

CONTEMPORARY ARAB CINEMA

2017
October 20-29

ARABIAN SIGHTS
FILM FESTIVAL

filmfestdc.org

ARABIAN SIGHTS

FILM FESTIVAL

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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 **Muna Abdulkader**, Coordinating Assistant, Press Relations; **Mary Pettigrew**, ampersand graphic design; **Tuan Tran**, Webmaster; and all **Theater Managers** and **Volunteers**.

The **Washington, DC International Film Festival** is the parent organization of the **Arabian Sights Film Festival**.

ARABIAN SIGHTS

FILM FESTIVAL

The 22nd Annual **Arabian Sights Film Festival** returns with a new and exciting program featuring groundbreaking works from North Africa to the Arabian Gulf. This year's Closing Event features *The Worthy*, a new film by Emirati filmmaker, Ali Mostafa, whose earlier work *City of Life* was winner of the *Arabian Sights Audience Award* in 2010.

An **Audience Award** for favorite film will be presented. Also offered this year will be the **Cultural Ambassador Prize** sponsored by The Arab Gulf States Institute of Washington.



The Arab Gulf States
Institute in Washington
Building bridges of understanding

Select directors will accompany their films to conduct post-screening discussions with the audience. **Please visit filmfestdc.org for updates on films, guests, and events.** All films will be screened with English subtitles.

TICKETS

\$13.00 per person for each screening, unless otherwise noted. Closing Night event (film and party) is \$20.00 per person.

Advance sales are subject to a convenience fee. 1-844-383-6832 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

EVENTNATION

Purchase tickets at filmfestdc.org and at the theater starting one hour before the first show.

STUDENT DISCOUNT

1 ticket for \$10 on day-of-showing at door only, with valid student ID.

FESTIVAL PASS

A special package of 10 tickets is available online and at the theater for a discounted price of \$100.

Advance sales subject to a convenience fee. This package does not include the Closing Night event.

LOCATION

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

Parking: \$2 for 3 hours or \$5 for 4 hours of reduced-rate parking available in garage with validation.



FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

Friday, October 20

6:30 pm *Blessed Benefit*
Followed by a Reception

8:30 pm *My Uncle*

Saturday, October 21

4:30 pm *The Originals*

7:00 pm *Foreign Body*

Followed by a Reception

9:00 pm *I Still Hide to Smoke*

Sunday, October 22

4:00 pm *Blessed Benefit*

6:00 pm *In Syria*

8:00 pm *I Still Hide to Smoke*



Solitaire



Foreign Body

Friday, October 27

6:30 pm *The Originals*

9:00 pm *A Day for Women*

Saturday, October 28

4:45 pm *My Uncle*

7:00 pm *Solitaire*

9:00 pm *A Day for Women*

Sunday, October 29

3:00 pm *In Syria*

5:00 pm *Foreign Body*

—Closing Night—

7:00 pm *The Worthy*

Party follows, \$20.00

For more information:

filmfestdc.org

202-234-FILM

Blessed Benefit

Friday, Oct. 20, at 6:30 pm

*followed by a reception sponsored by the
Jordanian American Association of DC*

Sunday, Oct. 22, at 4:00 pm

In this sly comedy, the middle-aged, scrawny, bespectacled Ahmad doesn't belong in prison. But when the quiet contractor and father of two is charged with fraud over an unfortunate business deal, things spiral out of control. The unreliability of his cousin and would-be savior leads to a comic series of miscommunications with the police and Ahmad's lawyer, landing our hero in prison. Ironically, once behind bars, he gradually feels something that he's never felt before — liberty. Ahmad discovers that prison has its own rhythms, its own rules, and its own economies — and he begins to carve out a position for himself, learning to make good in this place where fraud isn't a crime so much as a way of life. However, he also discovers that no matter which side of the bars he's on, events are guided by forces beyond his control.—*Toronto International Film Festival Jordan, Directed by Mahmoud al Massad, 2016, 83 minutes. In Arabic with English subtitles.*

