a genuine reflection of the inner turmoil, self-realization, and ultimate acceptance that comes with the beautiful chaos of motherhood.

This story is a heartfelt tribute to all mothers who navigate the intricate path of self-identity while embracing the transformative power of love and sacrifice for their families.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: LANA KOMSANY

Lana Komsany's active participation in film began in Jeddah, after being quarantined in the pandemic. Komsany decided to start dipping her feet in filmmaking since her original practice in the theater was on hold because of social distancing. Over the years, Lana has been involved in various performing endeavors in different capacities being a director, acting coach, and actress. She has acted in many Saudi productions, including the notable productions "Jameel Jedan," "Becoming" and the short "The Ride". Lana has also created initiatives such as "I Am Woman" which is a collective that aims to shed light on women's life stories and empower female voices through theater.



WRITER, PRODUCER: HADEEL MOHARRAM

Hadeel Moharram is a writer, director, and producer based in Jeddah, KSA. She studied filmmaking with a focus on directing and producing, and made significant contributions over the last five years. Hadeel has produced over 6 short films and worked on 3 feature films in various roles, including "The Matchmaker" produced by Telfaz11 & Netflix; "Basma," where she served as Casting Director; and "Al Gaid" as an assistant production coordinator for a film by Telfaz11 X NEOM. Recently, she produced NEOM's first short feature film and is currently developing her debut feature as a co-writer and producer.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Agency al-Muntjun Bahitraf for Art Production (known as Rose Panthera)
Address: Jeddah, Hay al-Ruways Sharq Tariq al-Madinah al-Tali' Wenzel
Phone: +966 54 684 0186
Contact Email: walaa@rosepanthera.com, hadeel@rosepanthera.com

Co-Producer: Walaa Bahefzallah
Company Name: Rose Panthera
Country: Saudi Arabia

Estimated Budget (USD): 1,500,000
Financing Acquired: None yet

FINANCERS

None yet

I'll Smile in September

Genre: Drama

Country: India, Singapore

Language: Hindi



LOGLINE

After a heart-wrenching separation from the love of his life and a brutal altercation in the aftermath in which he loses his front teeth, a young brass band player in Old Delhi attempts to move on in his life by getting his smile back.

SYNOPSIS

Kismateen, 22, works for a brass band in Old Delhi. An ace trumpeter, he is well-liked by his peers, especially the bandmaster Ashok, in his 50's, who considers him his protegee.

For the past few months, he has been secretly dating Ashok's daughter, Avani, 21, who studies Art History. The two bond over their love for Urdu poetry and Meena Kumari's films. When Ashok learns this he confronts Kismateen. He knocks out Kismateen's teeth and fires him from work, while Avani is married off to a distant relative.

Having lost both his love and his music, Kismateen feels utterly defeated. He moves back to his hometown and starts to work at a salon. One day, he comes across a dental clinic advertisement. He concludes that the only way he can move ahead in life is if he finds his smile back. The film follows Kismateen's quest as he tries to get his life back.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

Through "I'll Smile in September", I want to encapsulate Kismateen's unspoken and crippling feelings about his first big heartbreak; his separation from the one true love of his life; and his vehement yearning to move on in life.

During the pandemic, while I was trapped inside my apartment, I started to reflect upon the idea of companionship. I thought of my failed romantic relationships over the years, the flawed attempts I made, moving from one partner to another, simply to rewrite the script about perfect endings.

Dejected and desolate, Kismateen considers dental implants to be his only chance at life. He, too, is desperate to rewrite his ending. He is denied a chance at love simply for being a lower-caste Sufi artisan.

With a careful balance between a tender romance and a quiet examination of pathos, the film attempts to explore the themes of forbidden love, grief, and self-acceptance.

Filmmakers' Biographies



DIRECTOR, WRITER: AKASH CHHABRA

Aakash Chhabra is a writer and director based in Panipat, India. His short fiction "Mintgumri" (2021) was nominated for the Critics' Choice Awards 2022 of the Film Critics Guild, while his documentary short "A Winter's Elegy" (2022) was featured in the Sight and Sound, Best Video Essays of 2022.

He is currently working on his debut feature film "I'll Smile in September", which recently won the MPA Award at the Chanel X BIFF Asian Film Academy 2024. It was developed at the Busan Asian Film School 2022 and the Produire au Sud Nantes 2022. It has participated in the QCinema Project Market 2024, the Busan International Film Festival Asian Project Market 2023, and the NFDC Film Bazaar 2023.

He is also a recipient of the reFrame genDeralities2.0 film fellowship and the Rough Edges Uncode Fellowship for his short film "Warm Shadows".



PRODUCERS:

SANJAY GULATI

Sanjay Gulati is an independent film producer based in New Delhi, India. He is the founder of Crawling Angel Films. His films include "Girls Will Be Girls" (2024) - Sundance World Dramatic Audience Award; "Tentigo" (2023) - Tallinn Black Nights Special Jury Prize 2023; "Guras" (2023) - Karlovy Vary Proxima Jury Prize; "Laila Aur Satt Geet" (2020) - Berlinale Encounters; "Nimtoh" (2019) - IFFR Bright Future; "Ashwatthama" (2017) - BIFF New Currents; and "Lajwanti" (2014) - Berlinale Forum.



FRAN BORGIA

Fran Borgia leads Akanga Film Asia, an independent production company based in Singapore. His titles include "Stranger Eyes" (2024) - Venice Main Competition; "Oasis of Now" (2024) - Berlinale Forum; "Tiger Stripes" (2023) - Cannes Critics' Week Grand Jury Prize; "Tomorrow Is A Long Time" (2023) Berlinale Generation; "Yuni" (2021) - TIFF Platform Prize; "A Land Imagined" (2018) - Locarno Golden Leopard Prize; "A Yellow Bird" (2016) - Cannes Critics' Week; "A Lullaby To The Sorrowful Mystery" (2016) - Berlinale Silver Bear Prize; "Sandcastle" (2010) - Cannes Critics' Week; and "Here" (2009) - Cannes Directors' Fortnight.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Crawling Angel Films, Sanjay Gulati
Address: 107, Shahpuri Towers, C block, Community Centre, Janakpuri, New Delhi, Delhi 110058
Phone: +91 98100 82291
Contact Email: cleargoads@gmail.com, aakashchhabra949@gmail.com

Akanga Film Asia, Fran Borgia
Address: 81 Ubi Avenue 4, #06-01 UB, One Singapore 408830
Phone: +65 9623 1168
Contact Email: franborgia@akangafilms.com, fran.seapn@sgjiff.com

Estimated Budget (USD): \$687,000
Financing Acquired: \$67,500

FINANCERS

Sanjay Gulati, Fran Borgia

Jaysan

Genre: Coming-of-Age Drama

Country: Kyrgyz Republic

Language: Kyrgyz



LOGLINE

Jaysan, a lively 6-year-old boy, is left with his grandparents in a village emptied by labor migration. Amid the joy of new friendships and the harsh realities of loss, his carefree childhood quietly fades away too soon.

SYNOPSIS

Jaysan, a lively 6-year-old city boy who dreams of becoming a famous football player, is left with his grandparents when his parents go to Russia for work. He ends up in a small village affected by labor migration, surrounded by only elderly people and children of migrants. Missing his loving parents, Jaysan finds it hard to adjust to his strict grandmother and the tough village life. While he starts to appreciate the village and make new friends, Jaysan sees his neighbors suffer from adult violence, which also affects his own life. As he faces these changes, Jaysan struggles with unfamiliar feelings like envy, fear, and jealousy, which make it hard to keep his new friendships. When his fun and loving grandfather suddenly dies, Jaysan is forced to grow up quickly and take care of himself and his grieving grandmother. The once talkative and carefree boy fades away, leaving behind his dreams and a childhood that ended too soon.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

In a remote Kyrgyz village during the peak of migration in 2008, many children like six-year-old Jaysan were left in the care of distant relatives while their parents sought work abroad. I spent 17 years in such a village, witnessing friends and neighbors wait for years, hoping for their parents' return. Even after reunions, the emotional void remained, as the absence of those early years was hard to fill. Children like Jaysan felt abandonment and loneliness, and as life forced them to grow up far too soon, they lost their chance at a full childhood. They became adults, yet deep inside, remained abandoned children, stuck in their trauma, always waiting for a moment that might never come.

Filmmakers' Biographies



DIRECTOR: AISHA SULTANBEKOVA

Aisha is a director and screenwriter from Kyrgyzstan. In 2023, she earned her MFA in Film and Media Production from the University of Texas, Austin, through the prestigious Fulbright Program. Her short documentary "Golden Moon" (2023) premiered on PBS and had its world premiere at the Aspen Shortfest (USA). Aisha first gained recognition with her documentary "Ad Astra" (2019), which was selected for several renowned film festivals, including the 62nd SFFILM (USA); the 37th Torello Film Festival (Spain); and the 22nd Olympia International Film Festival (Greece), among others. Currently, Aisha is developing her debut feature film "Jaysan", which participated in the Biennale College Cinema 2023 and the Red Sea Labs' The Lodge 2024, and was selected for the Venice Gap-Financing Market 2024. Upon returning to Kyrgyzstan in 2023, she began teaching in the Media Department at Compass College while continuing to work on her films.



WRITER: ASEL IMANKULOVA MYRZABAEVA

Asel is a screenwriter from Kyrgyzstan who has lived in Spain for the past 16 years. With a background in economics, she took various screenwriting courses to pursue her long-held passion for storytelling. After working in digital marketing, Asel returned to creative writing in 2020, a dream she had since childhood. Her screenwriting debut came with the short film "Superheroes" in 2021, and she has since worked on animated children's series like "Kozular" and "Byityktar". She has also written over 30 scripts for commercial videos. Currently, Asel is co-writing her first feature film, "Jaysan", which participated in the Biennale College Cinema 2023 and Red Sea Labs' The Lodge 2024, and was selected for the Venice Gap-Financing Market 2024. In addition, she is developing several other personal projects.



PRODUCER: SALTANAT IMANKULOVA

Saltanat, a producer and screenwriter from Kyrgyzstan, holds a degree in Business Administration. After 16 years in finance, media buying, and human resources, she pursued her passion for film by taking courses in producing, directing, and screenwriting in 2021, and co-founded Koyon Media with her sister Asel. In 2022, she co-produced and co-wrote her first short film, "Kiyal", which earned recognition at the Xth Umut Forum of Young Cinema in Kyrgyzstan. Later she worked as an executive producer and co-scriptwriter for the popular TV series "Choochun Kishi", broadcast on the national TV channel and digital platforms. Saltanat has written scripts for children's animated series and produced short films. She is currently developing feature films with young Kyrgyz directors making their debuts. One of them, the "Jaysan" project, participated in the Biennale College Cinema 2023 and Red Sea Labs' The Lodge 2024 and was selected for the Venice Gap-Financing Market 2024.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Koyon Media
Address: 33/2 Ala-Archa-1, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic
Phone: +996 777 215 550
Contact Email: koyonmedia@gmail.com

Estimated Budget (USD): 565,000
Financing Acquired: None

FINANCERS

N/A

Manjano

Genre: Romance, Action, Comedy

Country: Kenya

Language: English, Swahili



LOGLINE

Fresh out of high school, a young man assembles a group of misfits to pull off a heist to fund his elopement with a girl promised to someone else.

SYNOPSIS

Rama, fresh out of high school, reconnects and falls madly in love with Munah, as he teaches her how to swim. In a society that sees premarital affairs as taboo, the two begin going out in secret. Their romance blooms and they experience their first taste of freedom until Munah drops a bombshell on Rama: she's engaged to be married in a few months. Besides, Munah is an Arab girl, and Arabs marry Arabsonsone thing that Rama is certainly not. Munah sees how broken Rama's heart is. Her own dreams of becoming an architect have been shattered by this marriage too. She comes up with a wild suggestion; they should elope. Rama agrees.

To fund their elopement, Rama decides to rob Pakistani, the current mayor seeking re-election but also secretly a drug lord. Rama assembles a group of highly incompetent people as his crew for the heist; a small-time drug peddler, an old key maker in a wheelchair, a girl with a broken heart, and him, a man with potential who never applies himself. We follow the team as they try and succeed to make it out with the money and their lives, but different dreams and futures.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

For most girls from Mombasa, one of the oldest coastal towns in East Africa, going to high school is just a checkbox they tick before being married off. It's an arrangement I have seen play out in my own family and I've attended many weddings with broken-hearted friends to bid farewell to their first love. It is from these experiences that Manjano stems.

I envision a vibrant and stylized world to melt the chaos of the heist and the young romance by featuring the blend of Arab-influenced architecture and the Indian-influenced Taarab music that permeate Mombasa. For this, I aim to use think-fast cuts, clever dialogue, and playful music cues that heighten both tension and humor.

Overall, I aim to make this a fun, thrilling and vibrant coming-of-age African film, a much-needed deviation from the barrage of stereotypically sad films coming from the continent.

Filmmakers' Biographies



DIRECTOR/WRITER: OMAR HAMZA

Omar is an award-winning director, having earned recognition at the Zanzibar International Film Festival and recently received the Signis Award for his film "Half Open Window". His latest short film, Ndoto, was selected for the Silicon Valley African Film Festival and screened at the historic Hoover Theatre. The film is also an official selection at the biggest kids' film festival in the world, the Cinekid Film Festival in the Netherlands.

As the founder of Giza Visuals, Omar has produced two feature films and numerous short films, both independently and in collaboration with organizations such as Some Fine Day Pics and the East African Documentary Film Fund. Currently, he is developing his first series through the Deental workshop, in partnership with Series Mania. Passionate about cinema's power to inspire positive change, Omar focuses on telling captivating, original, and relatable stories.



PRODUCER: JUNE WAIREGI

June is a producer and screenwriter based in Nairobi, Kenya. She's a film studies graduate from the United States International University; an alumnus of Some Fine Day Producer's Program; Nigeria's iDraft feature film screenwriting program; East Africa's Great Lakes Creative Producers Lab; and the Lodge program.

Working at Giza Visuals as a creative producer, she's produced films and documentaries for various organizations and platforms such as Africa's largest network, MNET, Some Fine Day Pix, and the East Africa Documentary Film Fund. Currently, she's producing a romantic comedy feature film titled "Sayari".

June believes in the ability of cinema to immortalize cultural and social moments and uses her stories to capture, retain, and retell history for generations to come.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Giza Visuals
Address: Amani Court, Fedha, Nairobi, Kenya
Phone: +254 712034627
Contact email: wairegi@gizavisuals.com

Estimated Budget (USD): 479,474
Financing Acquired: 43,200

FINANCERS

Giza Visuals

Pepo Kali

Genre: Drama

Country: Kenya

Language: English, Swahili



LOGLINE

After a biker dies in a motorcycle accident, a grieving mother learns how to ride a motorcycle, determined to complete the trip her daughter was on when she died.

SYNOPSIS

On a dusty playing field somewhere in Nairobi, Wairimu (50s) is learning how to ride a motorcycle. It's been a few months since the death of her daughter, KEMI (late 20s), a member of an all-women's motorcycle club called Pepo Kali and co-founder of the riding school that birthed the club. Kemi was killed while on a trip to Lake Marsabit. As the first anniversary of her death inches closer, Wairimu becomes obsessed with completing the trip on Kemi's behalf.

Wairimu's instructor is Sly, co-founder of Pepo Kali and Kemi's best friend. Sly is the only survivor and witness to the accident that killed her. While training Wairimu, Sly struggles to hide the fact that the school she and Kemi started together is struggling, as well as the true circumstances around Kemi's death. The lessons further complicate both women's grief. Wairimu eventually graduates and is able to ride with the support of her local biker community which puts her closer to her goal of riding to Marsabit. However, the secrets surrounding the accident and who Kemi truly was unraveled, threatening a mother's quest to honor her daughter and a best friend's determination to keep her dead friend's dream alive.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

I have fallen about a dozen times while learning how to ride a motorcycle. Each time I landed on the ground, I noticed how my fears of failing and falling became less and less.

Pepo Kali is a film about coming to terms with the worst thing that could ever happen and how to process it.

In the period that I've been developing this story, I've been dealing with the loss of loved ones and the loss of opportunities. I've also had a longtime obsession with the community of women motorcyclists in Nairobi. I'm deeply inspired by these women who are able to ride through Nairobi traffic and even further, across Kenya and sometimes across Africa, on motorbikes.

Making Pepo Kali is an opportunity to explore heavy themes in a unique way. My intention is to tell a layered story about loss, motherhood, mental health, community, and motorcycles.

Filmmakers' Biographies



DIRECTOR, WRITER: LYDIA MATATA

Lydia Matata is currently riding a used Apache 150 cc with a long list of mechanical problems. She is also one of the writers of "Country Queen", a drama series streaming on Netflix, and "Igiza", a limited drama series on Showmax. She is the writer and director of the short film "Sungura". The film has screened at various notable festivals including the Interfilm International Film Festival in Berlin and the Pan African Film Festival in Cannes. "Sungura" has also won several awards including the Best Women in Film Award at the Blackstar International Film Festival. Her new short fiction film Float is currently in post-production. Her latest documentary "Kenyan on Mars" is currently screening on Al Jazeera's Africa Direct platform. She is a 2024 fellow of the U.S. State Department's American Film Showcase documentary residency with a new project, Chovu. Her other documentary short, Utapata Mwingine, received the Best Emerging Filmmaker Award at the UN Women's Global Voices Film Festival in 2021.



PRODUCER: DEBRA AROKO

Debra Aroko is a Kenyan filmmaker and producer with a deep passion for telling stories that capture the nuanced realities of the various communities within her continent. As the Co-Director and Impact Producer of the feature-length documentary "Searching for Amani", Debra received the Albert Maysles Best New Documentary Award at the Tribeca Film Festival, where the film premiered. Additionally, "Searching for Amani" won the Best Documentary Film Award at the Raindance Film Festival. Debra served as the project manager and producer of the Solutions Storytelling Project Africa, overseeing the production of 19 short documentary films from across the African continent. The project was funded by the Skoll Foundation and connected African filmmakers with social innovators to create solutions-focused films that inspire positive change in their communities. A number of the films that she produced during the program have been acquired by major publications like AJ and Scientific American. Debra is a firm believer in the power of storytelling and its ability to bring hope and catalyze positive impact.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

The Ololokwe Movie Company
Address: Kitisuru, Kirawa Road-
Westlands, Nairobi
P.O BOX 34567, G.P.O NAIROBI
Phone: 254 706 116695
Contact Email: debyaroks@gmail.com

CO-PRODUCER

The Film and Laundry Company
Country: Kenya

Estimated Budget (USD): 700,000
Financing Acquired: 7,710

FINANCERS

Shore Script Development
Competition (prize)

Center frame Development
Competition (prize)

Great Lakes Producers Lab (prize)

Tarfaya

Genre:
Anticipation, Drama,
Medical Thriller

Country:
Morocco, France, Belgium

Language:
Arabic, French



LOGLINE

In the near future, Earth undergoes climate upheavals. In the city of Tarfaya, in the south of Morocco, sandstorms are frequent. The people there have resigned themselves to this reality. Meryem is a dedicated and solitary doctor at the regional hospital where she works when she encounters mysterious and unexplained medical cases that plunge people into a deep sleep.

