



THE WASHINGTON, DC INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
presents

ARABIAN SIGHTS 2017
CONTEMPORARY ARAB CINEMA, WORLD PREMIERES AND EXCITING GUESTS

October 20 – 29

WASHINGTON, DC - The 22ND Annual Arabian Sights Film Festival kicks off Friday, October 20th to present 9 new and exciting films from today's Arab world. Running through Sunday, October 29th, the Festival features captivating films from numerous Arab countries including Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and UAE, plus European co-productions.

"The Arabian Sights Film Festival showcases films that demonstrate the range and commitment of directors telling moving stories while exploring issues facing their region," said Arabian Sights Director, Shirin Ghareeb. **All features in this series are Washington, DC premieres, two of which are American premieres. All films have English subtitles.** The complete schedule of films and events is available at www.filmfestdc.org/arabiansights.

The Arabian Sights Audience Award will be awarded to the film voted the most popular by the audience. The **Cultural Ambassador Prize**, a juried award sponsored by *The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington*, will go to one of four participating films.

FILMS

Highlights include our Closing Night event, featuring the Emirati action-packed thriller, **THE WORTHY**. In the dystopian-set film by award-winning Emirati filmmaker, Ali F. Mostafa, a small group of survivors become pawns in a test for survival, where only one of them shall be chosen worthy. A party will follow the film sponsored by the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates. Tickets are \$20. (**THE WORTHY** will be screened on Sunday, October 29 at 7:00 pm.)

In the Jordanian comedy, **BLESSED BENEFIT**, middle-aged, scrawny, bespectacled Ahmad discovers that prison has its own rhythms, rules and economies. Director Mahmoud al Massad's award-winning comedy has screened at festivals worldwide, including the Toronto International Film Festival and the Palms Spring International Film Festival. (**Blessed Benefit** will be screened on Friday, October 20 at 6:30 pm and Sunday, October 22 at 4:00 pm).

American premiere, **A DAY FOR WOMEN**, is the latest must see, feel good film from Egypt creating international buzz after playing at the London and Dubai International Film Festivals, and opening the Cairo International Film Festival. 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. This film is selected to compete for the Cultural Ambassador Prize. (**A Day for Women** will be screened on Friday, October 27 at 9:00 pm and Saturday, October 28 at 9:00 pm).

Also featured is Tunisian-French co-production, **FOREIGN BODY**. An explosive triangle of jealousy, doubt, and attraction erupts after young Samia flees her homeland in the turbulent aftermath of the Tunisian revolution and arrives illegally in France. This film is selected to compete for the Cultural Ambassador Prize. (**Foreign Body** will be screened on Saturday, October 21 at 7:00 pm and Sunday, October 29 at 5:00 pm).

I STILL HIDE TO SMOKE, from Director Rayhana, won the audience award at the Thessaloniki Film Festival as well as 7 awards at the Cyprus International Film Festival. A Turkish bath becomes the setting for a series of steamy, provocative and political confrontations between women of all ages, shapes and sizes. This film is selected to compete for the Cultural Ambassador Prize. The director, Rayhana, will be present for a Q&A following the film. (**I Still Hide to Smoke** will be screened on Saturday, October 21 at 9:00 pm and Sunday, October 22 at 8:00 pm).

North American premiere **MY UNCLE** is a heartwarming comedy about a struggling actress, Alia, who hosts an unexpected visit from her uncle Abderraouf, played by beloved Moroccan actor, Abderrahim Tounsi. The 16th Marrakech International Film Festival celebrated Abderrahim Tounsi's legacy in a special tribute program. This film is selected to compete for the Cultural Ambassador Prize. (**My Uncle** will be screened on Friday, October 20 at 8:30 pm and Saturday, October 28 at 4:45 pm).

IN SYRIA (*INSYRIATED*) won the Panorama Audience Award at the 67th Berlin International Film Festival. In this powerfully gripping drama, 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. Every decision becomes a matter of life and death, forcing difficult moral choices in the struggle to survive. (**In Syria** will be screened on Sunday, October 22 at 6:00 pm and Sunday, October 29 at 3:00 pm).

Critically acclaimed director Marwan Hamed (*The Yacoubian Building*) and best-selling novelist Ahmed Mourad have teamed up for the second time since the Egyptian box office smash, *The Blue Elephant*, to create the visually stunning thriller, **THE ORIGINALS**. The film follows everyman, Samir (Maged El Kedwany), who, after being fired from his job one day, finds himself recruited to be part of a secret society with unlimited access to surveillance at their disposal. (**The Originals** will be screened on Saturday, October 21 at 4:30 pm and Friday, October 27 at 6:30 pm).

SOLITAIRE, an Official Selection of the renowned Dubai, Seattle, and Washington, DC International Film Festivals, has gained exceptional buzz around the festival circuit. Therese, the wife of a mayor in Lebanon, enthusiastically awaits a visit from her daughter's suitor and his family—until she discovers that her long-awaited guests are from Syria. This debut feature from director Sophie Boutros, delicately balances warm-hearted laughs with timely social insight. (**Solitaire** will be screened on Saturday, October 28 at 7:00 pm).