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CULTURAL AMBASSADOR PRIZE

★ AMERICAN PREMIERE ★

A Day for Women

Friday, Oct. 27, at 9:00 pm
Saturday, Oct. 28, at 9:00 pm

Opening film of the *Cairo International Film Festival* and official selection at the *BFI London Film Festival*, *A Day for Women* is the latest Egyptian film creating international buzz. In the film, the opening of a new swimming pool is the talk of the town – particularly because Sunday has been announced as a day for women. Bringing together very different women of a small community is an unexpected equalizer – no one is more excited than Azza, who dreams of wearing a swimsuit. Shamiya (Elham Shahin), considered a ‘loose woman’, finds herself talking about her life to an inquisitive and supportive audience. Even Lula ventures along – a sign that she is beginning to confront the grief of having recently lost her son. Naturally, the men of the community can’t help but be curious and find their own colorful way of protesting against the women’s day. From the director of *One-Zero (Arabian Sights, 2010)*, Kamla Abu Zekry’s latest film is a reflection on community, co-existence and freedom. —*BFI London Film Festival*
Egypt, Directed by Kamla Abu Zekry, 2016, 111 minutes. In Arabic with English subtitles.

CULTURAL AMBASSADOR PRIZE

Foreign Body

Saturday, Oct. 21, at 7:00 pm

*followed by a reception sponsored by the
Embassy of the Republic of Tunisia*

Sunday, Oct. 29, at 5:00 pm

An explosive triangle of jealousy, doubt, and attraction erupts in this fourth feature by *Satin Rouge* director, Raja Amari. Seeking refuge from her Islamist radical brother, whom she denounced to authorities, young Samia flees her homeland in the turbulent aftermath of the Tunisian revolution. She braves hostile seas in the crossing to France, but once there she finds that her struggles have only just begun. With no friends, no family, and — most crucially — no immigration papers, Samia must make a life and a living in a foreign land. She meets a young man, Imed (Salim Kechiouche, *Blue is the Warmest Color*), and soon finds work as a maid in the employ of the elegant Leila (the inimitable Hiam Abbass). As the three become more intimately acquainted and emotionally intertwined, Samia's intuition simultaneously leads her closer to unraveling the mystery of her brother's fate. —Various sources

Tunisia/France, Directed by Raja Amari, 2016, 92 minutes. In French and Arabic with English subtitles.

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CULTURAL AMBASSADOR PRIZE

I Still Hide to Smoke

Saturday, Oct. 21, at 9:00 pm • Sunday, Oct. 22, at 8:00 pm

A Turkish bath serves as a femme-centric refuge in an Algiers beset by car bombs and baton-waving fundamentalists. Set in the 1990s, when Algerian politics boiled over after the Islamist uprising, *I Still Hide to Smoke* follows a day-in-the-life of 50-year-old Fatima (Hiam Abbass), who runs a women's bath that becomes the setting for a series of steamy, provocative and political confrontations between women of all ages, shapes and sizes. This intriguing and insightful drama breaks cultural taboos and takes us into a haven where women find respite in each other's company at a time, and in a place, where they have few possibilities to freely express themselves. Featuring an ensemble cast, *I Still Hide to Smoke* won the audience award at the Thessaloniki Film Festival as well as 7 awards at the Cyprus International Film Festival. —Various sources

Algeria/France/Greece, Directed by Rayhana, 2016, 90 minutes. In Arabic and French with English subtitles.

In Syria

(*Insyriated*)

Sunday, Oct. 22, at 6:00 pm • Sunday, Oct. 29, at 3:00 pm



Trapped inside her home in a city under siege, a mother of three turns her flat into a safe harbor for her family and neighbors in an attempt to protect them from the war raging on the streets of Damascus. This powerful multi-award winning drama brings audiences a rare look at a conflict zone from the inside... literally.

(continued on next page)

CULTURAL AMBASSADOR PRIZE

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

My Uncle

Friday, Oct. 20, at 8:30 pm
Saturday, Oct. 28, at 4:45 pm

Known for its biting social criticism, *My Uncle* is a humorous, entertaining film that does not shy away from addressing cultural struggles in the modern world. Alia is a struggling actress living in Rabat with her two roommates. As she attempts to navigate her way in cinema – in spite of the negative perceptions of women in the acting profession – she remains diligently optimistic that she will become a famous actress. One day her Uncle Abderraouf, who she barely knows, visits her from out of town. As a result of his visit, Alia's life is thrown into a comedic confusion of circumstances as she juggles hosting her uncle and pursuing her acting career, while facing problems with her fiancé and his family. Uncle Abderraouf is played by the beloved and legendary comic artist, 80-year old Abderrahim Tounsi, who created a Moroccan Chaplin-style character that was hugely popular in the 1970s and early 80s.