SYNOPSIS

In the remote town of Tarfaya, Morocco, a mysterious epidemic emerges, causing residents to fall into an inexplicable deep sleep. The illness challenges medical understanding, leaving local doctor Meryem, a brilliant but isolated 40-year-old, at the center of the crisis. As tensions rise at the hospital, Meryem navigates personal struggles, including her complicated relationship with Adel, a younger doctor torn between staying in Tarfaya or leaving for Casablanca. The disease presents with symptoms like coughing, fever, and vivid dreams shared among patients, leading to a profound, surreal connection. As the epidemic spreads, the government isolates patients in desert camps, but treatment efforts fail, and the disease's origins remain unknown. Meryem and Adel, now partners in their fight, explore unconventional solutions to the epidemic, but when Adel shows signs of the illness, the personal stakes for Meryem skyrocket. As the military orders the closure of the camps and similar cases arise globally, Meryem faces the collapse of her world. In a final dream-like encounter, she receives a message of hope from Adel, pushing her to persevere in the face of an unfolding global catastrophe, as she struggles to save her town and the man she loves.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

Several years ago, inspired by my own struggles as a young woman witnessing the stark disparities in our world, I envisioned 'Tarfaya.' This film explores the life of Meryem, a solitary, idealistic woman in her forties living in Tarfaya, a Moroccan town afflicted by a disease that causes its victims to fall into a sleep from which they never awaken, serving as a metaphor for our collective indifference to global issues. This affliction mirrors the personal and professional dilemmas of Meryem, who battles within a neglected hospital, symbolizing societies that overlook crucial public affairs.

Stylistically, 'Tarfaya' merges neorealism with fantastical elements, portraying the harsh realities of Tarfaya through almost ethereal experiences. This approach aims to provide a raw and immersive experience, questioning the essence of our existence and our responsibilities toward others and our planet.

Filmmakers' Biographies



DIRECTOR, WRITER, PRODUCER: SOFIA ALAOUI

Born in Casablanca, Sofia Alaoui spent her childhood between Morocco and China. After studying in Paris, she returned to settle in Casablanca in 2015, where she founded her production company, Jiango Film. Her latest short film, "Qu'importe si les bêtes meurent" won the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival 2020, the French Film Critics Association Award, and the Jury Prize at the Paris Courts Devant Festival in 2021, followed by the César Award for Best Short Film in 2021. After directing a commissioned short film as part of a genre series for 20th Century Fox Digital (broadcast on Hulu), she directed her first feature film, "ANIMALIA," which won the Special Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival 2023. It continued its international circuit, appearing at major festivals such as BFI London, Karlovy Vary, and Palm Springs, where it also won the Special Jury Prize. In 2023, she was named "Arab Star of Tomorrow" by Screen Daily, and in 2024 she was listed among Unifrance's "10 Talents to Follow" in France. Residing in Rabat, she is currently working on her next feature film, "Tarfaya," a futuristic drama about a mysterious disease. The project is currently in development at the Cannes Film Festival residency in Paris.



PRODUCER:

MERYEM HAMDY, JIANGO FILMS

Driven by a passion for business, Meryem pursued a finance degree at Al-Akawayn University in Morocco. She began her career in the financial department of VIDEORAMA before transitioning to production, spending five years in advertising and corporate films. Her first film industry experience was with "Goodbye France," directed by Doha Moustaqim. Meryem then worked on notable films such as "Queens," "Hounds" (Cannes Jury Prize 2023), and "Across the Sea" (Cannes Critics' Week 2024). Currently, she is producing "Tarfaya" by Sofia Alaoui and collaborating with her husband on "The Stolen Kiss."

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Jiango Films
Address: Résidence Morjane, Route
Azemour Casablanca
Contact Email: sofajalaoui@icloud.com

CO-PRODUCERS

Kwassa Films (Belgium)

Margaux Lorier
Wrong Films (France)
Phone: +33 6 60 92 17 12
Contact Email: margaux@wrongfilms.com

Estimated Budget (USD): 2,610,250.63
Financing Acquired: 420,200

FINANCERS

Centre Cinématographique marocain
(CCM) \$320,000;

Private: \$50,000

Producers: \$50,000

Terbakar

Genre: Drama, Magical Realism, Fantasy

Country: Indonesia, Singapore

Language: Bahasa Indonesia



LOGLINE

Catalyzed by suicides, snakes, and a local revolution, Girl confronts her fire manipulation abilities as she witnesses the tendency for non-communication and sexual and physical abuse in town just as she does at home, bringing her to an emotional height that forces her to decide how she wants to live the rest of her life.

SYNOPSIS

After her 14-year-old sister's suicide, 16-year-old Girl confronts the emotional permutations in her family—abuse, denial, miscommunication—and witnesses how the whole village indulges in similar evils of the heart, through more overt embodiments; black magic, physical and sexual violence. She learns that her abilities to manipulate fire are a gift, a tool allowing the exploitation of what's already there—the incommunicable pain inside. The heart pain. The fire burning from the chest of everyone, from generations back and, if nothing is done, in generations forward. Girl finds an ally in her grandmother, as they find that the pain they experience shares a similar undertone, and similar perpetrators, and Girl goes on an internal journey to understand the root of her sister's death, and the reason for the lifelong feeling of void that sits in the pit of her belly. Through events in the village—the village head's wife's death, his daughter's unfortunate encounter with a jealous woman's curse turning her into a snake, and the struggle for authority—big actions in consequence of big decisions over big feelings are made, paralleling the pain that Girl's family feels, feeding the urgency to understand the pain.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

The 1998 tragedy. A time when the country was torn apart, begging for a dethroning of the president with screams, murders, rapes, and people with no skin in the game joining the fray, blending in with the motivated masses to hurt people for no other reason than that they can. The things a country, people, a person, would resort to before choosing to sit down and have a conversation instead. The non-communication tendency I see at home: the quick jump into physical and sexual violence and the deep aversion to listening and understanding. We grew up where people would do anything if it meant not having to be vulnerable. A global phenomenon of hurting one another, an ego learned and longstanding.

There is fire in everyone's hearts.

Looking back at my own life, I wish I was a girl who knew better. A girl who didn't indulge in fighting fire with fire, a girl who forgives others and herself, which the protagonist ultimately does.

Filmmakers' Biographies



DIRECTOR: SHELBY KHO

Currently pursuing a Master's in Fine Arts in Fiction Writing at Columbia University, Shelby Kho (she/her) is an Indonesian filmmaker and writer who enjoys personifying feelings and operating intuitively across all of her creative pursuits: She has written and directed short films including "Ocean" which premiered in Singapore International Film Festival's 34th Edition (2023); and "I Took a Nap and I Miss You" at Minikino (2022), establishing interest in culture-stemmed intergenerational trauma and woes of the heart that'll continue to be explored in her upcoming projects, namely her first feature film project "Terbakar" that received the Most Promising Project Award at SGIFF's SEA Film Lab 2023, and is in development at Red Sea International Film Festival, as well as her upcoming autobiographical novel "Disease".



PRODUCER: SI EN TAN

Si En Tan (she/they) is a film and TV producer and founder of Momo Film Co. An alumnus of Berlinale Talents and Rotterdam Lab, Si En produced "Don't Cry, Butterfly" by Dương Diệu Linh which won the Grand Prix and Most Innovative Film Award at the Venice Critics Week 2024; "Dreaming & Dying" by Nelson Yeo which won two prestigious Golden Leopards at the Locarno Film Festival 2023; and "Wet Season" by Anthony Chen, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival 2019, Platform Competition. Their latest co-productions "The Year Of The Everlasting Storm" premiered at the Cannes Film Festival 2021; "Arnold Is A Model Student" by Sorayos Prapapan, premiered at the Locarno Film Festival 2022; and "Andragogy" by Wregas Bhanuteja, premiered in Toronto 2023. They are developing prominent award-winning projects such as "Crocodile Rock" by Kirsten Tan, and "To Leave, To Stay" by Danech San, among others.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Momo Film Co.
Singapore
Website: www.momofilm.co
Address: 167 Geylang Road 02-01
Singapore 389242
Contact Email: hello@momofilm.co

Estimated Budget (USD): 643,275
Financing Acquired: 21,442.50

FINANCERS

Momo Film Co.

The Silent Ones

Genre: Fiction, Drama

Country: France, Morocco

Language: French, Arabic



LOGLINE

Struggling with her six-year-old son's scary behaviors, a mother decides to go dig into her unknown roots in Morocco with him. They follow a road that the kid mysteriously seems to know about.

SYNOPSIS

Sarah, a 35-year-old working woman, is out of resources in front of her son, Loan. The kid is turning into a danger for himself and others, trying to fly by any means, obsessing over drawings, and hurting himself in haunting and terrifying nightmares of a plane crash he keeps repeating every night... When the cartesian Sarah discovers strange connections between what Loan says and what her own mother tries to hide, she decides to go dig into the holes of the broken family lineage, following the voice and drawings of her son. It will lead them on a cultural and spiritual journey, from the streets of Paris to the desert of Morocco, where mother and son will hold on to each other, strengthen their bond, and let go of the ghosts of the past.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

This is a quest for identity and a question about transmission and love. My main character, Sarah, is one of these children of exile that have often lost touch with their ancestor's journeys and life experiences. They observed the silence asked to assimilate properly to new lands, and left something of themselves behind, untold, hidden, on the other side of the sea, torn between their African roots and the post-colonial France where they find themselves having children in. Children who would not speak their native language, nor know their homeland. Using magical realism, "The Silent Ones" explores the consequences of that silence and of a broken link to your roots. In a way, Loan is a manifestation of that silence screaming, at last.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: JAWAHINE ZENTAR

Jawahine Zentar is a Franco-Moroccan director who had been working as a first assistant director/casting director for more than ten years, before writing and directing. Following her short film "On My Father's Grave", which was screened in over 100 international festivals, including Clermont-Ferrand, Tanger, and Palm Springs, and received several awards including the Golden Yusr at the RedSealFF in 2022, she is now writing her first feature film, "The Silent Ones".



PRODUCERS

FABRICE PRÉEL-CLÉACH

Graduated from Ecole Supérieure de Réalisation Audiovisuelle (Paris) in 1993, Fabrice Prél-Cléach founded "Offshore" in 2000, first working as executive producer for foreign shootings in France, and then as delegate producer with his own projects. Since then, he has produced more than 70 short films internationally awarded and 10 features as a delegate producer. The last one, "Winter in Sokcho", by Koya Kamura, with Roschdy Zem, premiered in Toronto in September 2024. Two features are currently in post-production at Offshore, and several are in development at different stages.



EMMANUELLE LATOURRETTE

Emmanuelle Latourrette graduated as an engineer from Mines de Paris in 1993. After several years as a consultant at Deloitte Touche, she began to work in the cinema industry as head of development at Butterfly Productions and then joined Offshore in 2013. She has produced more than 20 short movies as well as several features. Together with Fabrice Prél-Cléach, she produced Jawahine Zentar's first short movie, "On My Father's Grave" and is very happy to follow on working with Jawahine for her first feature. Offshore's choices are guided by human encounters with directors and their desires.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Offshore
Address: 81 boulevard Richard Lenoir,
75011 Paris, France
Phone: +33 1 75 43 65 00
Contact Email: offshore@offshore.fr

Estimated Budget (USD): 1,950,000
Financing Acquired: none

FINANCERS

none

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✉️ info@improntafilms.com

RED SEA SOUK PROJECTS-IN- DEVELOPMENT

Projects:

Do Re Mimi
Farouk
Haven of Hope
Holy Cow (working title)

It's Okay, I'm Only Human
La Pyramide
Mother, Maybe
Robbing Beirut

Tahmina
The Loneliness of the Light Skin One
The Sea Was Once Blue
Watch It Burn

Do Re Mimi

Genre: Drama, Coming of age

Country: Saudi Arabia

Language: Arabic



LOGLINE

In a world of societal pressure, secretive Quran teacher, Ms. Lamia, helps bullied 10-year-old Mariam unleash her voice, only to discover an underlying musical genius. As Mariam's dreams soar, Ms. Lamia confronts haunting promises that could change everything.

SYNOPSIS

Mariam, a 10-year-old girl, overshadowed by her bustling family's small business pursuits and a victim of bullying in her new school in Jeddah, seeks solace in her Quran teacher, the secretive Ms. Lamia (33), whom she catches playing the piano in the school basement. Ms. Lamia takes Mariam under her wing to shield her from the bullies, surprisingly unlocking this young girl's hidden musical talent, and unknowingly pushing her into uncharted territory when this discovery kindles her potential for a prestigious national music competition under the stars of AIUla.

Although Ms. Lamia's militant character softens, her haunting past and vow to never play the piano again threaten to jeopardize their deep connection and the girl's hopes. Ms. Lamia is trapped in her promise due to her mother's tragic death, seeking to shield her blind and widowed father from another cycle of grief as he mourns his musical companion, his wife. Ms. Lamia grapples with the shadows of their past, forcing her into seclusion, hiding once again, only this time behind the piercing thudding of her father's Braille printer. This leaves Mariam at a crossroads; can she convince her teacher to unlock the melody that holds the key to her dream?

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

"Do Re Mimi" is a heartfelt exploration of dreams, connection, and the transformative power of sound. Inspired by my childhood memories of learning through music with my visually impaired stepfather, this film captures the enchanting friendship between ten-year-old Mariam and her traditional teacher, Ms. Lamia.

When Mariam discovers Ms. Lamia playing the piano in the school basement, their worlds collide in a secret that rekindles lost dreams and opens doors to self-discovery. Set against a backdrop of family chaos and personal sacrifices, their story unfolds with humor, warmth, and the exhilarating spirit of exploration.

Through vibrant cinematography and whimsical storytelling, "Do Re Mimi" invites audiences to celebrate the beauty of dreaming big and embracing one's true self. Join us on this inspiring journey that resonates with the evolving landscape of contemporary Saudi Arabia, proving that it's never too late to pursue your passions and ignite the spark of creativity.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: FATIMA ALBANAWI

This renowned Saudi actress, writer, and director is the founder of "Alf Wad Production House" and the author of the book, "The Other Story". She rose to prominence with the film "Barakah Meets Barakah," bringing one of the earliest Saudi tales to the big screen. With a Bachelor's in Counseling Psychology and a Master's in Social and Religious Studies from Harvard University, AlBanawi infuses her projects with psychological depth, clearly visible in the Netflix Original "Basma" that marks her debut feature film for 2024. Selected by Times magazine as part of the "Next Generation Leaders List", she is an active member of Saudi Arabia's Association for Theatre and Performing Arts.



CO-WRITER: GHADEER BINABBAS

An epidemiology graduate who transitioned into storytelling through various creative projects. She translated the films "Junoon" (2021) and "Dandanah" (2021), and wrote and directed the short film "Brush My Hair" (2023). She co-wrote "Urjeha" (2022) and contributed to a Netflix series (2023), the series Sajāt, and Do Re Mimi (2024), which won multiple awards at the Saudi Film Festival, including the Jury Award. Ghadeer also participated in the Red Sea Lodge lab, where her film "In The Beginning, It Is The End" won the MBC Academy Award.



PRODUCER: JAWAHER ALAMRI

Jawaher Alamri is a Saudi film writer and director. She graduated from Effat University in Cinematic Arts. Her Latest film is "The Last Dismissal". She is also one of the directors of the Saudi anthology "Becoming" which was screened at many festivals. She produced "The Girls Who Burned the Night" which won several prizes. She believes in the visual language of cinema as a contribution to self-actualization and recognition for the individual as well for the collective.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Alf Wad for Audiovisual Productions
Address: 7463 Abdulaziz street, Al Faisaliyah District, P.O Box 23442, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
Phone: +966 54 111 4862
Contact Email: info@alfwad.com

Estimated Budget (USD):

2,269,066.50

Financing Acquired: 92,493

FINANCERS

Saudi Film Souq Fund (KSA); Casting Grant from MBC Academy (KSA); Marketing Materials from Arabia Pictures (KSA); Post Grant (sound) from Kinana Films (Sweden).

Farouk

Genre: Documentary

Country: Norway, Iraq

Language: Arabic, English, Norwegian



LOGLINE

A journey through the life of Farouk Al-Kasim, a geologist with a great understanding of the Earth and its resources. His knowledge helped shape Norway's oil success and gives us important lessons about our connection with nature, global politics, and the future of sustainable development.

SYNOPSIS

Farouk Al-Kasim shares his life story in front of a microphone, taking viewers on a journey from the oil flames of Basra to his role as a leading geologist in Norway. Through Al-Kasim's narratives, not only his incredible life journey is revealed, but also a profound understanding of the earth and its resources, as well as the influence of oil on geopolitical landscapes and societies.

The film provides a unique insight into how oil can be a source of knowledge rather than conflict, and how Norway chose the right path in developing its oil industry. Through Al-Kasim's perspective, themes such as environmental conservation, sustainable development, and geopolitical power are explored, challenging viewers to reflect on their own roles in the planet's future.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

I have known Farouk Al-Kasim for many years, as we both share a common background from Iraq, and I have learned much from his perspectives on life and nature as a geologist. My curiosity and concern for climate change and the future of the next generation, including my children, drive this project.

