

Contemporary Arab Cinema



2007
**Arabian
Sights**
FILM FESTIVAL

October 26 – November 4

www.filmfestdc.org

2007

Arabian Sights

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October 26 – November 4

presented by

The Washington, DC International Film Festival

The Twelfth Annual *Arabian Sights* Film Festival offers a dynamic and diverse range of new films from North Africa to Lebanon, Oman, Palestine and Saudi Arabia. Also featured this year are innovative selections by Arab American filmmakers. Several directors will be present at their screenings to discuss their work. An *Audience Award* for favorite film will be presented. All films will be screened with English subtitles. Please visit www.filmfestdc.org for updates on films and guests.

Admission

\$9.00 per person for each screening, unless otherwise noted.

Tickets for any film in the festival may be purchased online at www.filmfestdc.org and at the theater starting one hour before the first show. Cash or check sales only at the theater.

Festival Pass

A special package of 10 tickets is available online and at the theater for a discounted price of \$81.00. (This package does not include the October 26 screening of *Caramel*).

Locations

AMC Loews Dupont Circle 5

All screenings will be held at this location except the opening film. 1350 19th St., NW. Take Metro Red Line to Dupont Circle, South exit.

Parking available at garage opposite the theater on 19th St. for \$10.00 after 5:45 pm with mention of *Arabian Sights* on Fridays and Saturdays only. Street parking is available.

Avalon Theatre

(Opening Film only)

5612 Connecticut Ave., NW.
Street parking available.

For More Information

www.filmfestdc.org

202-724-5613

Festival Schedule

Friday, October 26

6:30 pm *Caramel*
Avalon Theatre, \$10.00

Saturday, October 27

6:30 pm *Beirut Diaries* shown
with *After Shave*
6:30 pm *Zaina: Rider of the Atlas*
8:30 pm *Kicks*
8:45 pm *Downtown Girls*

Sunday, October 28

4:00 pm *Short Cuts*
6:00 pm *Downtown Girls*
6:30 pm *Kicks*
8:00 pm *Zaina: Rider of the Atlas*
8:30 pm *Beirut Diaries* shown
with *After Shave*

Friday, November 2

6:30 pm *Operation Filmmaker*
6:30 pm *VHS Kahloucha (Tarzan of the Arabs)*
8:30 pm *Making Of*
8:45 pm *Driving to Zigzigland*

Saturday, November 3

4:30 pm *Driving to Zigzigland*
6:30 pm *Al Boum*
7:00 pm *Reel Bad Arabs*
9:00 pm *Cut & Paste*
9:00 pm *Operation Filmmaker*

Sunday, November 4

4:15 pm *Short Cuts*
6:00 pm *Making Of*
6:30 pm *Cut & Paste*
8:15 pm *VHS Kahloucha (Tarzan of the Arabs)*
8:30 pm *Al Boum*



Caramel

Friday, October 26 at 6:30 pm
Avalon Theatre, \$10.00

In her gorgeous and love-affirming feature debut – which was the sleeper hit of this year's Cannes Film Festival – Director and Star Nadine Labaki finds gold in the hot goo used for waxing. Set in and around a Beirut beauty salon, *Caramel* stirs together the smooth

and the crunchy of five women's lives. Nisrine is a spirited bombshell on the verge of marrying a conservative Muslim. Jamale, an aging actress, goes to absurd lengths to hold back time. Rima suppresses her attraction to other women, until her own dream girl walks through the door. Seamstress Rose deflects the attentions of a gentleman suitor to care for her older sister. And Layale, the owner and lifeblood of the salon, carries on a hopeless – but very satisfying – affair with a married man. This is characteristic of a new kind of film coming from Lebanon, one that looks past war and politics to the eternal truths of love and passion.

(France/Lebanon, Directed by Nadine Labaki, 2007, 96 min., 35mm)
Co-presented with *C'est Chic! New Films from France 2007.*



Al Boum

In Person:
Director Khalid al Zadjali

Saturday, November 3 at 6:30 pm
Sunday, November 4 at 8:30 pm

Picturesque vistas and a tight-knit community, little seen by the rest of the world, construct the framework for the first feature film from Oman. The serene inhabitants of a small coastal town, steeped in tradition, have always made their living from fishing and boat-building. When a young fisherman suddenly and mysteriously goes missing, local superstition compounded with the threat of urbanization challenge not only the town's peaceful existence but also its livelihood. Friends and family of the missing boy patiently wait as the rest of the locals confront their futures.



