

2006

ARABIAN SIGHTS

FILM FESTIVAL

October 27 – November 5

www.filmfestdc.org

CONTEMPORARY
ARAB CINEMA



ARABIAN

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October 27 – November 5

presented by The Washington, DC International Film Festival

The Eleventh Annual *Arabian Sights* Film Festival offers a diverse selection of the newest, most provocative, and inspiring films from today's Arab world. These films show the range and commitment of directors, several of whom will be present at their screenings, who invariably manage to tell moving stories while exploring issues facing their region. All films will be screened with English subtitles. An Audience Award for favorite film will be presented. Please visit www.filmfestdc.org for updates on films and guests.

ADMISSION

Admission is \$9.00 per person for each screening.

Tickets for any film in the series may be purchased at the theatre starting one hour before the first show. Cash or check sales only.

FESTIVAL PASS

A special package of 12 tickets for all films is available for \$99.00. Reserve by calling 202-724-5613. Cash or check sales only.

LOCATION

All films will be shown at the AMC Loews Wisconsin Avenue 6 Theatres, 4000 Wisconsin Ave., NW. Take Metro Red Line to Tenleytown.

PARKING

Available in the theatre building along Upton Street for \$2.00 with a validated parking ticket.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For updates and announcements visit www.filmfestdc.org or call **202-724-5613**.

SIGHTS²⁰⁰⁶

Festival Schedule

Thursday, October 26

6:30 pm *Opening Reception
for Arabian Sights
Festival Pass Holders*

Friday, October 27

6:30 pm *I Saw Ben Barka Get
Killed*

7:00 pm *Waiting*

9:00 pm *The Prince That
Contemplated His
Soul*

9:15 pm *Beur, Blanc, Rouge*

Saturday, October 28

6:30 pm *Ahlaam*

7:00 pm *The Prince That
Contemplated His
Soul*

9:00 pm *Khochkhach*

9:30 pm *I Saw Ben Barka Get
Killed*

Sunday, October 29

6:00 pm *Khochkhach*

6:30 pm *Beur, Blanc, Rouge*

8:30 pm *Ahlaam*

8:30 pm *Waiting*

Friday, November 3

6:30 pm *Bosta*

7:00 pm *The Betrayal*

9:00 pm *A New Day in Old
Sana'a*

9:15 pm *A Perfect Day*

Saturday, November 4

7:00 pm *A New Day in Old
Sana'a*

7:30 pm *A Perfect Day*

9:00 pm *The Night Baghdad
Fell*

9:30 pm *The Betrayal*

Sunday, November 5

5:00 pm *Arabs and Terrorism*

5:30 pm *The Night Baghdad
Fell*

8:00 pm *Bosta*



Arabian Sights Opening Reception

Exclusive to all
Festival Pass holders!

Join us as we celebrate our eleventh anniversary!
Special guests will include Salma Baccar, director of *Khochkhach*, Mohamed Al-Daradji, director of *Ahlaam*, and Bassam Haddad, director of *Arabs and Terrorism*.

Thursday, October 26

6:30 – 8:30 pm

ADC National Headquarters
1732 Wisconsin Ave., NW

Arabian Sights Opening Reception is sponsored by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and Georgetown Design Group, Inc.



To RSVP please call 202-724-5613. To purchase a Festival Pass, please see information on page 2.

Ahlaam

In Person: Director Mohamed Al-Daradji

Saturday, October 28 at 6:30 pm

Sunday, October 29 at 8:30 pm



This remarkable first feature film from Mohamed Al-Daradji follows the lives of three Iraqi individuals forced onto the war-torn streets of Baghdad after the US invasion destroys an insane asylum. Among these wanderers is Ahlaam who had lived in the institution since the kidnapping of her husband on their wedding day by Saddam's police. She deliriously roams through the chaotic and perilous streets slipping in and out of hallucinations. Fellow patient and former

soldier Ali, devastated by the US bombardment and the subsequent loss of his best friend in battle, finds purpose in foolhardily braving the fallen city in search of surviving patients. Underappreciated Dr. Medhi entertains dreams of a free and peaceful Iraq despite the desolation surrounding him and the burden of his father's political past. *Ahlaam* has won numerous awards worldwide for "Best Film."

(Iraq/UK/Netherlands, Directed by Mohamed Al-Daradji, 2006, 110 minutes)

Arabs and Terrorism



In Person: Director Bassam Haddad

Sunday, November 5 at 5:00 pm

In this powerful documentary, Arab-American director and political science professor, Bassam Haddad, explores the discourse linking Arabs and Muslims to terrorism. He interviews over 100 individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, including political figures, media personalities, scholars and pedestrians from the US, Europe, Israel and the Arab world. Interviewees include leaders of organizations such as Hizbullah's Hassan Nasrallah and Hamas' Khalid Mish'al. Haddad traces the evolution of the media

coverage, perceptions and definitions of terrorism and takes a critical standpoint in evaluating the consequences.