What will happen to us? What does the future look like and how do we end up here? Through years of conversations with Farouk, I see that his vision and understanding as a geologist provide us with a unique access to a shared human understanding of nature and climate change. But my desire is to acquaint myself with the future through Farouk's knowledge of how we can envision a future for the next generations when artificial intelligence makes decisions instead of humans.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR, CO-PRODUCER: HALKAWT MUSTAFA

Halkawt Mustafa is a Norwegian-Kurdish film director, writer, and producer. His second movie, "El Clásico", received a lot of praise worldwide and was chosen as Iraq's entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the Oscars®. The movie won important awards, including at the Tribeca Film Festival, and won the Public Choice Award at Norway's Academy Awards. His documentary "Hiding Saddam Hussein" achieved unprecedented success, becoming the most-watched documentary in the history of Arab box office cinema.

Beyond filmmaking, Halkawt has built a remarkable career as a journalist, reporting from conflict zones such as Syria, Gaza, and Iraq. His deep understanding of the Middle East has enriched both his cinematic and journalistic work.



PRODUCER: JANNE HJELTNES

Janne Hjeltnes is a Norwegian producer with a diverse and extensive background in film and television. She has worked closely with filmmaker Halkawt Mustafa, producing the acclaimed documentary "Hiding Saddam Hussein" (2023), and they are currently finalizing a feature film in post-production. Janne also co-produced "Radiograph of a Family", which won the main competition at the IDFA Awards in 2021.

Her portfolio includes multiple Netflix projects, such as "Midsummer Night"; "A Storm for Christmas"; and the "Royalteen", a young adult film series. She previously headed Storyline Studios' Production and Financing division and co-produced critically acclaimed drama series like "Rådebank" and "Made in Oslo", which won the Golden Nymph and Golden Screen awards. Janne's credits also include notable feature films like "All Foreigners Have Their Curtains Closed" and "Oslo-Copenhagen", and documentaries like "Born2drive". She is also a part of the ACE producers' network.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Hene Films
Address: Råstadveien 43, 3228 Sandefjord, Norway
Phone: +4798834088
Contact Email: halkawtm@gmail.com

Estimated Budget (USD): 792,650
Financing Acquired: 88,000

FINANCERS

Norwegian Film Institute (Norway)
Rudwa Media Network (Iraq)

Haven of Hope

Genre: Drama

Country: Pakistan

Language: Urdu



LOGLINE

Three inmates from a Pakistani shelter home for women dare to venture into the outside world for a day. It transpires that their families would rather conveniently brand them lunatics than to give them their rights.

SYNOPSIS

Panah Gah is a shelter home for women in Karachi, Pakistan, where the mentally disturbed, homeless, disabled and rejected women coexist under one roof. The film follows three women who have found refuge in Panah Gah, and also volunteer there; an orderly in charge of the shelter's morgue, a trainee nurse and a gatekeeper. These three women venture out for a day in order to reconcile with their families. But it soon transpires that their families would rather brand them lunatics than give them their rights. Following these fragile and slightly unstable women as they try to break the boundaries imposed on them in a patriarchal and conservative culture, the safe house thus becomes a Haven of Hope, a refuge from a society that has shunned them yet again.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

I want to portray Pakistani women as resilient fighters and survivors. In this film, the ending may appear to have the protagonist lose their battles; my stories are more about the internal and external struggle than the outcome. It is an uphill daily battle for millions of South Asian women. "Sandstorm" is also from a strong female perspective where the Pakistani teenage girl decides her own fate even if it may cause 'dishonour' to her family. Whilst "Haven of Hope" depicts how the protagonists are undermined by patriarchy and inequality, they are nevertheless strong women that find quirky solutions to their impossible situations. My three main protagonists find their own unique ways to deal with issues such as divorce, access to children, inheritance, and femicide. Ultimately, I hope this film will raise awareness of the plight of women in patriarchal Muslim cultures, while also telling raw yet heart-warming stories.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: SEEMAB GUL

Seemab Gul is a British-Pakistani filmmaker who works as a producer, writer and director. Her narrative short film "Sandstorm" premiered at the 78th Venice Film Festival and at Sundance 2022. It screened at over 100 international film festivals and won 20 awards. It is also BIFA-nominated for Best British Short 2022 and won two Oscar-qualifying awards. Her documentary "Zahida", was broadcast on Al Jazeera TV channel and its trailer has 20+ million views. Seemab is an alumna of Locarno Open Doors, Berlinale Talents and Venice Biennale College Cinema. She also attended La Fabrique Cinema with her feature project "Haven of Hope", due to release in 2025. She is writing her second feature commissioned by Film4. Seemab has a BA in Fine Arts and an MA in Filmmaking from the London Film School. Seemab recently founded Cinelava in Pakistan, a production company dedicated to thought provoking arthouse cinema.



PRODUCER: MARGAUX JUVÉNAL

Margaux Juvénal studied at both Sciences-Po Paris and La fémis. She was a junior producer at Indie Prod from 2017 to 2022, where she worked on Jasmila Zbanic's "Quo Vadis, Aida" (nominated for the Oscar® for Best Foreign Film 2021) and Emad Alebrahim Dehkordi's "A Tale of Shemroon", Etoile d'Or at the Marrakech International Film Festival. She then co-founded "Take Shelter" with Simon Bleuzé and Alexis Genauzeau in 2020, where she produced Ramata-Toulaye Sy's "Banel & Adama", in co-production with La Chauve-Souris, selected in Official Competition at the Cannes Film Festival 2023. She is now producing several feature films, in France and abroad.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Cinelava
Address: B-20, Navy Housing Scheme, Zamzama, Clifton, Karachi 75600, Pakistan
Phone: +44 7951697222
Contact Email: seemabgulfilms@hotmail.com

CO-PRODUCER

Margaux Juvénal
Company Name: Take Shelter
Country: France

Estimated Budget (USD): 901,592
Financing Acquired: 650,000

FINANCERS

Les cinémas du monde (CNC) (France), Visionssudest (Switzerland), NFF+HBF (Netherlands), MOIN Film Fund (Germany), Eurimages (France), Arte/Cofinova Sofica (France).

Holy Cow (working title)

Genre: Comedy, Satire

Country: Morocco

Language: Arabic, Indian, Portuguese



LOGLINE

An unemployed truck driver's delivery mishap leads to diplomatic chaos, public uproar, and a revenge plot as justice proves elusive.

SYNOPSIS

After years of being unemployed, Madani, 28, has finally got his first job as a truck driver transporting sheep and cows for the Rabat slaughterhouses. His first mission is to transport Brazilian bovines who have just arrived at the Tangiers port to Rabat. But when he arrives at the entrance of the slaughterhouse, two cows manage to escape and rush headlong into the center of Rabat, delaying the passage of the important cortege and invading the parliament houses. The authorities try every solution to catch the cows, while Madani hides in fear. When the bovines are finally caught and Madani arrested, a diplomatic crisis has been caused with India and Brazil and the Moroccan population is in uproar against the government. Madani pays the price and is charged with several crimes, despite revealing he had been ordered to free the cows. In prison, he plans his revenge.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

It is important for me to deal with serious issues using humor. I think I can reach people better and bond with the audience. Furthermore, in Morocco, we are used to laughing at our own misfortunes. I believe this story to be universal as it can happen everywhere: when superiors make a mistake, it is always the subordinates who pay for it. This story, based on real facts that happened at the beginning of 2023 in Rabat, Morocco, evokes ordinary problems faced by any Moroccan citizen who attempts to survive. I like to tell stories that move me genuinely. To me, making films is a form of liberation, of release but also a way of finding shelter (even in a cold room full of meat). I identify with the character of Madani.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER: ASMAE EL MOUDIR

Asmae El Moudir is a Moroccan film director and screenwriter. She went on to study at La Femis in Paris. Asmae has directed several award winning short films. "The mother of All Lies" is her first theatrical documentary feature. It premiered at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival where it won the Directing Prize in the Un Certain Regard section as well as the Golden Eye for Best Documentary. "The Mother of All Lies" was also shortlisted in the International Features section of the Oscars® and screened at TIFF and Sundance. Asmae was nominated for the PGA Award and the Film Independent Spirit Award for Best Documentary. Most recently, she won the IDA Award for Best Director. In 2023, she was named a member of the Un Certain Regard jury at Cannes, headed by Xavier Dolan.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Insightfilms
Address: 15, Avenue AL ABTAL, N 4, Agdal, RABAT
Phone: +212661579359
Contact Email: insightfilms.mo@gmail.com

Estimated Budget (USD): 1,430,000
Financing Acquired: Pending

FINANCERS

Moroccan Cinematographic Center (Morocco).

It's Okay, I'm Only Human

Genre: Documentary

Country: Lebanon, France

Language: Arabic



LOGLINE

Documenting the preparation of a theatrical production featuring intellectually and physically disabled individuals, the film unfolds within a community center, chronicling their journey of self-acceptance and the universal quest for genuine connections.

SYNOPSIS

"It's Okay, I'm Only Human" follows a troupe of intellectually and physically disabled actors as they prepare for a theater production. The play mirrors the insecurities that often prevent us from truly living, offering a lens through which we explore the actors' desires for meaningful relationships, fulfilling careers, and a sense of belonging that transcends societal barriers.

In Lebanon, where these actors face tremendous challenges due to a lack of societal acceptance and infrastructure, their journey becomes a powerful reflection of resilience. Being in their presence reveals a purity and goodness that is often missing in the world. Their expression of love and lack of judgment force us to confront our own guardedness, leaving no room for pretense. It's a transformative experience, one that compels us to let go of our defenses and face ourselves honestly – to take off the mask.

Through heartwarming interactions, humor, and moments of vulnerability, the documentary captures the deep connections forged within this community. Ultimately, the film encourages us to challenge our biases and reconsider the limitations we impose on those with disabilities, celebrating the human spirit and advocating for inclusivity, purpose, and love for all.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

"It's Okay, I'm Only Human" seeks to challenge societal misconceptions about individuals with intellectual and physical disabilities, offering them the space to be seen and heard. These actors, often marginalized, demonstrate a clarity and presence that many of us struggle to access. Through their performances, they remind us of the beauty of living authentically, free from self-consciousness.

Our approach is rooted in observation and respect. By documenting their process and the creation of their theater piece, we aim to capture their strength, humor, and resilience, while avoiding clichés. Our goal is to immerse the audience into their world, revealing the profound wisdom they offer about life, love, and self-acceptance. Ultimately, this film is a celebration of their ability to teach us how to truly be present, embracing each moment with sincerity and joy.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITERS-DIRECTORS:

KARIM GHORAYEB

Karim Ghorayeb, a Lebanese cinematographer and director born in 1987. He has worked on feature films, series, documentaries, fashion films, commercials, and music videos. Based in Beirut, he seeks out inspiring stories to tell. His notable works include "The Blue Inmates" (2021), filmed inside Lebanon's Roumieh prison, and "Death of a Virgin", and "The Sin of Not Living" (2021), selected for the Berlinale's Panorama section. He also shot "Moss Agate", which was featured at the Rotterdam Film Festival. In 2023, his short film "Les Chenilles" won the Golden Bear at the Berlinale.



GEORGE PETER BARBARI

George Peter Barbari, born to an Argentinian mother and a Lebanese father, made his directorial debut with "Death of a Virgin", and "The Sin of Not Living". The film premiered at the Berlin Film Festival's Panorama section and went to play at many prestigious festivals like Zürich, Trois Continent, and Cork. It won multiple awards, including the Special Jury Prize and FIPRESCI Award at the Istanbul Film Festival; the Audience Award at New Horizon in Poland; and Best First Feature at the Leiden Film Festival.



PRODUCER: CHRISTELLE YOUNES

Christelle Younes began her career producing commercials for 10 years as a freelancer before transitioning to films, music videos, and series with "Bee On Set Productions". She served as production supervisor on the first Netflix Original in the MENA region. In 2021, she produced her first feature film, which premiered at the Berlinale's Panorama section, marking the start of her independent producing career. Between 2021 and 2024, she earned a scholarship for entrepreneurial producers, pitched at eight international co-forums, won the Rotterdam Producers Lab, and attended the POP-UP Film Residency in Greece. In 2024, Christelle founded her own company, "Bittersweet Pictures", and began financing two feature films and a feature documentary.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Bittersweet Pictures
Address: Lebanon, Beirut
Phone: 009613978008
Contact Email: contact@btrswtpictures.com

CO-PRODUCER

Marine Vaillant
Special Touch Studios (France)

Estimated Budget (USD): 451,259
Financing Acquired: 10,000

FINANCERS

Bittersweet Pictures (Lebanon)

La Pyramide

Genre:
Supernatural, Horror,
Fantasy, Thriller

Country:
USA, Brazil, Senegal,
UK, Nigeria

Language:
English, French, Portuguese,
Wolof



LOGLINE

Stories from three enchanted cities exploring characters in search of the divine, linked through space, time and culture.

SYNOPSIS

A nameless middle-aged Afro-Brazilian Woman is haunted by the fractured relationship with her late mother, and a haunting ubiquitous presence from her past. A nameless Tennessee Man moves to a strange, small neighborhood in New Orleans with his family for a lucrative factory job, to be visited by a strange, threatening entity known all over town as "The Keeper". In Senegal, during intense political riots, a Man encounters a mystical being known as "The Herald", who gifts him a talisman after which he is mysteriously transported to a desert where he encounters evil Jinns seeking to destroy him.

Following the innovative "Mami Wata" (2023) – which won the Special Jury Award for Cinematography at Sundance, writer-director C.J. "Fiery" Obasi and DP, Lilis Soares continue to expand their vision and experimentation on perspective and gaze, through diverse African and Diasporic characterizations, using pre-existing traditional and ancient belief systems to offer and channel new possibilities of African cinema. "La Pyramide" is an innovative feature film with three chapters that weave and fold into themselves, with characters and ideas overlapping and intermixing into one singular story.

It's a celebration!

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

La Pyramide is inspired by my feature film, "Mami Wata", which took seven years of my life to make. It builds upon the foundations laid – a new vision of dark bodies on screen. A perspective of us by us that we rarely see, if ever depicted in African cinema or by any cinema. The goal here is to create a new way of seeing and being.

I feel that we are all looking for something – even those of us "who do not believe". I think there is a seeking we inadvertently become a part of, for as long as we walk this Earth. For me, my walk is cinema – and as I walk, I will discover more and present my discoveries on screen. In "La Pyramide", I will present what I have found, and I will celebrate what I have seen; a new way. It's a celebration!

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: C.J. 'Fiery' Obasi

C.J. 'Fiery' Obasi was born and raised in the South-Eastern Nigerian town of Owerri, where he developed a knack for drawing comics of his favorite books and films. His films "Ojuju" (2014) and "O-Town" (2015) were screened at many festivals, including Gothenburg and Fantasia to international acclaim. His short film, "Hello, Rain" (2018) premiered at Oberhausen and over 40 festivals, winning the Jury Prize at Fantasia, and a BFI Short Film Award nomination. "Juju Stories" (2021)—an anthology film directed by the Surreal16 Collective (C.J. Obasi, Abba T. Makama, Michael Omonua)—won the Boccalino D'oro Award for Best Film at Locarno. His latest feature "Mami Wata" (2023), premiered at Sundance Film Festival 2023, where it won a Special Jury Award for Cinematography. "Mami Wata" was selected as Nigeria's official entry for the 2024 Academy Awards and nominated for Best International Film at the 2024 Independent Spirit Awards, as well as Outstanding International Motion Picture at the 2024 NAACP Image Awards.



PRODUCERS

ABBAS NOKHASTEH

Abbas Nokhasteh is a creative producer nurturing long-term relationships with international filmmakers and exploring subjects on the periphery. He is the founder/ director of the arts organization "Openvizor", based in London, UK. Abbas has produced award-winning documentary and fiction features and shorts that have premiered at Sundance, Rotterdam IFFR, Locarno, Cannes Directors' Fortnight and Cannes Semaine de la Critique, including Alejandro Jodorowsky's latest "Endless Poetry", "Chuck Norris vs. Communism" and "Ballad of Exiles".



ANDRÉS BORDA GONZÁLEZ

Andrés Borda González is a screenwriter and producer from Colombia, with ample experience both in the commercial world of television and the independent film community. He is the showrunner of Netflix' series "My Encounter with Evil" (2022). He has written and directed episodes of series such as "El man es Germán" (one of Latin America's most popular comedy TV shows). He has developed TV series for production companies such as Miracol, Dynamo, and Vice Studios, among others.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Bardo Openvizor
Abbas Nokhasteh and Andrés Borda González
Address: 18 Soho Square, London W1D 3QL, United Kingdom
Phone: Abbas Nokhasteh +44 7733 115 872 / Andres Borda +57 317 367 5814
Contact Emails: abbas@openvizor.com, andriosh@gmail.com

CO-PRODUCER

Oge Obasi
Fiery Film (Nigeria)

CO-PRODUCER

Julia Alves
Quarta-Feira Filmes (Brazil)

Estimated Budget (USD): 4,538,004
Financing Acquired: 1,000,000

FINANCERS

ANCINE international
co-production fund (Brazil)

Mother, Maybe

Genre: Comedy, Horror

Country: Philippines, Singapore, Tiwan, R.O.C

Language: Filipino, English, Japanese



LOGLINE

A son is reunited with his mother in Tokyo as he joins a high-stakes Japanese game show, but his joy turns to horror as he discovers that at night, his mother becomes a monster.

SYNOPSIS

Twenty-five-year-old Marco, a resilient Filipino, competes on the Japanese game show "Dash for Cash," aiming for the 5-million-yen prize. However, his true goal in Tokyo is far deeper: to find his mother, Minda, who vanished when he was five. Raised believing she left to work as a domestic helper, her sudden disappearance haunted Marco for 20 years.

Following a tip, Marco arrives in Tokyo, balancing grueling game show challenges with his search. Against all odds, he finds Minda, but their reunion is far from the joyful moment he imagined. He discovers that his mother has transformed into a manananggal, a monstrous creature from Filipino folklore.

Torn between love and horror, Marco tries to save her, but Minda, consumed by guilt and despair, pushes him away, believing her curse is beyond redemption. As Marco grapples with this harrowing reality, he is haunted by the possibility that his journey to Tokyo might be a final farewell rather than a reunion.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

The idea of a nation as an imagined community raises the question: can the family also be considered imagined? My family's story departs from the traditional Filipino structure. My late father, a popular TV host, and my mother, who left when I was two, shaped an unconventional narrative. My father discarded all her photos except one from my second birthday. Talking about her was forbidden, and I grew up watching TV, fixating on a Filipino actress I convinced myself was my mother. Years later, meeting my real mother shattered that illusion.

