

Arabian Sights

FILM FESTIVAL 2016

Contemporary Arab Cinema

October 21-30

filmfestdc.org

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Thank You

Shirin Ghareeb, Arabian Sights Festival Director and Programmer, and
Deputy Director of the Washington, DC International Film Festival.

Special thanks to **Tracy Betsock**, Coordinating Assistant, Press Relations;
Mary Pettigrew, ampersand graphic design, llc; **Tuan Tran**, Webmaster;
and all **Theater Managers, Assistants, and Volunteers**.

Arabian Sights Film Festival

Presented by the Washington, DC International Film Festival

The 21st Annual **Arabian Sights Film Festival** returns with a new and exciting program featuring groundbreaking works from North Africa to the Arabian Gulf. Select directors will accompany their films to conduct post-screening discussions with the audience and also participate on a panel to discuss the latest developments in Arab cinema. *Arabian Sights* will be bookended with Opening and Closing Night events to commemorate this year.

An Audience Award for favorite film will be presented.

Also offered will be the *Cultural Ambassador Prize* sponsored by The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington.



The Arab Gulf States
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All films will be screened with English subtitles. Visit filmfestdc.org for updates on films, guests, and events.

Tickets

\$13.00 per person for each screening, unless otherwise noted. Opening and Closing Night events (film and party) are each

MISSIONTIX www.missiontix.com \$20.00 per person.

Advance sales are subject to a convenience fee. 1-888-996-4774 (10:00 am – 6:00 pm, Monday – Friday)

Tickets may be purchased at filmfestdc.org and at the theater starting one hour before the first show.

Student Discounts

1 ticket for \$10.00 available at the theater only. Valid with proper student ID.

Festival Pass

A special package of 10 tickets is available online and at the theater for a discounted price of \$100.00. Advance sales subject to a convenience fee. This package does not include Opening or Closing Night.

Location

AMC Mazza Gallerie Theatre
5300 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20015

Parking: \$2.00 for 3 hours or \$5.00 for 5 hours of reduced-rate parking available in garage with validation.

Festival Schedule

Friday, October 21

Opening Night

6:30 pm *As I Open My Eyes*
Followed by a reception
\$20.00

8:50 pm *Good Luck Algeria*

Saturday, October 22

4:45 pm *Nawara*
7:00 pm *Good Luck Algeria*
9:00 pm *Our Mother*

Sunday, October 23

3:15 pm *Like a Matchstick*
5:15 pm *Our Mother*
7:15 pm *Hepta, The Last Lecture*

Friday, October 28

6:30 pm *Nawara*
8:45 pm *El Clásico*

Saturday, October 29

1:30 pm *Hepta, The Last Lecture*
4:00 pm *Short Cuts*
6:15 pm *Theo Who Lived*
8:30 pm *El Clásico*

Sunday, October 30

2:30 pm *Cairo in One Breath*
5:00 pm FREE Panel:
What's Next for Arab Cinema?

Closing Night

7:00 pm *Halal Love (and Sex)*
Followed by a party
\$20.00



As I Open My Eyes



Halal Love (and Sex)

For more information:
Filmfestdc.org
202-234-FILM

Opening Night

As I Open My Eyes



Fri., Oct. 21 at 6:30 pm, followed by an
Opening Night Party, \$20.00

Tradition butts up against progress in this musically charged French-Tunisian film that follows a young woman in a band as she navigates familial, cultural, and social ideals in contemporary Tunis. Her band plays a blend of original music and covers at local bars, including men's-only joints. For Farah, the young woman at the heart of the film, music transcends cultures

and languages. But music too is wrapped up in politics. As *I Open My Eyes* situates itself at the dawn of the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, and Farah's music addresses politics and issues in her home country.

-Tribeca Film Festival

Tunisia/France/Belgium/UAE, Directed by Leyla Bouzid, 2015,
102 min. In Arabic with English subtitles.