(Oman, Directed by Khalid al Zadjali, 2005, 105 min., 35mm)

Beirut Diaries: Truth, Lies and Videos

Saturday, October 27 at 6:30 pm

Sunday, October 28 at 8:30 pm

Seasoned director Mai Masri's latest documentary, *Beirut Diaries*, follows socially and politically active Nadine Zeidan and her friends in the tumultuous period following the February 2005 assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. This young, enthusiastic assembly looks past their individual sectarian differences to camp, protest and celebrate together under the mutual sentiment of "our religion is Lebanon." But in Beirut, where the political climate and international relations shift at an alarmingly accelerated rate, the parties who had initially urged the protestors to make their voices heard, now focus their attentions elsewhere. Masri deftly depicts a fiercely emotional moment in time in the ever-changing Beirut atmosphere through patriotic Nadine and her hope for her country.

(Lebanon, Directed by Mai Masri, 2006, 76 min., digital betacam)

Shown with:

After Shave

Since the Lebanese Civil War and the consequential destruction of his barber-shop, Abou Milad practices his profession in local cafes. Milad's situation changes when a wealthy recluse requests his services.

(Lebanon, Directed by Hany Tamba, 2005, 22 min., 35mm)



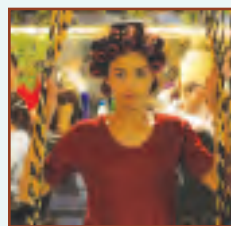
Cut & Paste

Saturday, November 3 at 9:00 pm

Sunday, November 4 at 6:30 pm

Hala Khalil's second film after the wildly popular *The Best of Times*, (*Arabian Sights*, 2005), kicks off with the chance meeting of Gamila and Youssef in the apartment of a stranger - she's there to bargain down the price of a harp for immediate resale and, hopefully, a substantial profit and he's there to hawk a satellite dish. For years Gamila has been saving up and ticking off requirements to qualify for immigration to New Zealand. Three more points on her application and Gamila will qualify for immigration, and, coincidentally enough, marriage is worth three points. Youssef, with no future plans or aspirations, and, inspired by Gamila's visions of New Zealand, seems to be the perfect candidate for the role of husband. Their intertwining life stories and those of their idealistic family members, quirky friends and disheartened neighbors present a disillusioned middle-class Egypt.

(Egypt, Directed by Hala Khalil, 2006, 105 min., 35mm)





Downtown Girls

Saturday, October 27 at 8:45 pm

Sunday, October 28 at 6:00 pm

In Mohamed Khan's latest comedy, two liberated young women work, love and commute in contemporary Cairo. Friends Jumana and Yasmin, a retail associate and a hairdresser respectively, together hop the Cairo metro daily to and from work. Their commute is not simply transportation; it's also social hour and dating-market. On the train they meet Osman, a chef, and Samir, a cell-phone salesman and the subsequent relationships that emerge challenge all parties' values and priorities. Both women know

their place in Egyptian society as working, middle-class women, but cleverly and subtly challenge the system in small but eloquent ways.

(Egypt, Directed by Mohamed Khan, 2005, 93 min., 35mm)



Driving to Zigzigland

In Person: Director Nicole Ballivian, Star Bashar Da'as

**Friday, November 2
at 8:45 pm**

**Saturday, November 3
at 4:30 pm**

Professional actor Bashar left the stage in Ramallah for the silver screen of Los Angeles only to find

that breaking into the industry in Hollywood in any other role than terrorist is nearly impossible. Between fruitless auditions Bashar makes ends meet with his meager returns as a cabbie. The interactions between him and his occasionally ignorant passengers further feed his frustrations in post 9/11 America and provoke him to tell folks that he is from Zigzigland. This entertaining film is based on true stories and was shot in Jerusalem, Ramallah and Los Angeles. *Driving to Zigzigland* is DC native and AU alum, Nicole Ballivian's first feature film.