This personal experience inspired "Mother, Maybe", which explores the plight of two million Filipino mothers working abroad as domestic helpers. They, like my mother, have their identities reshaped by foreign lands. Set against Japan's absurd game shows, the film blends fantastical elements with grounded performances, exploring the absurdity of family, identity, and the distance that transforms us.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: SONNY CALVENTO

Sonny Calvento is a Filipino director, producer, and writer based in Manila. He began his career at 19 as a drama writer for the largest broadcasting network in the Philippines. His first short film, "Excuse Me, Miss, Miss, Miss" (2019), was the first Filipino short to screen at the Sundance Film Festival and premiered at Locarno, Palm Springs ShortFest, and Shanghai, among others. The film won the Audience Award at Locarno Shorts Week 2023. His second short, "Primetime Mother" (2023), premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival, AFI Fest, and the Red Sea International Film Festival. Sonny's work explores the farcical aspects of life in the Philippines.



WRITER, PRODUCER: ARDEN ROD CONDEZ

Arden Rod Condez is a Filipino filmmaker who began his career as a drama writer for television. He then directed his debut film, "John Denver Trending," which was featured in international film festivals, including the New Currents Section of the Busan International Film Festival. He wrote "Excuse Me, Miss, Miss, Miss," the first-ever Filipino short film at Sundance. He later produced films such as "The Gospel of the Beast," "Primetime Mother," "Love Child," and "Tumandok."



PRODUCER: SHERON DAYOC

Sheron Dayoc is a Filipino producer known for creating impactful films. He produced "Excuse Me, Miss, Miss, Miss", "Primetime Mother", and "John Denver Trending", all recognized at international film festivals. His other directing and producing credits include "Halaw/Ways of the Sea", "The Crescent Rising", and "Women of the Weeping River". His latest project, "The Gospel of the Beast", competed at the Tokyo International Film Festival.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Southern Lantern Studios
Address: Lumiere Residences, Shaw Blvd., Pasig City, Metro Manila, 1600 Philippines
Phone:+639171294634
Contact Email: hello@southernlantern.com

CO-PRODUCER

Weijie Lai
E&W Films (Singapore)

CO-PRODUCER

Stefano Centini
Volos Films Ltd. (Taiwan)

Estimated Budget (USD): 1,566,625.70
Financing Acquired: 524,444.86

FINANCERS

Southern Lantern Studios (Philippines); E&W Films (Singapore); Volos Films (Taiwan); Taiwan Creative Content Agency (Taiwan) - Public Grant; Film Development Council of the Philippines (Philippines) - Public Grant; Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée (France) - Public Grant.

Robbing Beirut

Genre:
Drama

Country:
Lebanon, France

Language:
Arabic



LOGLINE

In Beirut, Joyce, a 30-year-old event planner, is struggling to gather enough money to save her younger sister who is battling leukemia. In a desperate act, she plans to rob her own bank to reclaim her savings frozen by the banking system since the country's economic collapse. But the heist takes an unexpected turn.

SYNOPSIS

In a collapsing Lebanon where depositors can no longer access their funds in the bank, Joyce, a 30-year-old event planner, struggles to pay for her younger sister Reem's leukemia treatment. With Reem's recent acceptance to study abroad and an urgent need for surgery, Joyce is running out of time. Her bank refuses to return her \$30,000 savings, leaving her in a dire situation with a depressed mother, a bankrupt boyfriend, and mounting bills.

Desperate, Joyce decides to take justice into her own hands and rob her bank. She teams up with a group of activists and storms the bank, a gun in hand, pouring gasoline on the floor, demanding her money back. However, the operation quickly spirals out of control as the bank manager is uncooperative and the vault doesn't contain enough cash. The situation worsens with frightened hostages, an angry crowd outside, and overwhelmed security forces. Determined to save her sister, Joyce has to make unforeseen and difficult decisions, which will eventually prove liberating.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

This film is inspired by the different bank robberies in Lebanon following the economic collapse in 2019. Set in Beirut, it is a character-driven drama with a dark comedy twist. The story unfolds in three parts: Joyce's race against time to save her sister, the heist inside the bank, and the escape to the mountains. I want this film to be close to the characters, their inner conflicts, and their contradictions. Everyone is trying to deal with a "normality" that is not normal. I imagine an intimate "mise en scène" using close-up shots, filmed in a naturalistic style, with a mix of amateur and professional actors. The film will feature biting humor and absurd situations, reflecting the Lebanese ability to use irony to cope with tragedy. In this film, I wish to highlight the challenge of seeking justice in a corrupt and lawless state like Lebanon, and illustrate how a mafia-like system can turn honest individuals into outlaws, as they are driven to adopt the same unethical methods as those in power.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: KATIA JARJOURA

A Lebanese-Canadian filmmaker, Katia Jarjoura has directed several documentaries in the Middle East, including "Liban, de fracture en fracture," "Goodbye Mubarak," "The Road to Kerbala," and "Caught in Between," for the French-German channel ARTE. She has also directed two short fiction films: "In Their Blood," which won the France 2 award at the Brest Film Festival, and "Only Silence," which was broadcast on France 3. Her films primarily explore themes of war and conflict, focusing on their impact on individuals and the ways they navigate these challenges. Katia also serves as an educator in various training facilities, works as a script consultant, and is a reader for the Doha Film Institute. She has led multiple filmmaking workshops in the Arab world, including in Iraq, Libya, Egypt and Algeria, aimed at nurturing emerging talents. More recently, she directed "Escape," a feature-length documentary about Syrian artists in exile, which was selected for competition at FIPADOC 2022. Currently based in Paris, Katia is developing her first feature film, "Robbing Beirut."



PRODUCER: MICHEL ZANA

After studying cinema at ESEC film school (Paris), Michel Zana worked in Los Angeles, from 1988 to 1996, as a casting director and production manager. Back to France in 1996, he became a line producer for 7 years, on TV creative documentaries (Artline Films/SZ Productions). In 2003, he joined Sophie Dulac in "Dulac Productions" and co-founded "Dulac Distribution" the same year. As head of Dulac Productions and Dulac Distribution, Michel Zana co-produced more than 20 feature films such as "Heartbeat Detector" by Nicolas Klotz; "The Band's Visit" by Eran Kolirin; and "Hannah Arendt" by Margarethe Von Trotta; and distributed more than 160 feature films in the past 20 years. In 2017, he founded "Blue Train Films" to produce/co-produce politically-engaged projects. The company's first film is "Only Silence", a short film by Lebanese director Katia Jarjoura, on a Syrian refugee in France (CNC, France 3, Région Normandie) and, more recently, Hind Meddeb's documentary film, "Sudan, Remember Us" (CNC, French-Tunisian Co-Production Fund (CNC-CNCF), Doha Film Institute, AFAC, Ile de France Region, Fonds Image Francophone OIF, Mad Solutions). The film premiered at Giornate Degli Autori (Mostra 2024) and Toronto Tiff Docs 2024.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Blue Train Films
Address: 47 avenue Daumesnil,
94160, Saint Mandé, France
Phone: +33 6 10 80 18 48
Contact Email: mzana@me.com

Estimated Budget (USD): 1,387,300
Financing Acquired: N/A

FINANCERS

N/A

Tahmina

Genre:
Drama, Horror, Fantasy

Country:
The Netherlands, Afghanistan,
Canada, Germany

Language:
Farsi



LOGLINE

A corpse must be whole for the soil to accept it, believes Tahmina, a goddess of the Hindu Kush Mountains, who scours the explosion sites for human organs. She reassembles the blown-up bodies to allow their souls to pass onto the afterworld. But things find a way to go wrong...

SYNOPSIS

Tahmina (35) works for the municipality of Kabul, cleaning up the aftermath of suicide attack in high schools, maternity hospitals or drone strikes. Unbeknownst to her colleagues, she is a Persian goddess originating in the Hindu Kush Mountains of Afghanistan. She has a special knack for locating the body parts blown away by the shock waves. Her partner, Abas (45) is a bus driver. The two visit cemeteries at night, placing the found body parts into the appropriate fresh graves. Tahmina believes that the soil refuses to accept incomplete corpses, so the dead roam the world of the living until their bodies are whole again. While the soul of such dead wander, Tahmina also utilizes found organs in her secret laboratory to resurrect her son Afshin (17) who died in a school bombing. Tahmina succeeds in getting her son's heart finally beating again, but inside a most bizarre-looking monster.

The news spreads and women who have lost children seek Tahmina's help, and it turns her basement into a monster-producing factory. Meanwhile, Afshin can't bear his appearance. This leads to a series of rampages resulting in killing his own creator, his mother, Tahmina. The film ends with the dead, the monsters, and those who helped create them walk into a dusty storm.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

Afghanistan is a graveyard of wars, both ancient and new. The hills of West Kabul, where Hazaras live, have become mass graves. Walking there, I could almost hear the whispers of the dead, leaving me with questions about the fate of the victims and the pain of those who survived. In my film, Tahmina embarks on a journey to resurrect her son, killed in a school bombing, only to create a monster. This mirrors Frankenstein: who is the true monster—the creator or the creation? With ongoing wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Ukraine, and the devastation of COVID-19, our greed and negligence emerge as the real monsters. The film, using horror techniques and inspired by Francis Bacon's grotesque imagery, is told from a mother's perspective. Influenced by the Shahnamah, Louise Bourgeois, and Käthe Kollwitz, it portrays universal themes of loss and sorrow. Originally meant to be shot in Kabul, its story can resonate anywhere in the world.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: ABOOZAR AMINI

Aboozar Amini (1985, Bamiyan, Afghanistan) moved to the Netherlands at a young age, studying contemporary arts at the Rietveld Art Academy and filmmaking at the London Film School. He works across video art, documentaries, and fiction. His graduate film "Angelus Novus" (2015), inspired by Paul Klee, premiered at IFFR and won international awards. Aboozar founded "Kinokabul", a production company focused on amplifying voices from his generation. Kinokabul co-produced his debut feature documentary "Kabul, City in the Wind", which opened IDFA 2018 and won the Special Jury Prize and Best Film Award at CPH-DOX 2019. He is currently working on his first feature fiction film "Tahmina" and his second feature documentary, "Kabul, Year Zero".



PRODUCER: JIA ZHAO

Jia Zhao is a Chinese-Dutch film producer based in Amsterdam. She founded "Muyi Film" and cofounded "Silk Road Film Salon" in 2012 with the Afghan-Dutch director Aboozar Amini. In 2023, "An Asian Ghost Story" by Bo Wang (executive producer) was the winner at the New:Vision competition of CPH-DOX, followed by multiple awards worldwide. In 2021, "A Marble Travelogue" by Sean Wang was selected for IDFA Frontlight, and "I'm So Sorry" by Zhao Liang for the Cannes Film Festival. From 2015 to 2019 her works "Mr. Hu and The Temple", "Fallen Flowers Thick Leaves", "Lady of the Harbour", "Kabul, City in the Wind", "Smog Town" have been shortlisted for IDFA Competition section for five times in a row, with "Kabul, City in the Wind" being the opening film for IDFA 2018.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Silk Road Film Salon by
Address: President Brandstraat 13,
1091 XD Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Phone: +31653488758
Contact Email: info@silkroadfilmsalon.com

CO-PRODUCER

Andreas Mendritzki,
Aonan Yang (Canada)

Estimated Budget (USD): 1,952,728.60
Financing Acquired: 1,680,000

FINANCERS

The Netherlands Film Fund
(Netherlands); Telefilm (Canada);
Sodec (Canada); ZDF (Germany);
Hubert Bals Fund Development (EU);
New Dawn Fund (EU)

The Loneliness of the Light Skin One

Genre:
Drama

Country:
Democratic Republic of Congo, Belgium,
France, The Netherlands and South Africa

Language:
English



LOGLINE

Billie is considered one of the future great South African sprinters. As the sole financial support for her family, her career is interrupted after being diagnosed with hyperandrogenism. Prohibited from racing, she undergoes hormonal treatment that profoundly disrupts her life.

SYNOPSIS

"The Loneliness of the Light Skin One" follows Billie, a 16-year-old rising sprinter in South Africa, whose athletic future is derailed when she is diagnosed with hyperandrogenism, a condition that produces high levels of testosterone. This diagnosis forces her out of competition, leaving her family, for whom she is the primary financial support, in a vulnerable position. Amah, her coach and manager, pushes Billie to undergo medical treatment to lower her testosterone levels so she can compete again. However, the treatment causes significant side effects, affecting her body and self-image. As she struggles with these changes, Billie also faces alienation from her peers and increasing pressure from her father. The film follows her journey as she navigates her physical transformation, family expectations, and her desire to return to the track. Ultimately, Billie must decide between conforming to the demands placed on her or forging her own path.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

This film explores complex themes such as generational trauma and societal pressures on young women's bodies. At its heart is the story of a young girl, half-European and half-African, grappling with expectations in both her family life and athletic career. Through the lens of athletics, the film delves into identity, gender, and racial dynamics, touching on real-life struggles like those of Imane Khelif (Algerian Gold medal winning boxer). The intense control over the protagonist mirrors a broader societal obsession with conforming bodies to specific norms. The narrative raises questions about dominance, societal expectations, and the transmission of unresolved trauma across generations. By focusing on sports as a symbol of both physical and emotional endurance, the film portrays resilience while critiquing the invisible forces that shape our understanding of identity, gender, and race.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: BALOJI

Baloji is a protean artist, filmmaker and musician born in Lubumbashi (Democratic Republic of Congo) and based in Belgium. His feature film debut, "Augure" (Omen), premiered at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival in the Un Certain Regard section, earning him the New Voice Award. Prior to his success in filmmaking, Baloji made a name for himself as a renowned musician, blending Congolese rhythms with European influences in his music. He remains an active singer, continuously releasing new material that reflects his rich cultural heritage. His music and films both explore profound themes such as identity, belonging, and the tensions between tradition and modernity.

Baloji's artistic journey, rooted in his dual cultural identity, has made him a dynamic and compelling voice in the creative world. With a distinct visual and narrative style, he moves fluidly between music and film, addressing complex societal issues while pushing artistic boundaries.



WRITER: THOMAS VAN ZUYLEN

After directing several documentaries for television, his career path led him to co-write "The White Knights", "After Love", "Keep Going", and "A Silence" with filmmaker Joachim Lafosse. At the same time, he co-wrote or collaborated with several directors on their first or second feature films, such as "Omen" by Baloji. This expertise has led him to do a number of consultancies and script doctorings, as well as leading writing workshops as a script expert. Thanks to these numerous encounters, he has been able to weave a network throughout the French-speaking world.



PRODUCER: EMMANUEL LUPIA

Emmanuel Lupia is an internationally-known Congolese producer for the film "Maki'la" by Machérie Ekwa (Berlinale 2018). Eclectic, he contributes to the emergence of new talents in the Congolese film industry. Among his most recent productions is Baloji's "Augure" (as co-producer); New Voice Award at the Cannes Film Festival in 2023. He produces several series for TV.

Tosala Films is a film and audiovisual production company based in Kinshasa. Its objective is to unearth innovative projects and talents in order to promote daring cinema in Africa. Its catalog includes feature and short films, TV series and web series.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Wrong Men
Address: Rue Lens 28, 1050 Ixelles
Belgium
Phone: +32477400028
Contact Email: info@wrongmen.be

CO-PRODUCER

Srab Films
Country: France

CO-PRODUCER

Tosala Films
Country: DRC

Big World Cinema
Country: South Africa

New Amsterdam Films Company
Country: Netherlands

Estimated Budget (USD): 6,050,000
Financing Acquired: 1,235,000

FINANCERS

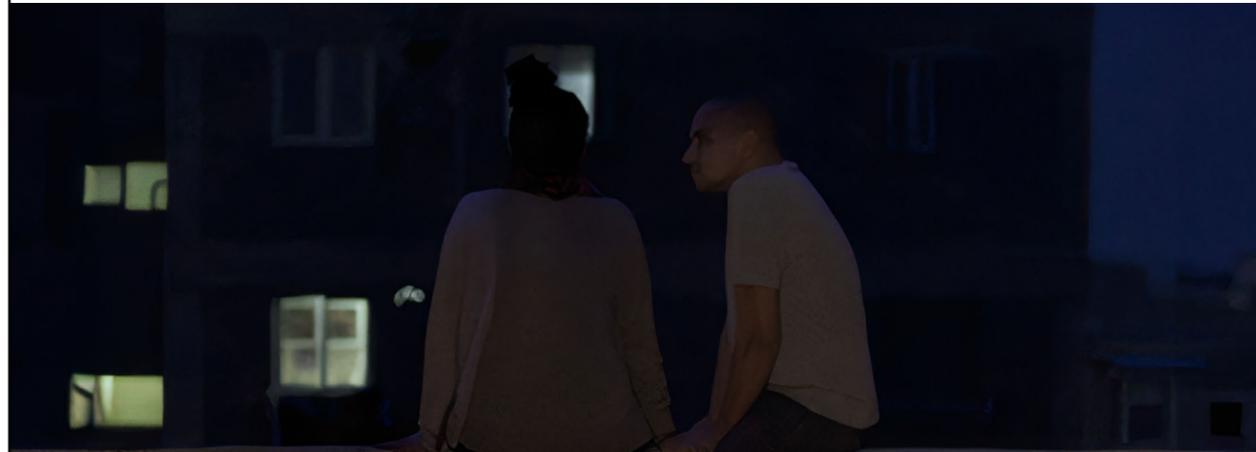
Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel
de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles
(Belgium), BNP Paribas Fortis Film
Finance (Belgium), Creative Media Europe

The Sea Was Once Blue

Genre:
Drama

Country:
Egypt, France

Language:
Arabic



LOGLINE

In the shadow of the Egyptian revolution, Reem is celebrating her last night with her lover Ossama, drifting through Alexandria's deserted streets, caught between dreams and waking life.

SYNOPSIS

Alexandria. Years after the feverish days of the failed revolution that bounded their love, Reem (34) announces to her partner Osama (35) that she cannot stand to live anymore. By dawn, she will be gone. Osama, devastated, has no choice but to follow her in one last night of roaming the empty streets of Alexandria. Together, they reminisce about their relationship, their life in this city, what the revolution was like. But in the midst of their nostalgic wanderings, an unexpected and violent encounter jolts them back to reality, pushing her to question her plan, the nature of her relationship with Osama, and the ties that still bind them to this place—and to each other. The night won't end as initially planned.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

After the failure of our Revolution in 2011, I witnessed comrades' souls being eaten away and their faith crumbling. We lived in tight-knit groups for the years to follow, and as time went on, these groups shrank and spread apart.