— Co-presented with —

Embassy of
the Republic
of Tunisia



and



Closing Night

Halal Love (and Sex)

Sun., Oct. 30 at 7:00 pm, followed by
a Closing Night Party, \$20.00

An entertaining comedy about three Lebanese Muslim couples who try to navigate their love lives and desires without breaking the religious rules of marriage. Squabbling newlyweds Batoul and Mokhtar play with fire as they continually threaten divorce over Mokhtar's

possessive jealousy. Their neighbor, Salim, thinks "a bit of nooky fixes everything." However, Salim's exhausted wife, Awatef, starts grooming a potential second wife to help deal with his nooky demands. Meanwhile Loubna hopes for a second chance with her first love, green grocer Abu Ahmad, through a potentially scandalous secret marriage. Featuring grown-ups having real conversations about love and sex, *Halal Love (and Sex)* dares to poke fun at the complicated balancing act of romantic desire and religious devotion in the Muslim world.

-Sundance Film Festival

Lebanon/Germany, Directed by Assad Fouladkar, 2016, 95 min. In Arabic
with English subtitles.



— Co-presented with the —

Presented under the patronage
of the Embassy of Lebanon.



—What's Next for Arab Cinema?—

Sun., Oct. 30 at 5:00 pm, FREE

We are witnessing a renaissance of Arab cinema with a much wider range of sophisticated films tackling a variety of topics and receiving much critical acclaim. There is also a rising number of talented young Arab filmmakers and a growing international audience appreciating these works. Join us for a panel of guest film directors and Arab film experts discussing the latest developments in Arab cinema and what we can expect in the future.

Please visit filmfestdc.org/arabiansights to view the list of participating panelists.

Cairo in One Breath

Sun., Oct. 30 at 2:30 pm

The *Adhan*, the Muslim call to prayer, is a 1,400 year-old oral tradition in the process of unprecedented change in Cairo. After 60 generations, thousands of individual muezzins who have traditionally made the call to prayer at a mosque five times a day are being replaced by a single voice broadcast from a radio station to wireless receivers as part of a plan put into effect by the Mubarak regime. This beautiful and timely film is full of rich details of everyday life and maintains a quiet respect for the range of opinions voiced on either side of this

somewhat unpopular edict. *Cairo in One Breath* is as much about soundscape as it is about modernity replacing tradition.
—Various sources

Ukraine/USA/Egypt,
Directed by Anna
Kipervaser, 2015,
80 min. In English
and Arabic with
English subtitles.



El Clásico

 Cultural
Ambassador Prize

Fri., Oct. 28 at 8:45 pm

Sat., Oct. 29 at 8:30 pm

Alan is deeply in love with Gona and has been keeping it a secret for years. When he finally works up the courage to ask Gona's father for her hand in marriage, his proposal is denied because of his small physical stature. Crushed by this verdict, Alan convinces his brother Shirwan, a huge Real Madrid soccer fan, to join him on a mission to deliver a pair of handmade Kurdish soccer shoes to famed Real Madrid footballer Cristiano Ronaldo. With the hope that the attention of Ronaldo will change Gona's father's mind about their relationship, the two brothers hit the road and set out on an epic journey of self-discovery and adventure. *El Clásico* refers to the highly competitive and widely televised match between Spanish football rivals Real Madrid and Barcelona, and it's in this spirit that the film derives its beating pulse. *El Clásico* is a heartwarming comedy about two little people who refuse to think small. —Tribeca Film Festival



Norway/Iraq, Directed by Halkawt Mustafa, 2016, 97 min. In Kurdish and Arabic with English subtitles.

Good Luck Algeria

★ AMERICAN PREMIERE ★

 Cultural
Ambassador Prize

Fri., Oct. 21 at 8:50 pm

Sat., Oct. 22 at 7:00 pm

A crowd-pleaser and “feel good” film, *Good Luck Algeria* is about Samir, or Sam for short, and his partner Stephane who run a small company in Grenoble that designs high-quality cross-country skis for Swedish Olympic athletes. When a major deal falls through, the company falls on hard times and in the hope of saving it, they devise a crazy plan for Sam to sign up for the cross-country skiing competition in the Winter Olympics, representing his father’s native Algeria! *The Hollywood Reporter* wrote “Director Farid Bentoumi transforms the real-life story of his own brother, Noureddine, into a fascinating hybrid of comedy and drama, immigrant tale and underdog sports movie unlike most other films out there.”