(USA/Palestine, Directed by Nicole Ballivian, 2006, 92 min., digital betacam)



Kicks

Saturday, October 27 at 8:30 pm

Sunday, October 28 at 6:30 pm

A follow-up to Albert ter Heerdt's hit comedy *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (*Arabian Sights*, 2005), *Kicks* offers a slightly more serious vista of a country adjusting to a growing multicultural society. Simmering racial tensions fester and pop in circum-

stances both critical and comical in modern day Holland. Moroccan-Dutch policewoman trainee Aaliyah frets over her reaction to witnessing her racist, native Dutch partner Frank shooting a Moroccan boy in supposed self-defense. The older brother of the victim, Said, a popular kick-boxer, takes much flack from young Moroccans for his blond girlfriend. The friends and family of these individuals compose the vast and diverse cast, including a capricious, upper-crust woman who longs to meet a genuine immigrant, her arrogant boyfriend an exploitative filmmaker, a Moroccan-Dutch soldier struggling with his conservative views of women and a pair of French-speaking ladies of the night.

(The Netherlands, Directed by Albert ter Heerdt, 2007, 112 min., digital betacam)

Making Of

**Friday, November 2
at 8:30 pm**

**Sunday, November 4
at 6:00 pm**

With no job, an unstable relationship, and a daily schedule of break-dancing and disturbing the peace, 25-year-old



Bahta's life isn't going anywhere. The recent US invasion of Iraq has stifled the facility of travel to Europe – the only option Bahta had to escape Tunisia. In his misguided idleness, he dons his cousin's police uniform and, feeling entitled to respect, prances around the local watering-hole. Subsequently, he is on the lamb and ushered into hiding by the only group that will take him: fundamentalists, who have singled him out for his rebellious ways. Shortly thereafter the actor playing Bahta, Lotfi Abdelli, who never read the film's script, fully realizes the extremist direction in which his character is headed and wishes to quit the film. He signed on as a break-dancer, not a terrorist. Director Nouri Bouzid enters the take in an attempt to counter his actor's reluctance and complete the film.

(Tunisia, Directed by Nouri Bouzid, 2006, 115 min., 35mm)



Operation Filmmaker

Friday, November 2 at 6:30 pm

Saturday, November 3 at 9:00 pm

Not long after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, MTV aired a documentary about Muthana, a 25-year-old Baghdad film student. Muthana had a winning smile and indomitable spirit, but his film school had

been bombed to pieces. American actor Liev Schreiber saw the MTV piece while preparing to direct his first feature and invited Muthana to join the production of *Everything Is Illuminated* in the Czech Republic. It seemed like a dream come true, a story of bridging cultures, so documentary director Nina Davenport went along to film it. The results are often harrowing. Muthana has difficulty managing personal as well as professional tasks and starts to fear for his safety if he returns to Baghdad. His patrons reach the limits of their charity. Everyone's motives are questioned, including documentary makers. Are there lessons to be learned? The unintended consequences are too messy and situational to say for sure. But in this mix of tragedy and farce, Davenport perfectly captures the follies of our times. —*Toronto International Film Festival*

(USA, Directed by Nina Davenport, 2007, 92 min., digital betacam)

Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People

In Person: Dr. Jack Shaheen

Saturday, November 3

at 7:00 pm

Reel Bad Arabs scrutinizes Hollywood's relentless demonization of Arabs and Muslims on the big screen from the first black & white flicks to



the blockbuster movies of recent years. This documentary features acclaimed author and Hollywood film consultant Dr. Jack G. Shaheen and his extensive research and shocking revelations on how Hollywood depicts Arabs. If there is an Arab character in a film, he most likely portrays not just a bad guy, but a bad guy engineered by Hollywood as a grotesque caricature. We've seen them numerous times: the slimy, conniving sheikh, the Bedouin bandits and the wild-eyed renegade wielding his AK-47.

(USA, Directed by Sut Jhally, 2006, 50 min., digital betacam)

Short Cuts from the Arab World

Sunday, October 28 at 4:00 pm

Sunday, November 4 at 4:15 pm

A hand-picked selection of shorts from Arab and Arab-American filmmakers. (Various formats)

Arab in America

Recent college-graduate Osama "Sam" Ahmed Abou-Bakr enters the post 9/11 American work force only to find that, unless he disguises his heritage, negative stereotypes dictate his opportunities.

(USA, Directed by Nabil Abou-Harb, 2007, 15 min.)