The story is not only a pressing one for me to tell because of the trauma of the defeat of the revolution. But also because of my romanticization of suicide at a certain time, the antidepressants, the film "The Fire Within", René Crevel's writings, and ultimately Islam Ayyad, my friend, who committed suicide in 2014. He was the first person I personally knew to do it. When I received the news, it hit me that suicide could be achieved in real life, not just in poems. That's when I began to think about this film. A film about how, without freedom, a person could lose their ability to even love.

Filmmakers' Biographies



DIRECTOR: MOHAMAD EL HADIDI

Mohamad El-Hadidi (born 11/09/1986, Alexandria) is a film director, cinematographer, and photographer. "Alban Wady Eineel", his first short film, was released in 2013. During the same year, he co-directed, co-produced, and co-shot the collaborative feature "The Mice Room" with Rufy's Films' other 5 members/filmmakers. As a photographer, he received prizes such as the European Union Prize in 2011, and Egypt Photo Marathon Grand Prize in 2012. He was also shortlisted for the Google Photography Prize in 2012. He is an alumnus of the Berlinale Talents 2018. He is also the co-founder of "Rufy's Films", an independent film collective and production house based in Alexandria, Egypt, created in 2010.



CO-WRITER: MOHAMED ELMASRI

Mohamed Elmasry is an Egyptian writer. Over the years, he collaborated in the writing of numerous short films and TV series, such as "Abu Omar Al Masry" (2018). His latest TV series, "Echoes of the Past", produced by Netflix, is set to be released soon.



PRODUCER: CHARLES MERESSE

Charles Meresse worked for "White Light Films" and "Sofica Cinéma" in 2014, before joining "Les Films du Poisson". He then turned to line production for 2 years before starting the "Atelier Ludwigsburg-Paris" at La Fémis. Since 2020, the company has been focused on international co-productions, and notably produced as a delegate the feature "In the Land of Brothers" by Alireza Ghazemi and Raha Amirflazi, awarded the Best Directing Award of the World Cinema Dramatic Competition at Sundance 2024.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Furyo Films
Address: 17, rue de Limare 45 000
Orléans France
Phone: +33 6 70 26 47 14
Contact Email: contact@furyofilms.com

CO-PRODUCER

Mark Lotfy
Fig Leaf Studios (Egypt)

Estimated Budget (USD): 876,000
Financing Acquired: NA

FINANCERS

N/A

Watch It Burn

Genre: Drama, Suspense, Thriller

Country: Indonesia

Language: Indonesian



LOGLINE

In a remote Indonesian mining town, Alma (35), a devoted wife, is trying to raise her son following the arrest of her husband. Disappointed by the arrest, however, one night, her son sets a mining excavator on fire, kicking off a violent chain of events.

SYNOPSIS

Alma and her family live in Kolawe, a remote Indonesian mining town where nickel is extracted for export to China. The town's boom attracts many Chinese workers, leading to tension. Alma is a devoted housewife focused on her teenage son, Akbar, and her husband, Rafa, who has just been released from prison after seven years. They try to adapt to life together while struggling with their clove farm amid water shortages.

Trouble erupts when Rafa injures two Chinese miners in a fight, resulting in his re-arrest. Akbar, devastated by losing his father again, secretly sets a mining excavator on fire, escalating tensions in the village. Alma desperately negotiates with corrupt police for Rafa's release, who demand a hefty bribe.

To raise the money, Alma takes a job smuggling three illegal Chinese workers for the mining company that imprisoned Rafa. During the journey, she discovers Akbar's involvement in the fire, leading to anger toward both men. While Rafa is released, Akbar is arrested. The mining company offers to forgive Akbar only if Alma sells her clove farm. Realizing her true battle lies in confronting systemic evil, Alma resolves to grab the evil by its neck and watch it burn.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

"Watch It Burn" is a film that explores the impact of environmental destruction on both nature and its people. Inspired by the nickel mining situation on my home island, where the demand for nickel—essential for green technologies—has led to the loss of community and natural resources. The narrative follows a family striving for simplicity amidst the chaos of mining activities, revealing the irony of their sacrifices supporting environmentalism elsewhere.

Fire serves as a central visual and thematic element, symbolizing the struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed. I'd like to question the ethics of "green policies" and whose expense they come at. Set in a dusty village with mining trucks and houses on stilts, the cinematography focuses on intimate moments of self-reflection among characters, while the sound design utilizes fire's auditory elements to heighten suspense, creating a commentary on sacrifice and resilience.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: MAKBUL MUBARAK

Makbul Mubarak (born 1990) is an Indonesian film director and screenwriter. Before embarking on filmmaking, he was a film critic and a co-founder of the Indonesian film collective, "CinemaPoetica". He made five short films before debuting in feature fiction with "Autobiography" (produced by the Jakarta-based company KawanKawan Media), which premiered at Venice Film Festival (Orizzonti Competition) in 2022 where it received the FIPRESCI Jury Prize. The film went on to be screened in numerous festivals including Toronto, Busan, Stockholm, Marrakech, BFI London, New Directors/New Films and many others, receiving 24 awards worldwide. He is currently developing his second feature film "Watch It Burn".



PRODUCER: YULIA EVINA BHARA

Yulia Evina Bhara is CEO and Producer of "KawanKawan Media", a production company based in Jakarta, Indonesia. She produced "Solo, Solitude" (2016) and "The Science of Fictions" (2019) by Yosep Anggi Noen; and "You and I" (2020) by Fanny Chotimah; "Whether The Weather Is Fine" (2021) by Carlo Francisco Manatad; "Stone Turtle" by Woo Ming Jin (2022), "Autobiography" by Makbul Mubarak; "Tiger Stripes" by Amanda Nell Eu, "Dreaming & Dying" (2023) by Nelson Yeo; "Last Shadow At The First Light" (2023) by Nicole Midori Woodford; "24 Hours With Gaspar" (2023) by Yosep Anggi Noen; "Don't Cry Butterfly" by Linh Duong Dieu; and "Tale of the Land" by Loeloe Hendra. She was chosen as one of Variety's Impactful International Women of 2023 by Variety International.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

KawanKawan Media
Address: Jl. Tebet Timur Dalam XVII
No. 15 Jakarta Selatan 12820
Phone: +6281282275648
Contact Email: yuliaevina@gmail.com

Estimated Budget (USD): 1,200,000
Financing Acquired: 250,000

FINANCERS

One Kool Prize Asian Project Market (South Korea); Torino Film Lab Prize (Italy); Next Master Tokyo Talents (Japan); The Ministry of Culture Indonesia (Indonesia)

MBC



ITHRA



Ithra, your cultural destination

Ithra Film Production

Ithra's annual program that seeks to develop the Saudi filmmaking industry by supporting filmmakers through film commissioning and funding opportunities. Thirty six Saudi films have been funded with over 100+ festival entries and 40+ awards internationally.

Ithra Content Initiative

In cooperation with the Cultural Development Fund, Ithra provides financial support and advisory sessions to companies that produce visual, readable or audio content in Arabic through seven tracks: documentaries, literature, translation, electronic platforms, music, podcasts, and mobile games.

The Creative Solutions Residency Program

Creative Solutions is a one of a kind four-month immersive design and storytelling residency and incubator. The program has graduated 25 prototypes, 4 program cycles, and has collaborated with over 20 knowledge partners.

Arthouse Cinema Program

The Ithra cinema is a 300-seat cinema dedicated to arthouse films, with a special focus on Saudi cinema. Diverse voices, perspectives, and cultures are showcased, resulting in a program that honors the artistry of film, from avant-garde creations to timeless classics.

Learn more about Ithra's efforts to enrich the Kingdom's film industry

For more information, visit www.ithra.com

RED SEA SOUK WORKS- IN-PROGRESS

Projects:

A Winner is Seen at the Start
Allah is Not Obligated
Dandelion's Odyssey

Fuxi
Guria
Memory of Princess Mumbi
Vagabonds

A Winner is Seen at the Start

Genre: Coming-of-Age, Arthouse Drama

Country: France, Kazakhstan, The Netherlands, Lithuania

Language: Russian, Kazakh



LOGLINE

Mila, 17, joins an unconventional swimming team with an experimental method, managed by mysterious and charismatic Vlad. How far will she be ready to go in the competition once she discovers its darker side?

SYNOPSIS

Swimming in open water has nothing to do with technique, and everything to do with inner potential. That's what Mila, 17, learns when she joins an unconventional swimming team with an experimental method, managed by mysterious and charismatic Vlad. How far will she be ready to go in the competition once she discovers its darker side?

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

With the backdrop of modern Kazakhstan, the film focuses on Mila, a young woman trying to find her way in a world undermined by an omnipresent normalized moral corruption. At the end of the film, Mila suddenly quits the competition. She manages to do what seems almost impossible, as we are so immersed in a never-ending race, with no time to stop and re-evaluate.

I was always interested in exploring how the character's world perception balances between fantasy and reality and here, I'm pushing this idea further. In this sensorial film, I want to use sound and image as hypnotizing tools. I will experiment with sound design, so the coach's voice, the music and the soundscape merge into one tripping track. The visual language focuses on capturing Mila's emotional journey. I feel that the world, intoxicated with neoliberal ideology, is choking with constant performance anxiety and individualism. We are living in a society where competition is a defining characteristic of human relations. I believe that any change is possible if we stop blaming external forces and take responsibility for our choices. I believe that Mila's unwillingness to continue the race won't solve problems, but will initiate a change.

Filmmakers' Biographies



DIRECTOR: ZHANNAT ALSHANOVA

Zhannat is an award-winning writer/director/producer from Kazakhstan. She studied MA in Filmmaking at the London Film School with her graduation short film "End of Season" (2018) premiering at the 71st Cannes Film Festival (Cinefondation).

In 2019, Zhannat got selected for Bela Tarr's directing workshop, where she developed and shot the film "Paola Makes A Wish" (2019), produced by Locarno Film Festival, CISA and Ticino Film Commission. The film got screened at Locarno, Sundance, and PÖFF Shorts. Her most recent short film "History of Civilization" (2020) won the Silver Leopard award at Locarno Film Festival. The film was also selected for TIFF, Hamptons IFF, Clermont-Ferrand, Les Arcs, Cairo IFF and others.

Recently, she served as a juror for Sundance Collab Challenge "Time Capsule". She is a Berlinale Talents alumna. In 2021, Zhannat founded her own independent production company, "Accidental Films".



PRODUCER: JEAN-LAURENT CSINIDIS

Since founding "Films de Force Majeure" in 2010, Jean-Laurent has distinguished himself through his expertise in international co-productions and his dedication to arthouse cinema. His portfolio includes the critically acclaimed "A Land Imagined", Golden Leopard winner at Locarno in 2018; "Still Recording", which garnered five awards at Venice Critics' Week 2018; and the multi-awarded "Little Palestine, Diary of a Siege" (2022). In 2024, "Stranger Eyes" competed in the Official Competition at the Venice Film Festival; "Green Line" was featured in the international competition at Locarno; and "The Flats" won the prestigious CPH:DOX award. His strategic approach and collaborative spirit have positioned Films de Force Majeure as a dynamic leader in the arthouse cinema landscape. Jean-Laurent is an active member of several key industry networks, including EAVE, ACE, and Eurodoc.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Films de Force Majeure (France)
Address: 147 rue Paradis 13006 Marseille
Phone: +33 (0)4 84 18 30 33
Contact Email: elmaanouni@films-de-force-majeure.com

CO-PRODUCERS

Kazakhstan: Accidental Films
The Netherlands: Volya Films
Lithuania: M-Films

Estimated Budget (USD): 1,308,621
Financing Acquired: 1,009,912

FINANCERS

France: Images fantômes – post-production in-kind; SUD Region - development fund for international co-production; CNC - Aide aux Cinémas du Monde; Europe Creative MEDIA - Slate; SUD Region – production fund

Kazakhstan: Hubert Bals Fund (development); When East Meet West - dev award (Serbian Film Centre); When East Meet West - EWA award; Adilzhan Tuyakbay (Private investor); Kazakh Cinema Fund; Cem Demirer (Private investor); Dias (Private investor)

The Netherlands: NFF+HBF Co-production Scheme; HBF+Europe

Lithuania: Lithuanian Film Center - minority co-production fund

Allah is Not Obligated

Genre:
Animation

Country:
France, Luxembourg, Belgium,
Canada

Language:
French



LOGLINE

Birahima, a Guinean orphan, tells with the help of four dictionaries and a lot of irony how he becomes a child soldier when he tries to join his aunt in Liberia.

SYNOPSIS

Birahima is an 8-year-old boy living in Guinea. When his mother dies, he must get to his tutor, Aunt Mahan, who will take care of him. But Mahan lives in Liberia, where fierce civil war is raging. Yacouba, a great griot man and bandit, will guide him to Mahan – and sell some anti-bullet lucky charms in the process. But the travelers are attacked as soon as they cross the border. To save his life, he has no other choice than to become a small soldier. “And seize the opportunity to become a great someone and earn good dollars, Faforo!” as tells us Birahima, in his strong, ironic voice.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

In “Allah Is Not Obligated”, Ahmadou Kourouma uses the voice of a child, Birahima, who is both innocent and deeply ironic. This young boy tells us with a sharp and unique tone his life as a child soldier, on a quest to find his aunt Mahan. Accompanied by Yacouba, a smart and charismatic jujuman, their journey exposes the brutal mechanisms that fuel and sustain civil wars. What moved me the most was the irony in Birahima’s voice, a way to cope with the horror he endures. In my family, Armenians from Syria and Lebanon, war stories were often told with the same irony, as a shield against tragedy. This personal resonance inspired my first film, “A Shell Everywhere”, where I explored the impact of war on a teenager’s life. Birahima’s story clearly echoes the current state of our world where many terrible conflicts continue to shatter innocent lives.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: ZAVEN NAJJAR

Zaven Najjar is a French director and artistic director. He is the graphic author and artistic director of the animated feature film “The Siren” (La Sirène), directed by Sepideh Farsi, produced by Les Films d’Ici and Sébastien Onomo. The film premiered at the Berlinale 2023, opening the Panorama Category. It was selected at Annecy 2023 and received recognition in several festivals around the world.

He first shined on the web with the illustrations series, Rapposters in 2013. In 2015, he directed his first animated short, Un Obus Partout, several times awarded in festivals, produced by Caimans Productions with Arte. He creates illustrations for the football magazine “l’After foot revue”. He is now directing his animated feature film Allah is not obliged, produced by Special Touch Studios and Sébastien Onomo.



PRODUCER: SÉBASTIEN ONOMO

Sébastien Onomo is an established French film and television producer with over ten years in the industry, known for his extensive work across diverse projects. His portfolio includes the television films “Bois d’Ébène” by Moussa Touré and “Léon Blum hai et adoré” by Julia Bracher, as well as the acclaimed documentary series “African Empires,” directed by Chris Macari, Françoise Ellong-Gomez, Askia Traoré, and Josza Anjembe. Onomo also produced “Gang of the Caribbean” by Jean-Claude Barry and “Funan” by Denis Do, which won the Crystal Award at the 2018 Annecy Festival.

In recent years, he produced “Lost Souls of Syria,” “The Forest of Miss Tang” (a 2023 Annecy screening and César 2024 nominee), and “The Siren” by Sepideh Farsi, a Berlinale Panorama opener and multiple award winner at Annecy and Champs-Élysées. Additionally, Onomo co-produced “Omen” (Augure) by Balaji, which premiered at Cannes 2023, earning the New Voice award.

CO-WRITER: KARINE WINCZURA

Karine Winczura graduated from HEC and got her master’s degree in audiovisual narrative. She has been telling stories since the beginning of her career – corporate branding and political storytelling, scripts for strategic planning or for audiovisual projects.

In 2010, she became writer Michel Fessler’s assistant, then collaborator, and headed towards fiction and the moving image for good. Under the mentorship of a recognized award-winning professional, she honed her skills as a screenwriter on more than thirty ambitious film projects. While working on her own stories, she’s co-writing several French and international projects with Michel Fessler. Some of their common themes include the absurdity of violence as well as intellectual open-mindedness and diversity as a way forward. In this vein, the adaptation of “Allah is Not Obligated”, carried by Zaven Najjar’s dynamic and preppy style, aims at sharing Ahmadou Kourouma’s humanist and antimilitarist values with a wider audience.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Special Touch Studios
Address: 15-17 Voie La Canebière,
13001 Marseille
Contact Email: contact@
specialtouchstudios.com

CO-PRODUCERS

Adrien Chef and Paul Thiltges
Paul Thiltges Distributions
(Luxembourg)
Sébastien Onomo
Creative Touch Studios (France)
Annie Degryse
Lunanime (Belgium)
Anne-Laure Guegan
Need Productions (Belgium)
Eric Idriss-Kanago and Daniela Mujica
Yzanakio (Canada)

Estimated Budget (USD):

7,492,981.89

Financing Acquired: 7,142,360.62

FINANCERS

France: BAC Films; MK2; Media
Single Project; GKIDS; Eurimages;
TV5Monde; Canal+ International;
Sofica Indéfيلمs; Sofica Cofinova;
Procirep-Angoa; Grand Est Region;
Strasbourg Eurometropole; CNC;
South Region; Haute-Savoie
Département; Reunion Region;
Pictanovo; Clilic.

Saudi Arabia: Red Sea Film Fund

Belgium: Tax Shelters; VAF;
ScreenFlanders; CFB; Wallimage;
Proximus

Canada: Maison 4:3; Telefilm Canada;
SODEC; SODEC tax credit; BCPAC
tax credit

Dandelion's Odyssey

Genre:
Adventure

Country:
Japan, France, Belgium

Language:
None



LOGLINE

Two dandelion balls are the only survivors of a series of nuclear explosions that destroy the Earth. At the end of their odyssey, they will manage to find a new soil that will allow their species to survive.