(USA, Directed by Bassam Haddad, 2006, 135 minutes)

The Betrayal

Friday, November 3 at 7:00 pm

Saturday, November 4 at 9:30 pm

The consequences and contradictions of French colonization in Algeria are brilliantly addressed in this compelling thriller. Lieutenant Roque is a young French officer, tired and dispirited by the endless war that seems far from a resolution. Roque and his men have been posted to a dusty, isolated village. His official role is to pacify the locals, wave the French flag and convince the Algerians of his nation's good intentions. But in fact, his main target is the dismantling of the Algerian Front de liberation nationale (FLN). He toils to fulfill his mission, torn between resentful villagers and his own soldiers whose morale and vigilance must be maintained at all costs. After the discovery of a notebook containing confidential information, Roque is confronted by the possible betrayal of some of his young North African recruits.

(France/Belgium, Directed by Phillippe Faucon, 2005, 80 minutes)



Beur, Blanc, Rouge



Friday, October 27 at 9:15 pm

Sunday, October 29 at 6:30 pm

French Algerian friends Brahim and Mouloud have long anticipated attending the soccer match between France and Algeria. In the 76th minute of the game, a crowd of enthusiastic Algerian supporters rush the field. Brahim shows his unabashed allegiance for Algeria by joining the passionate crowd. Young, unemployed Brahim subsequently gets arrested on the field and now faces a steep fine. This charming comedy gathers momentum when Brahim's parents take him to Algeria

where he is unwittingly pressed to evaluate his Beur identity. This comical take on Beur youth coming to terms with their dual identity is the fifth film of Algerian Director Mahmoud Zemmouri.

(France/Algeria, Directed by Mahmoud Zemmouri, 2006, 88 minutes)

Bosta

Friday, November 3 at 6:30 pm

Sunday, November 5 at 8:00 pm

This rough-and-ready Lebanese musical updates the traditional dabkeh folk dance to show how new and old values can weld post-war Lebanon back together. A young dance troupe crosses the country in an ancient bus, bringing its upbeat message to the hide-bound provinces. The civil war has dispersed the students of Utopia College, but when Kamal returns from abroad, he pulls dancers who once fired shots at each other back into a group. His untraditional approach to dabkeh gets the troupe ousted from a national competition, but a TV presenter takes up their cause and makes them famous as they take their unusual, kitchy-pop act on tour. The performers hit their stride at an exhilarating wedding in Baalbek.

—Deborah Young, *Variety*

(Lebanon, Directed by Philippe Aractingi, 2005, 122 minutes)



I Saw Ben Barka Get Killed



Friday, October 27 at 6:30 pm

Saturday, October 28 at 9:30 pm

Extremist politics, the film industry and criminal activity stylishly collide in Serge Le Péron's pulp thriller based on the still unsolved kidnapping of Moroccan independence leader Mehdi Ben Barka in Paris in 1965. After a stint in prison, George Figon aims to prove himself in the Paris art community and haphazardly undertakes the production of a documentary on decol-

onization commissioned by a suspicious Moroccan organization. Figon employs Georges Franju to direct, Marguerite Duras to write the narration and, at the behest of the shady sponsors, influential political activist Ben Barka to serve as the primary source of information. Ben Barka mysteriously disappears en route to a meeting with the filmmakers on October 29, 1965. Figon has taken on much more than he can handle and the situation quickly spirals out of his control.

(France/Spain, Directed by Serge Le Peron, 2005, 101 minutes)

Khochkhach

In Person: Director Salma Baccar

Saturday, October 28 at 9:00 pm

Sunday, October 29 at 6:00 pm

Set in the early 1940's in Tunis, this poignant film follows the life of young, aristocratic Zakia. After a painful childbirth, Zakia is given a cup of khochkhach (poppy tea) by her mother to alleviate discomfort. Zakia finds escape in the drug for both her physical suffering and the mental anguish she

bears from her sham marriage to the affluent Si Mikhtar. She soon plummets into a world of addiction and is forced into an asylum. Within the walls of the institution, Zakia finds solace in relating to other Tunisian women fallen from society and sanity. However, it is thanks to the friendship of Khemais, a man who presumably killed his wife, that she regains her self-esteem and love for life. In *Khochkhach*, Director Salma Baccar continues her passionate and revealing focus on women at different moments in Tunisian history.