—Various sources

Morocco, Directed by Nassim Abassi, 2016, 115 minutes. In Arabic with English subtitles.

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(In Syria continued)

Protected only by the balcony's window lattice and a wooden deadbolt on the apartment door, little stands between the residents and the war just outside their walls. Despite a shortage of water and fresh food, household matriarch, Oum Yazan (Hiam Abbass) attempts to maintain some kind of normalcy. She does her best to impose loving order, even when that means withholding information or keeping everyone confined to the tiny kitchen. But with the seemingly endless sniper attacks just beyond the apartment's windows and imposing knocks at their bolted door, every decision could be a matter of life or death, forcing difficult moral choices in the struggle to survive. —Toronto International Film Festival

Lebanon/Belgium/France, Directed by Philippe Van Leeuw, 2017, 86 minutes. In Arabic with English subtitles.

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The Originals

Saturday, Oct. 21, at 4:30 pm

Friday, Oct. 27, at 6:30 pm

An Egyptian box office smash hit, *The Originals* is the latest film from critically acclaimed director Marwan Hamed (*The Yacoubian Building*) and best-selling novelist Ahmed Mourad (*The Blue Elephant*). In this visually stunning thriller, Samir (Maged al-Kedwany) works for a bank, provides for his ever-demanding family and dreams of singing in an Egyptian talent show. When he is unexpectedly fired, Samir finds himself recruited to be part of a secret society, called The Originals, which has unlimited access to surveillance at their disposal. They have taken it upon themselves to keep an eye on every Egyptian who might be a potential threat. *The Originals* leads a new wave of modern cinema as it thematically and technically breaks structures of conventional Egyptian narratives. With Hamed and Mourad at the helm of an all-star cast, this trailblazing film has cemented its place in leading edge Egyptian cinema and has all the ingredients for a classic in the making. —Various Sources

Egypt, Directed by Marwan Hamed, 2017, 125 minutes. In Arabic with English subtitles.



Solitaire

Saturday, Oct. 28, at 7:00 pm

This Filmfest DC comedy hit is back by popular demand! There is the wife of a mayor of a small Lebanese village. The highly anticipated visit of her daughter's suitor's family causes much excitement. There's brother, who was killed during fighting with Syrian troops 20 years ago, still features heavily in the family's home and looms large through photographs all around the house. There shares her happiness with her deceased brother—through his photographs — until she discovers that her long-awaited guests are from Syria. When There cannot contain her personal prejudices, the film turns increasingly farcical as she makes outlandish attempts to

thwart the union. With charming performances, this film successfully balances warm-hearted laughs with timely social insight. —Various sources

Lebanon/Jordan/Egypt, Directed by Sophie Boutros, 2016, 92 minutes. In Arabic with English subtitles.

CLOSING NIGHT

The Worthy

Sunday, Oct. 29 at 7:00 pm

Followed by a Closing Party, \$20.00

Part social commentary, and part sheer thrill ride, *The Worthy* is breathless, an audacious ripping up the script of what to expect from an Arabic language film. Emirati filmmaker Ali F. Mostafa (*City of Life, Arabian Sights* 2010 and *From A to B, Arabian Sights* 2015) makes his most ambitious, mature film to date with *The Worthy*, a visually spectacular dystopian take on an Arab world torn apart by social disorder. A prologue shows us a truck driver picking up a hitchhiker. The man, his face hollow with distress, warns the driver to beware the black flags before he disappears into the distance. Heeding the hitchhiker's warning, the driver moves to an abandoned warehouse with his children and a small group of survivors, seeking refuge with the only clean remaining water source in the area. When two visitors infiltrate their compound, they soon become pawns in a test for survival, where only one of them shall be chosen worthy. —BFI London Film Festival

*United Arab Emirates, Directed by Ali F. Mostafa, 2017,
99 minutes. In Arabic with English subtitles.*

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