SYNOPSIS

Dandelion, Baraban, Léonto and Taraxa, 4 dandelion achenes rescued from a succession of nuclear explosions destroying the Earth, find themselves hurled into the cosmos, stranded on an unknown planet, in search of a soil suitable for the survival of their species. But the elements, fauna, flora and climate are just some of the obstacles they have to overcome.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

"Dandelion's Odyssey" is a 75' animated film aimed at a family audience, taking viewers on a journey into a microscopic, imaginary world, rich in emotions, funny and moving scenes. Combining 3D animation for the main characters (the achenes) and real macro shots (the natural settings), it will be enhanced by a grandiose symphonic musical orchestration. "Dandelion's Odyssey" is also highly educational, raising public awareness of the challenges of environmental migration.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: MOMOKO SETO

Momoko Seto was born in Tokyo, Japan. She lives and works in France. Schooled at the French lycée in Tokyo, she studied art at the École supérieure des beaux-arts de Marseille, then at Fresnoy, Studio National des Arts Contemporains. She works as a director at the CNRS where she makes scientific documentaries with researchers in the human and social sciences. At the same time, she makes more personal, experimental or documentary films.

The short films from her "PLANET" series have been presented and awarded at numerous festivals and artistic events around the world. PLANET Σ was awarded the Audi Short Film Award at the Berlinale in 2015 - a prize awarded to a work "with a strong artistic signature". In 2017, her virtual reality film, "PLANET ∞" joined the MK2 catalog. The films in this "PLANET" series are regularly used as educational support in middle and high schools, and as part of Masterclasses led by the filmmaker. Momoko Seto has also directed several documentaries, some of which were filmed in Japan, which were broadcast on France Télévision.



PRODUCER: PIERRE BAUSSARON

Associate Producer and Managing Director Pierre Baussaron first studied management, and joined "Groupe Danone" in 2004 first as an organization development manager, then as a marketing manager. Since 2010, he has been running a consulting activity in strategy and communication through his company "A Boire et A Manger", and soon after as a partner with the company "Liquid Liquid", specialized on the spirits sector.

He founded "Blast Production" in 2011, a production company dedicated to corporate films. His dedication to production soon became total and in 2012 he started the development of his first short films and a TV series.

Led by a strong willingness to produce animation projects, closer to his artistic sensibility, and manage a more dynamic structure, he joined "Miyu Productions" in 2015 as associate producer and executive VP, alongside its founder Emmanuel-Alain Raynal. He specifically handles the production management of the projects, the administrative and financial activities, and the services activities. He manages the company's strategy and the projects' development together with Emmanuel-Alain Raynal.

CO-WRITER: ALAIN LAYRAC

Alain Layrac is the screenwriter of many films, including "Mauvaises fréquentations" (1998), adapted from his first novel, "Barnie et ses petites contrariétés" (2001); "The Leap Years" (2008); and "Le cours de la vie" (2023). On television, he is the creator of the series "Une famille formidable," which ran for seventeen seasons on TF1 and garnered up to twelve million viewers per episode. As a consultant (script doctor), he is regularly called upon by producers to refine or improve scripts during production. He is also an internationally recognized instructor, having led writing workshops for twenty-five years in France (University Paris 3, Fémis, Conservatoire Européen d'Écriture Audiovisuelle...) and abroad (Morocco, Brazil...). He is the author of two books on screenwriting: "Atelier d'écriture - 50 conseils pour réussir son scénario sans rater sa vie" (2017) and "Une vie de scénariste" (2019).

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Miyu
Address: 4 rue d'Enghien 75010 Paris
France
Phone: +33 1 43 44 53 76
Contact Email: contact@miyu.fr

CO-PRODUCERS

Ecce Films (France)
Umedia (Belgium)

Estimated Budget (USD):
4,798,127.33
Financing Acquired (USD):
4,690,130.13

FINANCERS

Arte (France), Canal+ (France), Media Europe (EU), Fondation GAN (France), Science New Wave (USA), SACEM (France), Iceland Tax Shelter (Iceland), Gebeka Films (France), CNC (France), Auvergne Rhône Alpes (France), Nouvelle Aquitaine (France), Ile de France (France), Umedia (Belgium), Wallimages (Belgium)

Fuxi

Genre: Fantasy, Black Comedy

Country: Taiwan, France, Japan

Language: Chinese



LOGLINE

In a circus tent, a ragtag film crew is busy shooting a gourmet film—spanning four millennia, and told in four chapters. Through four festivities, it invites us to feast with the living, the dying, the dead, and the long dead.

SYNOPSIS

Four Sichuan bizarre tales: a Funeral Feast 4000 years ago—on the verge of death, a grandma severs her tail and gifts it to her descendants; a Spring Festival 3000 years ago—a former king returns as a cuckoo, only to cough up blood in solitude amidst the feast; a Mid-Autumn Banquet in the 1990s—spirits gather to honor a millennium-old beleaguered epicurean poet; and a Birthday Feast from a century back—a waif meets underworld deities, savoring life's vastness and death's fickleness; On and off stage, the living and the dead unite to relish in everyday culinary joys.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

Expanding on my use of history and folklore in my previous film, "A New Old Play" (2021), I will use food as the through-line to continue exploring the narrative inspired from a blend of myths, legends, literature and folklore, to make a light comedy (a bit dark, a bit eccentric, a bit absurd, a bit dreamlike...) about the people of my homeland, Sichuan, marked by happiness, dignity, strength and release.

Eating. Drinking. Excreting. Resting. These each are grand epics of Life. The joy of living resides in the extraordinary and in the mundane—the joy of food resides in cooking and tasting, whether the ingredients are extravagant or economical. And as the director/chef, it has always been my interest to extract unadulterated joy from untapped, raw ingredients—everyday life. To me, everyday life is like a fairytale mixed with all flavors; a rhapsody of life and death, in which death is seasoned with sorrow, fear, acceptance, liberation, and even anticipation.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: QIU JIONGJIONG

Qiu Jiongjiong is an active contemporary artist and filmmaker in China. As an artist, his works have been exhibited all over the world. As a filmmaker, his experiments with cinematic language and aesthetics have earned him a reputation as one of China's most important independent directors. After six extraordinary independent documentaries, "A New Old Play" (2021), as his first fiction feature, won Special Jury Prize at Locarno among others, and was screened at over 40 international film festivals. Qiu also has had retrospective exhibitions at the Smithsonian Asian Art Museum in the U.S.; the Rotterdam International Film Festival; the Taipei Film Festival; and the Broadway Cinematheque in Hong Kong, among others.



PRODUCERS:

DING NINGYUAN

Ding Ningyuan has worked for the Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum (HAF), Asia's leading film financing platform, and later joined internationally acclaimed director Ning Hao's "Dirty Monkeys Studios". Now, she is an independent producer whose credits include "A New Old Play" (2021, Locarno Jury Prize) and "The Poison Cat" (2024, Venice Short Competition).



ZHAO JIN

Producer and partner of "Midnight Blur Films" and "Parallax Films" international sales. His credits include "Yanagawa" (Zhang Lu, 2021); "A New Old Play" (Qiu Jiongjiong, 2021); and "Vanishing Days" (Zhu Xin, 2019), among others. He is also a film critic, and the co-founder and former editor-in-chief of the Chinese media brand "Deep Focus".

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Uluka Studio Limited
Address: Unit 2A 17/F Glenealy Tower,
NO.1 Glenealy Central, Hong Kong
Phone: +852-6700-8202
Contact Email: ningyuan.ga@gmail.com

Midnight Blur Films
Address: 7-2D, Pok Fu Lam, Hong Kong
Phone: +86-152-6882-2433
Contact Email: zhaojin@midnightblurfilms.com

Rise Pictures Co., Ltd.
Address: 5F.-1, No.36, Aly. 38, Ln. 358,
Ruiguang Rd., Neihu Dist., Taipei City
114, Taiwan (R.O.C)
Phone: +886-2-2657-1577
Contact Email: vivi880419@gmail.com

CO-PRODUCTION

Taiwan, France, Japan co-production.

Estimated Budget (USD): 1,400,000
Financing Acquired: 900,000

FINANCERS

Rise Pictures Co., Ltd. (Taiwan); Uluka Studio Limited (Hong Kong); Midnight Blur Films (Hong Kong)

Guria

Genre: **Dramedy**

Country: **Georgia, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Bulgaria, Türkiye**

Language: **Georgian**



LOGLINE

A raging civil war, a local “beauty contest” serves as background for ups and downs of the lyrical relationships of Zuriko with the teacher and his son with the classmate. Kidnapping, surgery without electricity, a funeral with singing and crying, fighting and falling in love are the dynamics of Gurian life.

SYNOPSIS

In Guria, a poor region in western Georgia, in the 1990s. The Gurians, for whom progress has not yet arrived after the collapse of the Soviet Union, struggle for their daily survival with great passion and inexhaustible resourcefulness.

Zuriko, a 45-year-old hazelnut farmer, has debts but no wife. His best friend Gela keeps trying to set him up, but so far no woman has satisfied his mother-in-law. So Zuriko decides to take matters into his own hands and meet Maya, a teacher of music.

Achi, Zuriko's son and the local hooligan Beso, compete for the attention of their classmate Eka.

While father and son are busy with their wifely affairs, life in Guria takes its usual course: Policemen steal trolleybus cables, which are promptly taken from them by petty criminals to be sold at a high price; a doctor operates on people without electricity or anesthetics; a wife quarrels with her jealous husband after a nighttime swim in the sea; teenage boys kidnap a future wife during the local beauty pageant; grown men weep unrestrainedly at a funeral before drowning their pain in their songs. Such is life, life in Guria.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

Gurians, who live between the mountains and the sea, believe that they are especially gifted compared with other Georgians. They often cite their sense of humor and musical ability as proof. Measuring talent is a subjective exercise and defining who is more talented is difficult. Poverty, on the other hand, can be measured objectively, and Gurians are the undisputed champions in Georgia.

Poverty is usually cinematic. You can find stories there. Especially if you, like me, love Italian neo-realism. However, simple poverty isn't enough. At least for me. For inspiration, I usually need “something more”. This “something” has different names: lightness, lyricism, humor, the absurd, or sadness. And in Guria, you have plenty of it. In fact, Guria is the natural blend of impoverishment and lyricism, deprivation and self-irony, sadness and laughter. Guria is the natural land of tragicomedy, the genre I like the most.

Guria is not just a place; it's a state of mind and that's what our film is about.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: LEVAN KOGUASHVILI

Levan Koguashvili is a Georgian film director and screenwriter. Levan's short film “The Debt” (2005) was in the official selection of the 2006 Sundance Film Festival. His first feature film “Street Days” premiered at the Rotterdam IFF in 2010 and was regarded as the beginning of a new wave of modern Georgian cinema by many critics. His “Blind Dates” (2013) premiered at the Toronto IFF and Berlinale – Forum, earned more than 20 awards and went to more than 100 festivals. His feature documentary “Gogita's New Life” (2016) premiered at IDFA's competition. “Brighton 4th” (2021) has received the Best Film, Best Actor, and Best Script awards at Tribeca IFF, and Levan Tediashvili was nominated at APSA 2021 for Best Actor. “Brighton 4th” was a candidate for an Academy Award Oscar representing Georgia. Koguashvili is a Member of the Asian Pacific Screen Academy and the European Film Academy.



PRODUCER: OLENA YERSHOVA

Olena Yershova's graduation short film as director, “Demoniada” competed at Locarno IFF. In 2011, she created the company “TatoFilm”, which operated in Ukraine and Türkiye. She is also part of “Kino Iberica” (Georgia). She produced ten feature films and three feature documentaries, which received more than 250 awards worldwide.

Olena served as the head of the Antalya Film Forum in the frame of Antalya IFF (2019 - 2020). In 2022, she went back to producing new projects: “Guria” by Levan Koguashvili (Cannes Atelier 2022) and “Escape from Harem” – a drama series (Türkiye/France) which was awarded at Netflix/EPC competition for female producers.

She is a member of AMPAS - Oscar Academy; the European Producers' Club; and the Asian Pacific Screen Academy.

Selected Filmography: “Frost” (2017), Director's Fortnight (Cannes IFF); “Motherland” (2015), Best Script award at APSA 2015; and “Blind Dates” (2013), Toronto IFF/ Berlinale, Forum, Anatolian Leopard (2021), and FIPRESCI award at Toronto IFF 2021.

WRITER: BORIS FRUMIN

Boris Frumin, born in 1947, is a Latvian film director and scriptwriter. Frumin's film “Errors of Youth” was screened in the Un Certain Regard section at the 1989 Cannes Film Festival. His other films as a writer-director, “Black and White” (1992) and Viva Castro! (1994), premiered at the Sundance and Locarno festivals respectively. His project Siberian Triangle was presented at the 32nd Moscow International Film Festival.

“Brighton 4th” (2021) marks his third collaboration as a screenwriter with Levan Koguashvili, having written the scripts for “Street Days” and “Blind Dates”. The script for “Brighton 4th” was awarded at Tribeca IFF as a Best Script.

Frumin is an associate professor at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, where he shares his passion for neorealism and Eastern European films. He is also a member of the Asian Pacific Screen Academy.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Kino Iberica
Address: Melikishvili str 13, Tbilisi, 0154, Georgia
Phone: +995 595 13 91 95
Contact Email: olena@tatofilm.com

CO-PRODUCERS

Pascal Traechslin
Cineworx (Switzerland)

Donato Rotunno
Tarantula (Luxembourg)

Stefan Kitanov
ArtFest (Bulgaria)

Kanat Doğramacı
Asteros Cinema (Türkiye)

Estimated Budget (USD): 1,640,500
Financing Acquired: 170,000

FINANCERS

Georgian National Film Center (Georgia), Swiss Film Fund (Switzerland), Zurich Film Fund (Switzerland), Luxembourg Film Fund (Luxembourg), Bulgarian National Film Center (Bulgaria), Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Türkiye), SorFond (Norway)

Memory of Princess Mumbi

Genre: Romantic Sci-fi Mockumentary Country: Switzerland, Kenya

Language: English



LOGLINE

In 2094, young director Kuve sets out to make a documentary about the Great War, but actress Mumbi challenges him to create it without AI.

SYNOPSIS

In 2094, aspiring director Kuve sets out to create a documentary about the Great War of the 2070s, a conflict that banished modern technologies and revived the era of kingdoms. While filming at the war's epicenter in Umata, he anticipates capturing scenes of despair but instead discovers unexpected harmony among the people. There, he meets an actress named Mumbi, who shows him that humans can indeed live in harmony. Inspired by her, he decides to collaborate with her on the documentary. However, Mumbi challenges him to produce the film without using artificial intelligence. This forces Kuve to completely rethink his approach to filmmaking, relying on traditional methods and reinventing his entire understanding of the craft. The film is presented as a retrospective, narrated through old behind-the-scenes footage that Kuve recorded during his shoot with Mumbi. Through voice-over, Kuve shares the experiences they had during the filming. Experiences that showed him the true value of peaceful and timeless moments.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

When I was younger, I always carried a camera with me and filmed my friends, family, and surroundings. After my younger brother passed away, my memories of him were overshadowed by his tragic death. But when I looked at the old footage, I was able to hold onto the beautiful moments we shared, which helped me process his loss. In this film, I wanted to preserve these seemingly trivial moments. Told from Kuve's perspective, he recalls good times with Mumbi through old footage he captured of her. The movie challenges the notion that our lives are solely defined by conflicts and seeks to showcase that beauty and tranquility can coexist with chaos, and that our perspective ultimately shapes how we experience the world.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER: DAMIEN HAUSER

Damien Hauser is a filmmaker based in Switzerland. Born in Zurich in 2001, he began producing short films by the age of seven. He later studied film at SAE from 2016 to 2020 and worked for a commercial production company from 2018 to 2020. He went on to make a total of four feature films that were screened at renowned festivals around the world and distributed on platforms like Netflix and Canal+. In 2024, he founded the production company "Hauserfilm", through which he will continue to create films.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Hauserfilm
Address: Lohzelgstreet 7, 8118 Pfaffhausen
Phone: +41 76 681 04 16
Contact Email: damienhauser2001@gmail.com

Estimated Budget (USD): 403,523
Financing Acquired: 70,000

FINANCERS

Private Investors

Vagabonds

Genre: Nomadic Western

Country: Ghana

Language: Twi, Pidgin, Ga, English, Gonja



LOGLINE

A headstrong teenager, Owusu (15), and his perceptive "sister," Adobea (7), flee their orphanage and brave the Ghanaian countryside on a quest to find their last legitimate relative in the colorful chaotic streets of Accra.

SYNOPSIS

Owusu, abandoned by his mother and with an unknown father, is raised by his half-aunt Yaa until her death during childbirth. Owusu and his alleged sister Adobea, who has sickle cell disease, grow up in an orphanage near Kumasi. When an American couple seeks to adopt Adobea, the two escape to find Owusu's estranged mother in Accra.

Their journey is fraught with danger and wonder, aided by smugglers and vagrants. In Accra, they are saved by street kids called the Jackals, led by Ziggy, who teaches them to survive on society's fringes. Despite finding Owusu's estranged mother, she denies knowing him, prompting Owusu to seek a new family.

Owusu finds refuge with King Solo, a Ga Chieftain resisting government relocation. During a police confrontation, Adobea suffers a sickle cell crisis and is hospitalized, alerting social welfare. The siblings vow to reunite before Owusu returns to the streets.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

I often find that a big part of our core identity revolves around the innate need to know who we belong to. Is it only to a person? Or is to a larger family connected by blood or maybe to a group united in circumstance or even a shared complex history? When kinship is externalized as the unspoken oath that you are prepared to do anything for someone, even overcome death, just to ensure that person has a place to belong.

I wanted to explore this idea, while re-introducing the new Ghanaian socio-cultural landscape, both to itself and the world, through an unlikely source: a disenfranchised Ghanaian youth, hailing from an equally young globalized nation. For they are at the forefront of redefining what it means to be alive and to be human in their collective togetherness. They survive in defiance of today's fast changing world that does everything it can to leave them behind. And yet, they have united a band of nomads wandering the earth, fighting to exist. I want this to be their story and rallying cry to keep going.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER, DIRECTOR: AMARTEI ARMAR

The product of a Ghanaian father and an American mother, Amartei Armar finds topics surrounding identity, immigration, and belonging both fascinating and yet terribly conflicting. After receiving his BFA in Film Production at UBC, he moved back to his fatherland Ghana, contributing several short films to the growing cinema of the diaspora. His most recent work, "Tsutsue," premiered at the Cannes Film Festival as part of the official selection in 2022, a first for Ghana. His first feature film "Vagabonds," has just recently wrapped principal photography.



PRODUCER: IKE YEMOH

Ike Yemoh, a Ghanaian film producer, initially faced parental opposition to his passion for acting. While studying far from home, he secretly attended auditions and landed a role. Impressing the producer with his logistical skills led to a shift in his career aspirations from acting to production coordination.