In Person: Director Nabil Abou-Harb, will be present November 4

Cinema 500 km

Tariq Al-Husaini is a 21 year-old film fanatic who has never been to a movie theater in his life. Why? There aren't any in his country. Determined to 'go to the movies', Tariq must obtain a passport and make the 500 kilometer trek into Bahrain.

(Saudi Arabia, Directed by Abdullah al Eyaf, 2006, 42 min.)

The Dead Won't Mind

While guarding a bicycle for his pal, a young boy receives an unexpected offer from a group of men arranging a funeral procession.

(Egypt, Directed by Emad Mabrouk, 2007, 10 min.)

Ferkesh

Making social plans in Palestine can be a risky endeavor.

(Palestine, Directed by May Odeh, 2006, 3 min.)

Kemo Sabe

The playground is divided between the Cowboys and the Indians; one's assigned allegiance seems based on appearance and attire. Six-year old Yussef longs to switch sides, but are blue-jeans and a belt all he needs to become a Cowboy?

(USA, Directed by Rana Kazkaz, 2006, 13 min.)

On a Monday

Through the observation of each other's mundane activities, a middle-aged couple, uncovers profound mutual affection in their marriage.

(Egypt, Directed by Tamer El Said, 2004, 8 min.)

Sari's Mother

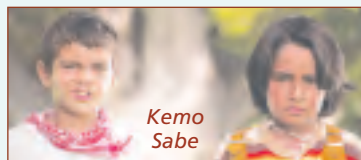
This touching short is composed of extra footage from James Longley's Oscar-nominated documentary *Iraq in Fragments* (Filmfest DC 2006).

(USA, Directed by James Longley, 2006, 21 min.)

A World Apart Within 15 Minutes

A woman drives around Jerusalem asking strangers for directions to Ramallah only to find that the short geographic distance is not the only thing separating the two cities.

(Palestine, Directed by Enas Muthaffar, 2006, 3 min.)





VHS Kahloucha (Tarzan of the Arabs)

Friday, November 2 at 6:30 pm

Sunday, November 4 at 8:15 pm

Mouncef Kahloucha, actor and filmmaker extraordinaire, renowned throughout Tunisia, needs a particular role filled for his upcoming feature – naturally, he starts knocking on his neighbors' doors. Kahloucha is a house-painter by trade, but this love-affair with filmmaking has occupied his recreational time for years. His infectious and relentless enthusiasm makes up for his utter lack of training and has spread amongst many of the locals of Sousse, who, if tapped as actors, take their

roles with the utmost level of professionalism. Meatheads from the gym play the villainous roles and do the stunts; a proud, elderly woman whose husband staunchly opposes her acting career shines as a leading lady; and a rigid-legged stuffed animal stars as a ferocious wolf for a dramatic fight scene. The documentary's director Nejib Belkadhi steadfastly trails the making of Kahloucha's latest, endearingly campy film, *Tarzan of the Arabs*, while using it as a vehicle to expose an intimate view of the vices, toils and joys of impoverished Tunisians in Sousse.

(Tunisia, Directed by Nejib Belkadhi, 2006, 80 min., 35mm)

Zaina: Rider of the Atlas

Saturday, October 27 at 6:30 pm

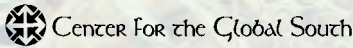
Sunday, October 28 at 8:00 pm

Following the mysterious death of her mother Selma, 11-year-old Zaina reluctantly falls into the custody of her nomadic, horse-raising father Mustapha, who she has never met given that he abandoned Selma. Once in her father's care, however, Zaina can get away from the sinister Omar, who unrequitedly loved Zaina's mother and now desires guardianship of the child. Together Zaina, Mustapha and his band of drifters trek across Morocco's spectacular Atlas Mountains en route to the renowned horse-races in Marrakech. Omar is hot on their trail. The mountain journey is punctuated with adventurous fights and slow but sure father-daughter bonding. From the director of award-winning *Vivre au paradis* (*Arabian Sights*, 2000).

(France, Directed by Bourlem Guerdjou, 2005, 100 min., 35mm)



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Arabian Sights is programmed by Shirin Ghareeb, *Assistant Director of the Washington, DC International Film Festival*, and is coordinated by Regan Spurlock, *Coordinating Assistant of the Washington, DC International Film Festival*.

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The Washington, DC
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