(Tunisia, Directed by Salma Baccar, 2005, 102 minutes)



A New Day in Old Sana'a



Friday, November 3 at 9:00 pm

Saturday, November 4 at 7:00 pm

The first ever feature film from Yemen paints a tantalizing scene of the ancient city of Sana'a, steeped in revered tradition, inhabited by a modern society and veiled in seductive charm. In three days affluent Tariq will wed the notoriously beautiful yet haughty Bilquis and he is overjoyed when, for the first time, he catches a glimpse of her dancing before dawn, clad in the dress he gave her as a wedding gift. Later that day, as quirky gossips of

Sana'a chatter, Tariq and the whole neighborhood gather that the figure in the dress and the object of Tariq's affection is not Bilquis, but Ines, a poor orphan henna artist, in love with Tariq, who is now suspected of theft. Italian photographer and employer of Tariq, Federico, enraptured with the magic of Sana'a, narrates the progression of Tariq's dilemma.

(Yemen, Directed by Bader Ben Hirsi, 2006, 86 minutes)

The Night Baghdad Fell

Saturday, November 4 at 9:00 pm

Sunday, November 5 at 5:30 pm

Cheeky humor jabs at Egyptian languor and American foreign policy, *The Night Baghdad Fell* kicks off with its namesake historical event.



Throughout Egypt folks are glued to their televisions, paralyzed in shock and gripped with the fear – how much time do they have until the Americans invade Cairo? Shaker, a school headmaster, for one, will not sit and passively watch the desecration of Iraq while waiting for the sack of Cairo. With his eccentric family reluctantly sacrificing their time, marital status and rooftop for Shaker's patriotic schemes, he commissions former

genius student, Tarek, who, post-graduation, has taken to nightly sessions at the "Hookah Research Center," to engineer a defense weapon. Affected by the same anxieties and feeling of powerlessness as Shaker, Tarek embraces hashish joints between his sexual fantasies of a certain former National Security Advisor. When Shaker enlists his activist daughter, Salma to wed Tarek, "for the good of Egypt," Tarek, like the other men in the neighborhood, finds he can only make progress, both on the weapon project and in the bedroom, if Salma dons fatigues.

(Egypt, Directed by Mohamed Amin, 2005, 109 minutes)



A Perfect Day

Friday, November 3 at 9:15 pm

Saturday, November 4 at 7:30 pm

A Perfect Day evocatively captures a nation finding itself at a crossroads between war and peace, pain and resolution. Claudia finally decides to sign the paperwork to formally declare her husband dead, 15 years after he disappeared during the war. As she

grapples with her guilt and torment over the empty space in her bed, her son Malek, a borderline narcoleptic, sleepwalks his way through a renovated Beirut in search of his beautiful girlfriend, yet another listless member of a generation dislocated from reality and numbed by trauma. Awarded the International Press Critics Prize at the Locarno Film Festival, this second feature from filmmaking team Khalil Joreige and Joana Hadjithomas (*Around the Pink House*, *Arabian Sights* 2000) marks another important step in the renaissance of post-civil war Lebanese cinema.

(France/Lebanon/Germany, Directed by Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige, 2005, 88 minutes)

The Prince That Contemplated His Soul

Friday, October 27 at 9:00 pm

Saturday, October 28 at 7:00 pm

An enchanting fable of a prince and his spiritual quest is vividly imparted by a blind dervish on his own mystical journey. Young Ishtar and her blind dervish grandfather, Bab' Aziz, trek through the vast desert in search of the great gathering of the elders. The location of the legendary meeting will be revealed only to those who have faith. Bab' Aziz passes the time by recounting the prince's expeditions to his

granddaughter as they encounter others in the desert whose life experiences remarkably echo those of the prince's tale. Every story within this film marvelously unfurls to Sufi music. A stunning follow up to Nacer Khemir's first film *The Dove's Lost Necklace* (Filmfest DC 1991).

(Tunisia/France/Germany/Hungary/UK, Directed by Nacer Khemir, 2005, 96 minutes)



Waiting

Friday, October 27 at 7:00 pm

Sunday, October 29 at 8:30 pm

Ahmad, a disillusioned 40-ish filmmaker determined to emigrate out of Palestine, reluctantly accepts one last job. He must audition theatrical talent to perform at the new

National Palestinian Theatre in Gaza. Ahmad and his team, which include local celebrity Bissan and cameraman "Lumiere," meet crowds of refugees in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, and audition them by having them act out their essential condition, their sense of "waiting," before the camera. The auditions — at turns comical, surprising, and poignant — unearth strong and varied personalities by

both professional and would-be actors, united by dreams of homecoming, reunion and universal human longings.

(Palestine/France, Directed by Rashid Masharawi, 2005, 90 minutes)



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

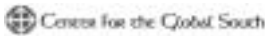
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