After completing his marketing studies at G.I.A, Yemoh founded "Next Media Concept", a talent management agency. Driven by a vision to revolutionize Ghanaian cinema, he partnered with Amartei Armar to challenge the notion that the Ghanaian film industry is "dead," believing it has yet to reach its full potential.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

AKA Entertainment Ltd
Address: 3rd Dade Link, Labone, Accra, Ghana
Phone: +233-544708525
Contact Email: okaynolly11@gmail.com

Estimated Budget (USD): 741,158.70
Financing Acquired: 661,158.70

FINANCERS

Red Sea Fund - Development Fund (KSA); Red Sea Souk Award (KSA); Red Sea Fund - Production Fund (KSA); Ana Ventures (Ghana); AKA Entertainment Ltd (Ghana); Grassroot Initiative - Grassroot Initiative Grant (Ghana)

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THE SERIESLAB PROGRAM

The second edition of the SeriesLab program is held in partnership with Film Independent. The program supports 7 series projects from the Arab world, Africa, and Asia through a three-part, hybrid virtual/in-person residency agenda. The program provided the selected writers with the skills, knowledge, networking, and mentorship needed to complete and pitch their television series pilot.

In two-person teams, writers participated in workshops and masterclasses, received one-on-one guidance from renowned U.S. mentors and episodic creators, and workshopped their projects in a supportive group setting. The program included an exclusive opportunity to travel to Los Angeles for two weeks, where participants took part in a workshop and attended the Film Independent Forum, a special weekend event designed to inspire and empower content creators with the tools and connections necessary to bring their projects to fruition.

The selected writers will pitch their series projects at the Red Sea Souk to an audience of international buyers, studios, networks, and producers.

ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT

For 40 years, Film Independent has helped filmmakers get their projects made and seen. The nonprofit organization's core mission is to champion creative independence in visual storytelling in all its forms, and to foster a culture of inclusion, supporting a global community of artists and audiences who embody diversity, innovation, curiosity and uniqueness of vision.

In addition to producing the Film Independent Spirit Awards, the organization supports creative professionals with artist development programs, grants and labs. Their signature mentorship program "Project Involve" fosters the careers of talented filmmakers from underrepresented communities. Education events and workshops equip filmmakers of all ages and experience levels with tools and resources. "Global Media Makers" is a cultural exchange program produced in partnership with the U.S. Department of State, providing career-building opportunities for international film professionals, and year-round screening series. "Film Independent Presents" offers a robust program of unique cinematic experiences, including screenings, conversations, as well as the "Live Reads" and "Bring the Noise" musical events.

Projects:

B'itha
Cold Case One (Pullukandam Murder Case)
Generation-A
Pazuzu

Saria Othman Needs No Man
Shani Bazaar
Switch

B'itha

Genre: Comedy

Country: Saudi Arabia



LOGLINE

Three Saudi students struggle to navigate college life, co-ed classes and halal romances after coming to the U.S. on scholarships, post 9/11.

SYNOPSIS

“B’itha” (expedition or scholarship in Arabic) is a half-hour, coming of age, fish-out-of-water comedy that follows three young Saudi men coming to the U.S. for the first time in 2005.

Ahmad (alpha of the group), Youssef (fragile) and Hasan (happy-go-lucky) are forced to navigate college life and the U.S. system, starting at passport control and college orientation in the pilot episode. When the boys learn that they’re not rooming together, Ahmad goes to extreme lengths to fix their housing situation.

Throughout Season 1, the boys are faced with various challenges and experiences – trying to get a driver’s license, witnessing a bank robbery, and getting paired with a girl on a project for the first time. When one of them gets caught at the wrong place at the wrong time, how far will they go to protect one another?

After surviving their freshman year, they land their first internships, their families come to visit, and it’s their turn to welcome the new incoming class of Saudi students.

The show ultimately ends with the big dilemma most international students are faced with- to stay or not to stay? The boys are divided. There is pressure on them to return home, but will they seize any opportunity to stay in the U.S.? At its core, “B’itha” is a story about self-discovery, brotherhood and being proud of where you come from.

Filmmakers’ Biographies



WRITER: NOORAH AL EIDI

Noorah Al Eidi is a screenwriter from Saudi Arabia. She earned her MFA in Screenwriting from the American Film Institute (AFI), where her thesis film, DOSH, won the 2024 Spirit of Slamdance Award. “Do not underestimate the power of storytelling” is the advice she lives by. Her goal is to write and share Saudi stories with the world.



PRODUCER: SHEHERYAR AHSAN

Sheheryar Ahsan is a producer with an MFA in Producing from the American Film Institute (AFI). Based in Los Angeles, Sheheryar has created compelling content for platforms such as Paramount, BET, and YouTube. Sheheryar produced many short films, most notably the award-winning short film “Stalled”, which he also wrote, and which is currently broadcast on KCET/PBS.

WRITER’S STATEMENT

It all started with an empty water bottle. Read the pilot, and you’ll understand what I mean.

In 2005, our beloved king launched the King Abdullah Scholarship Program which gave young Saudi students like myself the opportunity to study abroad – all at the government’s expense. But to me, the most valuable part of my experience was the cultural exchange – the conversations and friendships that were formed outside the classroom.

I want to relive my college experience and I want people to understand and appreciate what it means to be an international student. We are a 40 billion-dollar (U.S.) industry that has never been explored on screen before. A lot of the situations our beloved characters are faced with are based on first-hand experiences that I—and many of my Saudi and international friends—have been through.

“B’itha” is a coming of age, fish out of water comedy about three Saudis struggling to navigate student life in the U.S., but at its core, is a story about self-discovery, brotherhood, and being proud of where you come from.

Cold Case One (Pullukandam Murder Case)

Genre:
Crime Drama

Country:
India



LOGLINE

Two 'incompetent' police officers, Abubaker(52) and Naveen(32) come across a rare cold case when Diana John Devassi(33) an NRI, claims that her father was killed by his own siblings for wealth. The two policemen struggle to figure out the real intentions of Diana and prove themselves as competent policemen by finding the truth in the thirty-year-old murder case.

SYNOPSIS

Diana John Devassi (33), comes back from Australia for a year break and she randomly buys a plot and house in a village in Idukki, which was famous for thick cardamom plantations. Pullukandam is a remote place in Idukki. She came back for her father's burial and she stayed at the village after her husband went back to America.

Diana has a past and she's there to know a hidden secret of the past. Diana is here to know the truth behind her grandmother's revelations of murdering her husband decades back. According to Diana's FIR, the case gets forwarded to crime branch CID officer Abubaker (52), who was infamous for bribery and under suspension for sometime; and Naveen David (30), a young officer with hemophobia who can't investigate crime scenes.

Seeing this pregnant lady who's after some truth, the officers decide to support her. Her search for truth and with the officers' help, they succeed to reveal the true story that happened decades back and get justice for her grandmother. Diana is successful in finding out the dangerous past of the Alunkal family and their reputation goes off in the roller coaster of events. The Police arrest the family members for multiple murders in the past, which eventually leads to getting the deserved property in Diana's and her grandma's name.

Before going back to America with her husband and newborn, Diana makes sure that the acres of the land she received will be a charity organization in her grandfather, Devassia's name and in collaboration with the government they built a medical college for the common people at the hill station.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER: NITHIN LUKOSE

Nithin Lukose graduated from the Film and Television Institute of India in 2014 with a PG in Cinema. He wrote and directed his debut feature film "PAKA-River of Blood" and got selected at the Toronto International Film Festival 2021 in the Discovery section for its world premiere. The film got selected at the RedSealFF for its Arab premiere.



CO-WRITER: HARI KIRISHNAN

Hari Kirishnan is a screenwriter and director who completed a PG diploma in Screenplay and Direction from KR Narayanan National Institute of Visual Science and Arts. He has been deeply involved in the Malayalam film industry, where he was an Assistant Director for "Paka", which officially premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival, and "Rajini", a mainstream Malayalam movie released in theaters.

WRITER'S STATEMENT

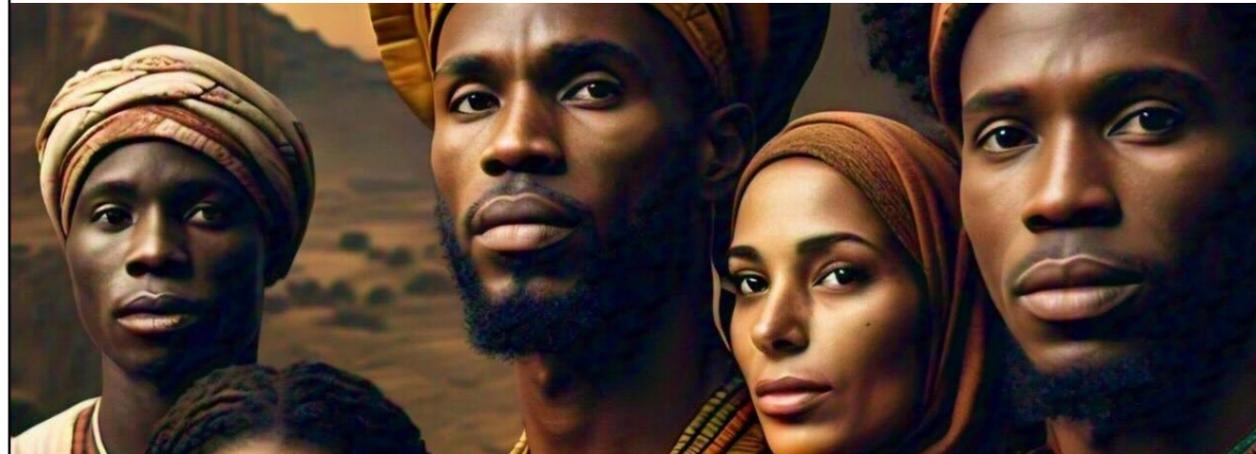
Pullukandam is a village surrounded by misty mountains. I placed a story around a cardamom estate in Idukki district. The investigation stories narrated by my father, a police officer, inspired me to create this series. "Cold Case - One" (Pullukandam Murder Case), is a web series with multiple seasons. Next season, cold cases will be a different story. 'Pullukandam Murder Case' is inspired by my father's life in law enforcement. He lived his entire life as a fatherless child since the family was not ready to accept him after his father's death. The injustice evoked the storyteller in me to write this story.

A pregnant lady digging her roots is the key element in the story. The story is very much rooted in the cultural biography of villages and small towns in my hometown. It is the place where Syrian Christians migrated from the south of Kerala and built their life. Their struggles lead them to be brave, bold, and apparently violent in nature. I want to explore the complex relationships of the characters within a feudal family and the people of the village through the protagonist Diana John Devassi, where she resolves her own inheritance.

Generation-A

Genre: Fantasy, Drama

Country: Kenya



LOGLINE

To escape their dysfunctional destinies, a group of troubled teens reluctantly enroll in a supernatural experiment aimed at creating an alternate East Africa where the West never showed up.

SYNOPSIS

"Generation-A" is a supernatural coming-of-age drama set in an exclusive, secretive boarding school run by an eccentric billionaire and his draconian wife. The school gathers a diverse group of troubled teens from privileged and marginalized backgrounds, aiming to purge them of Western influence and recondition them to ancient African traditions and values. Success at this school offers a clean slate in an unclaimed, alternate East Africa where the West never showed up, but failure leads to exile in the Sahel, where death is imminent.

The story revolves around four unlikely allies: Tichi, an orphaned pastoralist's daughter from northern Kenya; Senki, a rebellious prince from Swaziland; Aida, a free-spirited heiress from Egypt; and Xavi, a genius from the slums of Lagos via Detroit. They reluctantly band together to survive the progressive yet oppressive school and its strict surveillance system, where every action is monitored, and privacy must be earned.

Unbeknownst to the teens, their admission to the academy is based on their ancient bloodlines, as they are descendants of African royalty and legends. Their lineage holds the key to the school's founders' goal of using a magical portal to create a new East Africa, free of Western influence. However, this supernatural experiment takes a dangerous turn as the teens grapple with their evolving identities, their relationships with each other, and the school's increasingly extreme measures.

In a world that's changing too fast, and an age where being a teen is more confusing than ever, Generation 'A' follows the theme of belonging and a return to innocence.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER: MONA OMBOGO

Mona Ombogo is a multi-award-winning scriptwriter and Amazon best-selling author for her romance series, "V for Visa". Her renowned show "Volume" on Netflix topped the Kenyan charts for over 10 weeks. Having lived around the world, she borrows from these experiences to enrich her work. She believes in telling the untold story from a fresh lens.



PRODUCER: LOUSIE KAMWANGI

Louise Kamwangi is a Kenyan producer who began her career in 2008 after completing a Diploma in Film/TV Production. She has produced several TV series, telenovelas, and a feature film titled "Dreamchild". Louise is currently a series producer on a comedy show for Girl Effect, and has partnered with Mona Ombogo to produce the TV series "Generation-A" and the feature film "Tero".

WRITER'S STATEMENT

When I think of boarding school, I get a sense of nostalgia. I went to one of these ideological elite schools, whose mandate was to provide a safe space for students of different races and social classes during the time of apartheid in South Africa.

Situated in Swaziland, which borders South Africa, Waterford Kamhlaba was attended by children of political leaders, royalty, scholarship students from difficult backgrounds and middle-income students, bridging this gap. Nelson Mandela's grandson was one of the famous ones in our school.

The school mantra was, "Like the soil, we are many colors, but we are all the same soil." Yet, because of these differences, there was bound to be constant friction, division and conflict.

It is from this experience in Waterford that I derived the idea of an elite boarding school with one purpose: to recondition the minds of the young towards one ideological idea. In this case, reprogramming young minds to lead an Africa none of us had experienced.

It is answering the age-old question of teenage identity, and specifically, what does it mean to be an African child today? What value systems were lost in the passing of Ancient Africa, and is there a way to blend the past with the present and create a new culture, determined by us, the African child?

Despite the specificity of "Generation-A", the quest for belonging is universal. It cuts across race, age or location. It's an unconscious desire to return to innocence. It is this journey that I wish to explore with the series, using teenagerhood, a time in our lives where all possibilities are open and yet rigged with so many potential wrong choices. "Generation A" is a story of becoming, regardless of the conditions around us and indeed, because of them.

Pazuzu

Genre:
Drama, Crime, Thriller, Horror

Country:
Iraq



LOGLINE

After a failed lawsuit against major European museums over stolen Iraqi artifacts, archaeologist Hassan returns to Iraq. He settles on his parents' farm, where he confronts unresolved traumas and fragmented memories. His return pulls him into Iraq's artifact-smuggling underworld, putting both his life and the country's heritage at risk.

SYNOPSIS

In the ancient city of Babylon, Hassan, a man in his thirties, returns to Iraq after over a decade in Europe, haunted by secrets from his past and the weight of familial duty. As he navigates his childhood home, he reconnects with the fractured memories of his family and friends, encountering Asil, a young woman entangled in her own struggles within Hassan's family circle. Asil reveals scars, both literal and figurative, from a life marred by violence and abuse, leading Hassan to question his own role and responsibilities in her life.

Soon, mysterious events unfold around Hassan, pulling him back to a deeply rooted spiritual and historical connection with Babylon's legends and ancient lore. He experiences supernatural encounters with two mysterious figures who challenge his understanding of his identity, referring to him cryptically as "two in one." They insist he confront his past and uncover hidden truths if he wishes to find peace. While reconnecting with his roots, Hassan delves into the underworld of antiquities smuggling—a dark network endangering Iraq's cultural heritage. As Hassan's path intertwines with that of Marwa, a childhood friend turned police officer, and Amir, a fellow archaeologist with dubious motivations, he finds himself trapped between a pursuit of justice and the unsettling mystical forces tied to Babylon.

Hassan's return unveils more than just memories; it stirs a storm of repressed identities, unresolved losses, and ancient forces, leading him to a revelation that threatens to transform not only his life but the legacy of Babylon itself.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER: ALI KAREEM

Ali Kareem, born in 1984, is an Iraqi/German screenwriter and director, and a member of the European Film Academy. His films have been screened at many prestigious film festivals around the world and won numerous awards. In 2023, Ali created "The Arthouse Productions" company based in UAE.



CO-WRITER: DANIA ALTAYEB

Dania Altayeb is a screenwriter specializing in television. Her dedication has been recognized through prestigious programs like the first Netflix MENA lab 6x6, MEMI x RSIFF, and SRMG x NEOM x Telfaz11 Series Lab. Her notable projects include "Sundus", "Eyal Nouf", "El Farah Farahna", "Kharej An Alsaytara", and "Banat Almolakama."

WRITER'S STATEMENT

With the beginning of the British occupation of Iraq in the last century, excavations began in Iraq's archaeological cities. Many important sites were indeed discovered by European missions, but at the same time, many valuable Iraqi artifacts were stolen and remain to this day in European museums or are still traded on the black market.

Since the discovery of Iraq's ancient cities, these cities have become vulnerable to theft or vandalism due to security chaos or continuous wars in Iraq. The last acts of vandalism against these artifacts were carried out by ISIS during their occupation of northern Iraq several years ago. The black market in Europe and the rest of the world also encourages the ongoing looting of many ancient Iraqi cities, such as Babylon, Ur, Nineveh, and many others.

In addition to highlighting this important issue, the drama series touches on various social matters related to Iraq's ancient civilizations, such as magic and other issues, which are addressed in a smooth and exciting dramatic way.

The story follows the struggles of the Iraqi archaeologist Hassan, who dedicates himself to protecting and preserving these antiquities. Hassan's journey is fraught with danger and critical moments, inspired by both Iraq's current and historical social realities, and is told in an engaging and understandable way for viewers to follow the series' events with passion.

Saria Othman Needs No Man

Genre:
Feel-Good

Country:
Lebanon



LOGLINE

On her 47th birthday, after struggling to sustain a family, succeed in her career, and fulfill her love, Saria Othman decides to give herself a second chance. She secretly enrolls in acting school to pursue her long-held dream of becoming a successful actress.

SYNOPSIS

At 46, Saria Othman has had enough of life's misfortunes and decides to take a bold leap. She secretly enrolls in an acting school filled with 18-year-olds to chase her long-lost dream of becoming an actress. To start fresh, she moves in with her younger sister, Maggie, a spirited yoga instructor in her thirties, who helps Saria navigate college life where she must adapt to Gen Z students while juggling her handy boring job at an elevator company.