Please visit filmfestdc.org/arabiansights for additional descriptions on films and special events.

CONFIRMED GUESTS

- Saturday, October 21st and Sunday, October 22nd: Algerian director and playwright Rayhana provides extended insight in the pushback she faced as a result of the candid depictions of women in her film **I STILL HIDE TO SMOKE**.
- Additional guests to be announced via eblasts.

RECEPTIONS

- The Friday, October 20th screening of **BLESSED BENEFIT** to be followed by a reception sponsored by the Jordanian American Association of D.C.
- The Saturday, October 21st screening of **FOREIGN BODY** to be followed by a reception sponsored by the Embassy of the Republic of Tunisia.

- The Closing Night event on Sunday, October 29 features the premiere of **THE WORTHY** followed by a closing party sponsored by the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates.

TICKETS

Tickets are \$13 per person for each screening, unless otherwise noted. **A Festival Pass is available, 10 tickets for a discounted rate of \$100.** This pass does not include the Closing Night film. Tickets may be purchased online through the Festival web site (filmfestdc.org/arabiansights) or Eventnation.com until noon the day of each show. Remaining tickets will be available at the theater starting one hour before the first show of the day.

THEATER LOCATIONS

AMC Mazza Gallerie

5300 Wisconsin Ave., NW; Take Metro Red line to Friendship Heights.

Street parking and the garage at Mazza Gallerie are available.

Film trailers and a complete schedule are available online at filmfestdc.org/arabiansights. Click the catalog cover image on our homepage for a downloadable PDF of the catalog.

ABOUT FILMFEST DC

Since its inception in 1987, Filmfest DC has become one of Washington's major cultural events, attracting thousands of moviegoers each year. Filmfest DC is an annual spring District-wide event, bringing together the city's major cultural institutions in a spirit of cooperation and celebration. Arabian Sights is a unique annual festival created and administered under the Filmfest DC umbrella. For more information, visit www.filmfestdc.org.

HIGHLIGHT SUMMARIES OF ARABIAN SIGHTS 2017 FILMS

- **A Day for Women** | Egypt
 - American Premiere
 - Official Selection, BFI London International Film Festival
 - Opening film at the Cairo International Film Festival
 - Official Selection, Dubai International Film Festival
- **Blessed Benefit** | Jordan
 - Followed by the screening on Friday, October 20, at 6:00 pm, there will be a reception hosted by the Jordanian American Association of DC
 - NETPAC Award – Best Asian Film, Warsaw International Film Festival
 - Special Jury Award – Best Actor Ahmad Taher, Warsaw International Film Festival
 - Official Selection, Toronto International Film Festival
 - Official Selection, Palm Springs International Film Festival

- **Foreign Body** | Tunisia/France
 - Followed by the screening on Saturday, October 21, at 7:00 pm, there will be a reception hosted by the Embassy of the Republic of Tunisia
 - Best Screenplay, River Run International Film Festival
 - Official Selection, Toronto International Film Festival
- **I Still Hide to Smoke** | Algeria/France/Greece
 - Followed by the screening on Friday, October 20, at 6:00 pm, there will be a Q&A with special guest director Rayhana
 - Audience Award, Thessaloniki Film Festival
 - Third Prize, Sharm El-Sheikh International Festival
 - Nuovi Sguardi, Sguardi Altrove Film Festival
 - Best Feature Film of a Debut Filmmaker, Cyprus International Film Festival
 - Best Script of a First Feature Film, Cyprus International Film Festival
 - Best Cinematography of a First Feature Film, Cyprus International Film Festival
 - Best Director of a First Feature Film, Cyprus International Film Festival
 - Best Production Design of a First Feature Film, Cyprus International Film Festival
 - Best Editing of a First Feature Film, Cyprus International Film Festival
 - Best Leading Actress of a First Feature Film, Cyprus International Film Festival
- **In Syria (Insyriated)** | Lebanon/Belgium/France
 - Panorama Audience Award, Berlin International Film Festival
- **My Uncle** | Morocco
 - North American Premiere
 - Tribute program, Marrakech International Film Festival
- **The Originals** | Egypt
- **Solitaire** | Lebanon/Jordan /Egypt
 - Official Selection, Dubai International Film Festival
 - Official Selection, Seattle International Film Festival
 - Official Selection, Filmfest DC
- **The Worthy** | United Arab Emirates
 - *Closing night film followed by a party*
 - Official Selection, BFI London Film Festival
 - Best Emirati Filmmaker, 4th Dubai International Film Festival
 - Young Filmmaker of the Year, Digital Studio Awards

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Arabian Sights Film Festival

is presented by The Embassy of the United Arab Emirates



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