— Various sources



Belgium/France, Directed by Farid Bentoumi, 2016, 90 min. In French and Arabic with English subtitles.



Hepta, The Last Lecture

Sun., Oct. 23 at 7:15 pm

Sat., Oct. 29 at 1:30 pm

Hepta, The Last Lecture broke Egyptian box office records as the highest grossing film of all time.

Based on Mohamed Sadek's best-selling novel of the same name, "Hepta" takes its title from the Greek word for the number seven. The film depicts the seven stages of love through four paralleled stories delineated as psychology professor Shukri Mokhtar (Maged El-Kedwany) explores the rocky world of love and relationships in a Cairo University

lecture. Featuring a star-studded cast, the ensemble also includes Amr Youssef, Ahmed Dawood, Dina El-Sherbiny, Jamila Awad and Yasmine Raeis. Nelly Karim and Anoushka are also featured. –*Various sources*

Egypt, Directed by Hadi El Bagoury, 2016, 112 min. In Arabic with English subtitles.

Like a Matchstick

 Cultural
Ambassador Prize

Sun., Oct. 23 at 3:15 pm



The backstory of *Like a Matchstick* is almost as intriguing as the film. This raucous Egyptian comedy marks the feature debut for its writer-director Hussein Al-Imam. He conceived it as a tribute to his

father, the acclaimed and highly prolific director Hassan Al-Imam, and uses copious amounts of footage from his '50s era films. But Hussein died recently at the age of 63, so the film had to be completed by his own son Youssef. It marks a collaboration among three generations, adding a poignant subtext to the otherwise zany proceedings. Set in 1950 Cairo, the filmmaker plays the lead role of Wahid Ezzat, a drug dealer who learns about a hidden treasure while serving a prison sentence. Upon his release he manages to retrieve it, using the funds to start a successful nightclub with which to operate his illicit activities. This black-and-white comedy deftly interweaves its original material with footage from several of Hassan Al-Imam's '50s era melodramas recalling Woody Allen's similarly styled *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* It all works to highly amusing effect.
–*The Hollywood Reporter*

Egypt, Directed by Hussein Al-Imam, 2016, 100 min. In Arabic with English subtitles.

Nawara

Sat., Oct. 22 at 4:45 pm

Fri., Oct. 28 at 6:30 pm

In this biting social commentary, multi-award winning director Hala Khalil chronicles the aftermath of the Tahrir Square revolution on a young woman named Nawara who works as a housemaid for Egypt's elite. Every day Nawara follows a path that takes her between the alleys of the poor neighborhood and the roads that lead to the villas within a luxury compound where she works. Little does she know that the spring of 2011 will bring her something unexpected. Winner of the *Best Actress Award* at the Dubai International Film Festival went to star Menna Shalabi. *Nawara* follows director Hala Khalil's earlier films *Cut & Paste* (2006) and *Best of Times* (2004), both of which were *Arabian Sights* highlights.

—Various sources

Egypt, Directed by Hala Khalil, 2015, 107 min. In Arabic with English subtitles.



Our Mother

★ AMERICAN PREMIERE ★

 Cultural Ambassador Prize

Sat., Oct. 22 at 9:00 pm

Sun., Oct. 23 at 5:15 pm

In this delightful comedy, seventy-five year old Zayane, a traditional, illiterate Algerian mother always at the beck and call of her children, has never ventured outside the limits of her neighborhood. One day she receives a message concerning the death of a man she once knew in Algeria who has

left her a mysterious box. In the space of a day, she decides to break her rules and leave her quiet suburb for a day's journey to collect the box. Zayane's absence sets events in motion that will bring her eleven children together for the first time in more than ten years. They discover a side to their mother's life that none of them knew about until then. —Various sources

France, Directed by Fejria Deliba, 2015, 85 min. In French with English subtitles.