At the acting school, Saria meets Ayman, a young attractive teacher in his thirties. The initial spark of attraction quickly turns to shock when she discovers that her first crush after her long-time divorce is Syrian, triggering unresolved feelings from her past and creating a conflict between her grudge and her attraction to him. Saria grapples with proving herself among young students who have a completely different perspective on life and starting her acting career. As she starts balancing her old self as a traditional mom and finding the new Saria finally putting her dreams first, she must confront her daughter, Rosy (25), who surprises her by relocating from the US to Lebanon.

Adding to this complex dynamic, Saria and Maggie's lives take an unexpected turn when they form a close bond with Abbiba, a 20-year-old Ethiopian domestic worker. Despite their different backgrounds, these three women find common ground in their shared experiences of leaving family behind and seeking a better life.

This feel-good comedy offers a unique and relatable portrayal of modern women in the MENA region. Through humor and heart, it explores the joys, challenges, love lives, and triumphs of Saria, Maggie, and Abbiba as they pursue their dreams, ultimately asking the question: Is it ever too late for a second chance?

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER: ESTEPHAN KHATTAR

Estephan Khattar is a Lebanese director and screenwriter with an MFA in Film Directing. He has written and directed many award-winning short films and TV series. He was selected as a Film Independent and Global Media Makers Fellow for his debut feature project, "Summer 58", which made it to the GLAAD/Black List of the most promising unmade inclusive films.



PRODUCER: HIBA LOUIS

Hiba Louis, a Lebanese producer born in 1991 and co-founder of "Quo Films", producing her first TV thriller "Status Quo" supported by the Red Sea Film Foundation and Doha Film Institute, and winner of the Paramount+ Storytellers Award at CF&E, Toledo Spain and BTF Media Award, Miami USA. Hiba underwent the Qumra Series Lab in 2022 and was selected for MEMI x USC in 2023.

WRITER'S STATEMENT

Raised by women and surrounded by them, being the only boy in my family, women's stories have unconsciously shaped my art, especially those of strong, independent women like my mom. This influence is at the core of our latest project, "Saria Othman Needs No Man."

The inspiration also came from my best friend Carine, who suddenly, at 40, quit her job and enrolled in acting school, where we met 10 years ago and became close friends. Her resilience and determination prove that Arab women in general, and Lebanese women specifically, never give up. This story continually reminds me of the importance of having a passion and following your dreams, no matter your age or gender.

I'm developing the show in a writers' room alongside writer/producer Hiba Louis, a mother in her thirties, balancing family, motherhood, career, and dreams, who I am sure that—like many Arab women—identifies with Saria, and ensures an authentic representation of women and mothers.

Shani Bazaar

Genre: Crime, Thriller, Drama, Mythology

Country: India



LOGLINE

In northern Indian village, an upper-caste man forced to become a manual scavenger uncovers a criminal empire while hiding his true identity. As he fights for survival, he sparks a revolution against caste discrimination, becoming an unlikely hero in the battle against a powerful crime lord and deep-rooted social prejudices.

SYNOPSIS

In the village of Harnandi, Subodh, a man from an upper caste, is forced to hide his identity and work as a manual scavenger to support his family. The village, deeply divided by caste, centers around Shani Bazaar, a marketplace harboring dark secrets.

An ancient legend speaks of a shrine stone, blessed by Lord Saturn and given to the Pandavas, now lost in Harnandi's caves. This stone becomes the obsession of Gujjar Singh, a powerful crime lord who controls the area's drug and human bone trade.

As Subodh adapts to his new life, he gets caught in a dangerous web of crime and politics. His wife Gauri works as a maid, while their daughter Priya faces discrimination in their new community. During this struggle, Subodh meets Lakshmi, a priest's daughter fighting against her caste-defined destiny.

A mysterious vigilante, once Gujjar's ally, emerges to oppose him. This vigilante joins forces with Subodh, Lakshmi, and Vijay Kumar, an honest police officer, each seeking justice for their own reasons.

Together, this unlikely group takes on Gujjar Singh's criminal empire. Their battle isn't just about stopping crime - it's about challenging the deep-rooted caste prejudices that poison their society. Shani Bazaar becomes their battleground, where they fight not only for survival but for dignity and justice.

As they dig deeper, they uncover how caste discrimination and crime are intertwined in modern India. Their fight becomes a symbol of hope against social inequality and corruption. The question remains: can this small group of fighters bring down a powerful criminal empire and help create a more just society?

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER: KARAN KABIR

Karan Kabir is a multifaceted talent in the Indian entertainment industry, excelling as an actor, writer, and director. His diverse experience includes serving as a Director's Assistant and 2nd Unit Director on the feature film "Heer Sara Tey Pondicherry", as well as working as a casting professional on many projects. Karan's writing prowess shines through his upcoming web show "GOATS" on Jio Cinema and his contributions to IPL commentary scripts.



CO-WRITER: NITIN KOUL

Nitin is an independent filmmaker and writer whose work spans Netflix hits "Sector 36" and "Guns and Gulaab." He served as Chief Assistant Director for the national award-winning "Samanantar" and created acclaimed short films "Solace" and "Khwaab." A Thilsi International Film Festival screenwriting award winner, Nitin brings his storytelling expertise to casting and advertising projects across major streaming platforms.

WRITER'S STATEMENT

As a child growing up in Ghaziabad (near Delhi), I loved visiting Shani Bazaar, our local market. Coming from an English-speaking school, I was fascinated by its lively atmosphere - the toys, snacks, and rides made it magical for me.

In the 1990s, our town changed rapidly as India's economy grew. Living in my upper-caste family, I didn't understand how deeply the caste system affected our society. Moving to Mumbai for work changed everything. Reading about caste discrimination opened my eyes, but one moment truly sparked this story.

I saw a manual scavenger cleaning sewage, covered in filth, yet making his family laugh nearby. This man inspired my main character and the heart of "Shani Bazaar." The story isn't just entertainment - it shows how modern India still struggles with old prejudices.

The series follows Subodh, an upper-caste man who pretends to be a Dalit (lower caste) and becomes a manual scavenger to survive. His story reveals hard truths about caste discrimination and corruption in today's India. Through his fight for justice, he becomes a symbol of hope for others.

My childhood market, Shani Bazaar, represents all of India - beautiful and vibrant on the surface, but hiding dark secrets underneath. I don't want to preach through this series. Instead, I want people to think and talk about these issues. By showing the humanity in those society ignores, I hope to challenge how people think.

This story shows how one person's courage can fight huge injustices and how real change starts when we question our deepest beliefs.

Switch

Genre:
Drama/Telenovela

Country:
Uganda



LOGLINE

A man's quest for a better life in the Middle East results in a lifetime prison sentence, followed by an unexpected pardon. After 15 years, Shafic (50s) returns to Kampala, only to find that his family moved on. Struggling to reclaim his life, he is drawn into the criminal underworld, seeking redemption again.

SYNOPSIS

In bustling Kampala, the Bajja family's world is shaken by the unexpected return of Clint Bajja. Fifteen years earlier, Clint left for the Middle East in search of a better future, sending money home to support his wife, Mercy, and their two children. However, his dreams were derailed by a wrongful conviction, leading to life imprisonment. Unbeknownst to Clint, Mercy moved on, finding comfort in a new relationship with Caesar and welcoming a child, Nashville.

During his years in prison, Clint converted to Islam and adopted the name Shafic, finding solace in his faith. When a surprising pardon grants him freedom, he returns to Kampala, only to find himself a stranger in his own home. Mercy's life with Caesar and their child has flourished, leaving Shafic on the outskirts of a family he no longer recognizes.

Isolated, Shafic retreats to his mother's rural home to contemplate his life and the decisions that have led him here. Struggling with his alienation, he finds an unexpected path as a humble shoe shiner in Kampala. In his new life, he bonds with Hassan, a boda boda rider, and Malik, a security guard, forming a trio that delves into the criminal underworld through car theft.

As they rise through the ranks of this dangerous world, their success comes with consequences. Loyalties are broken, and the weight of Shafic's past threatens to unravel everything. Meanwhile, Mercy's life with Caesar crumbles, pushing her back towards Shafic, now remarried to Nice. Their blended household becomes a battlefield, with their children caught in the crossfire.

Shafic's daughter, Clarissa, emerges as a powerful force, using her business skills to help rebuild her father's life and exact justice on her mother. As old secrets resurface, the Bajja family faces a climactic showdown, testing their bonds and hopes for redemption. "Switch" explores the complexities of love, betrayal, and second chances.

Filmmakers' Biographies



WRITER/PRODUCER: NATHAN MAGOOLA

Nathan Magoola is a creative entrepreneur, writer, director, advertising creative, and producer based in Kampala, Uganda. Nathan is a member of the prestigious EAVE and ACE producers networks, and an alumnus of Berlinale Talents, Rotterdam Lab, and a Nipkow Fellow. Nathan is the creator of the award-winning series "Prestige" and "Beloved" for Pearl Magic Prime on DStv.



CO-WRITER: LUCKY LORA ATWIINE

Lucky Lora Atwiine is a Ugandan film female producer, writer, and director based in Uganda with over 15 years of experience. Notable work as a writer includes award-winning shows like "The Hostel", "Prestige" and "Beloved". She runs a free online writing program. Lucky volunteers with several local organizations to train enthusiastic young talent in filmmaking, specifically writing, directing, and producing.

WRITER'S STATEMENT

In the past decade, hundreds of thousands of Ugandans, in their prime and most productive years, have been migrating to the Middle East to work as laborers, domestic helpers, drivers, and more. For some, this has been a path to improved livelihoods. Their remittances have enabled families to buy assets, support relatives, and improve their financial standing. However, for many others, this journey has been nothing short of modern-day slavery—marked by trauma, brutality, and even death. Numerous cases have surfaced where workers were maimed or killed by their employers or the agents who trafficked them.

For those who endure the unimaginable working conditions, another tragic reality awaits. Many send their hard-earned money back home, trusting friends or family to invest it wisely, perhaps in constructing homes or starting businesses. Yet, upon their return, they discover that their savings were squandered, leaving them with nothing after years of grueling labor.

One heartbreaking example involves a man who trusted his brother to use his life savings to build a house while he worked abroad. Upon his return, he was led to believe the house was completed. However, when his brother couldn't produce the property, the situation spiraled into tragedy. The trusted brother, in a desperate attempt to escape the consequences of his deceit, killed his sibling and hid the body for days in his living room.

Despite these devastating stories, every day two full flights leave Entebbe Airport for the Middle East, filled with Ugandans seeking opportunity. This raises critical questions: Do poverty and desperation blind people to the dangers they face? And can the greed for wealth truly drive individuals to betray their loved ones in such horrific ways?

SHIFT STUDIOS





Note From the Head of the Red Sea Fund

The Red Sea Fund is thrilled to present the latest slate of co-productions. We've had the privilege of collaborating with 120+ projects from over 50 countries from the Arab world and Africa since 2021, and we are thrilled to venture into Asia in 2025 to expand our reach and continue fostering a global community of talented filmmakers.

These films not only have the Fund mentioned in their credits, but they also put Saudi Arabia as a "country of production". Leading Saudi to almost every respected film festival around the world including Cannes, Venice, Berlin and TIFF. Successful projects include "Four Daughters" (Kaouther Ben Hania); "The Mother of All Lies" (Asmae El Moudir); and "Mandoob" (Ali Kalthami). We are particularly proud of our recent achievements at the Academy Awards, with Saudi Arabia being recognized as a country production with Four Daughters, an Oscar-nominated film. This milestone underscores our ongoing efforts to support Arab and African cinema and inspire a new generation of filmmakers.

The Red Sea Fund is proud to continue to support the Souk Project Market through the Red Sea Souk and Labs Awards. The Fund has also directly supported Project Market films as they have moved forward into production and post-production and then onto great festival and distribution successes.

With pleasure and honor, we present to you 2024 Fund Co-Productions.

Emad Eskander
Head of the Red Sea Fund

THE RED SEA FUND CO- PRODUCTIONS

Projects:

NORAH
AGORA
RED PATH
ANIMALE

THE BRINK OF DREAMS
THE MOTHER OF ALL LIES
MANDOOB
AĪCHA

SEEKING HAVEN FOR MR. RAMBO
TO A LAND UNKNOWN
FRONT ROW
TO KILL A MONGOLIAN HORSE

SONGS OF ADAM
THE HEART IS A MUSCLE
HOBAL
MY DRIVER & I

NORAH

Director: Tawfik Alzaidi
Producer: Tawfik Alzaidi, Sharif Majali
Festival Selection: Winner Cannes Un Certain Regard Award - Special Mention
Country of Production: Saudi Arabia



AGORA

Director: Ala Eddine Slim
Producer: Ala Eddine Slim - Julie Viez
Festival Selection: Selected for RSIFF – Winner Locarno Pardo Verde Ricola Award
Country of Production: Tunisia, France, Saudi Arabia



RED PATH

Director: Lotfi Achour
Producer: Anissa Daoud, Sébastien Hussenot, Lotfi Achour
Festival Selection: Selected for RSIFF – Nominee Locarno Golden Leopard Award, and selected at the Red Sea Souk Project Market
Country of Production: Tunisia, France, Belgium, Poland, Saudi Arabia



ANIMALE

Director: Emma Benestan
Producer: Julie Billy, Naomi Denamur, Cassandre Warnauts
Festival Selection: Cannes Critics' Week
Country of Production: France, Belgium, Saudi Arabia



THE BRINK OF DREAMS

Director: Ayman El Amir, Nada Riyadh
Producer: Ayman El Amir
Festival Selection: Winner Cannes Golden Eye Award
Country of Production: Egypt, France, Denmark, Qatar, Saudi Arabia



THE MOTHER OF ALL LIES

Director: Asmae El Moudir
Producer: Asmae El Moudir
Festival Selection: Shortlisted for Oscars – RSIFF - Winner Cannes Golden Eye Award
Country of Production: Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar



MANDOOB

Director: Ali Kalthami
Producer: Abdulrahman Jarash Alqahtani - Chawki Knis
Festival Selection: RSIFF – TIFF
Country of Production: Saudi Arabia



AÏCHA

Director: Mehdi Barsaoui
Producer: Marc Irmer, Habib Attia
Festival Selection: RSIFF - Nominee Venice Horizons Award
Country of Production: France, Tunisia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Italy



SEEKING HAVEN FOR MR. RAMBO

Director: Khaled Mansour
Producer: Rasha Hosny, Mohamed Hefzy
Festival Selection: RSIFF – Venice Film Festival
Country of Production: Egypt, Saudi Arabia



TO A LAND UNKNOWN

Director: Mahdi Fleifel
Producer: Geoff Arbourne, Mahdi Fleifel
Festival Selection: RSIFF – Cannes Film Festival – TIFF – London Film Festival
Country of Production: Greece, Denmark, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Palestine, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Qatar



FRONT ROW

Director: Merzak Allouache
Producer: Bahia Allouache - Merzak Allouache - Amina Salem Castaing
Festival Selection: RSIFF – TIFF
Country of Production: Algeria, France, Saudi Arabia



TO KILL A MONGOLIAN HORSE

Director: Xiaoxuan Jiang
Producer: Zhulin Mo
Festival Selection: RSIFF – Venice Film Festival
Country of Production: Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, United States, Saudi Arabia



SONGS OF ADAM

Director: Oday Rasheed
Producer: Majed Rasheed
Festival Selection: RSIFF Premiere
Country of Production: Netherlands, Saudi Arabia



THE HEART IS A MUSCLE

Director: Imran Hamdulay
Producer: Khosie Dali
Festival Selection: Berlin Film Festival
Country of Production: South Africa, Saudi Arabia



HOBAL

Director: Abdulaziz Alshlahei
Producer: Sharif Almajali
Festival Selection: RSIFF Premiere
Country of Production: Saudi Arabia



MY DRIVER & I

Director: Ahd Kamel
Producer: Georgie Paget
Festival Selection: RSIFF Premiere
Country of Production: United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia



THANKS TO OUR TEAMS

SOUK TEAM



Holly Daniel
Red Sea Souk Director



Zain Zedan
Red Sea Souk Manager



Juwairiyah Fageih
Souk Communication Coordinator

PROJECT MARKET TEAM



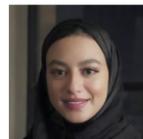
Cendrella Abi Gerges
Project Market Program Manager



Siza Zayed
Production Manager, Projects-in-Development



Sara Mesfer
Project Market Coordinator, Projects-in-Development



Anous Sadayo
Project Market Assistant, Projects-in-Development



Wim Vanacker
Head of Selection Committee, Works-In-Progress Manager & Coach, Editing Workshop



Nancy Hamdy
Production Manager, Works-in-Progress



Mawadda Sallam
Coordinator, Works-in-Progress

SOUK EXHIBITIONS TEAM



Raghad Korayem
Lead Exhibitions Consultant & Senior Souk Coordinator



Laura Mufti
Souk Exhibitions Sales Executive



Wesam Abdelkader
Souk Exhibitions Assistant

SOUK TALENTS TEAM



Alice Kharoubi
Head of Souk Talents Shorts & Family Programmer



Yar Mekhtigian
Souk Talents Senior Coordinator



Fatima Mazeh
Souk Talents Coordinator

SOUK ACCREDITATIONS



Zaki Wardah
Souk Accreditations Coordinator

SOUK TALKS TEAM



Marlin Soliman
Souk Talks & Events Program Manager



Arwa Altoukhi
Souk Talks & Events Coordinator



MUSAAB GHALIMAH
Souk Talks & Events Assistant

RED SEA LABS TEAM



Ryan Ashore
Head of Red Sea Labs



Hania Bakhshwain
Red Sea Labs Officer



Dur Jamjoom
Submission Officer



Diala Ghouth
Labs Associate



Layan Alhadhrami
Communication Officer

RED SEA FUND TEAM



Emad Eskandar
Head of Red Sea Fund



Munthir Altuwaireb
Contract Supervisor



Ghaida Alsurayhi
Fund Coordinator



Mai Alshaibani
Initiatives Manager



Salman Almusaad
Cycle Manager



Reham Jambi
Fund Coordinator



Mohammed Justaniah
Submission Manager

RED SEA SOUK SCHEDULE & EXHIBITION MAP



RED SEA SOUK
SCHEDULE



RED SEA SOUK
EXHIBITION
MAP

THE NEW HOME OF FILM