Short Cuts

Sat., Oct. 29 at 4:00 pm

Total running time: 70 minutes

Mayhoda ★ WORLD PREMIERE ★

Reem, a little girl with a big imagination spends lots of time in the garden with her grandfather. She thinks her best friend, a tree, is dying, but is determined to save it.

United Arab Emirates, Directed by Mariam Al Zaabi, 2015, 10 min. In Arabic with English subtitles.

Astray

Haya, a self-obsessed, enigmatic Arab woman, is arrested when caught in a compromising position with her long-time boyfriend. The police give them an ultimatum: either get married or face jail time for indecency. She must avoid prison while keeping her past affairs secret.

United Arab Emirates, Directed by Lubna Bagsair, 2015, 8 min. In Arabic with English subtitles.

Co-presented with **IMAGE NATION**
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Asfoora

Veganize It!

Bakr has some big news, but he's not sure his family, friends, or even his fiancée will be able to accept it: he has decided to become vegan. As he tells those closest to him, the reactions aren't what he had hoped for.

Qatar, Directed by Khalid Salim, 2015, 7 min. In Arabic with English subtitles.

Central Market

A boy works his afternoons at the local market. Always searching for a quick buck, an opportunity arises to make some "serious cash" by trying to milk a small goat at a nearby pen.

United Arab Emirates/Bahrain, Directed by Saleh Nass, 2015, 10 min. In Arabic with English subtitles.

Asfoora ♦ NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE ♦

When she is caught cheating on an exam, Jana is sent to detention where she encounters a cruel bird that taunts her mercilessly. The schoolgirl goes to extreme lengths to silence the creature, but it keeps coming back to pick on her insecurities.

Co-presented with



Embassy of the
State of Qatar

Qatar, Directed by Mayar Hamdan, 2015, 10 min. In Arabic with English subtitles.

Short Cuts continued...

The Visit

A 'brown' man with a beard finds himself caught in a dilemma when two men show up at his house looking for answers. Stereotype victim, or perpetrator?

The Visit is an upside-down look at present day racial realities.

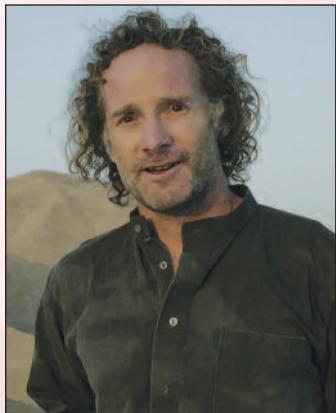
USA, Directed by Shane Andries, 2015, 11 min. In English.



Ave Maria

The nuns of the Sisters of Mercy Convent, in the middle of the West Bank wilderness, have their daily routine of silence and prayer disrupted when a family of Israeli settlers come knocking at their door for help after crashing into the convent's wall. Nominated for Best Live-Action short at last year's Oscars and recipient of numerous other awards.

Palestine/France/Germany, Directed by Basil Khalil, 2015, 14 min. In Arabic, English, Hebrew with English subtitles.



Theo Who Lived

Sat., Oct. 29 at 6:15 pm

★ *In Person: Theo Padnos*

In the late fall of 2012, Theo Padnos, a struggling American journalist, slipped into Syria to report on the country's civil war and was promptly kidnapped by Al Qaeda's branch in Syria. Because he spoke fluent Arabic, his captors suspected he worked for the CIA and he was brutally interrogated for months. But his fluency, coupled with his remarkable personal expansiveness, also led to an extraordinary engagement

with, and understanding of, his captors. By the time of his release, twenty-two months later, he had become a confidant of al-Qaeda's top commander in Syria. In *Theo Who Lived*, Padnos returns to the Middle East and retraces the physical and emotional steps of his journey, performing his memories, and enacting the fantasy world he created as means of mental escape. A gripping narrative that includes betrayal among the imprisoned, unlikely friendships, and thwarted escapes, *Theo Who Lived* is an intimate portrait of personal resilience and grace in the face of hate. —Various sources

USA, Directed by David Schisgall, 2016, 86 min. In English and Arabic with English subtitles.

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