



CONTEMPORARY ARAB CINEMA, OUTSTANDING FILMS AND EXCITING GUESTS

WASHINGTON, DC- The 24th Annual Arabian Sights Film Festival kicks off **Friday, October 18** to present 11 new and exciting films plus a shorts program and a virtual reality experience from the Arab world. Running through **Sunday, October 27th**, the Festival features captivating films from numerous Arab countries including Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, and the UAE, plus other European and Arab co-productions.

The Arabian Sights Film Festival showcases films that demonstrate the range and commitment of directors who invariably manage to tell moving stories while exploring issues facing their region. **All films have English subtitles.** The complete schedule of films, events, and guests is available at www.filmfestdc.org/arabiansights.

Highlights include an Opening Night event featuring the film **IT MUST BE HEAVEN**, the latest film from Elia Suleiman, one of the leading Palestinian filmmakers. This film premiered in competition at the Cannes Film Festival this year and received both the Special Jury Prize and Fipresci International Critics Prize in Cannes. It is also the official Palestinian entry for Best International Feature Film at the Oscars. A party will follow the film. Tickets are \$20.

New this year is an interactive virtual reality program, the multi award-winning documentary **Home After War**. Set in present day Falluja, this virtual reality experience is a cutting edge program and the first time it is being offered in *Arabian Sights*.

Back by popular demand! This year, the **Arabian Sights Film Festival** is pleased to bring back a FREE screening of **Short Cuts**. Featured will be the North American premiere of **WHAT REMAINS** by director Areej Mahmoud. Raed Alsemari, the director of **DUNYA'S DAY**, winner of the Short Film Jury Award at the Sundance Film Festival, will be present for a post-screening discussion with the audience.

CONFIRMED GUESTS

- Sunday, October 20: Saudi filmmaker Raed Alsemari discusses his hilarious and biting social satire **DUNYA'S DAY (Short Cuts)** during a post-screening Q&A.
- Sunday, October 27: Co-director Rachel Leah Jones will be on hand to answer questions about her new documentary sparking international debate, **ADVOCATE**.

HIGHLIGHT SUMMARIES OF ARABIAN SIGHTS 2019 FILMS

OPENING NIGHT FILM, Arabian Sights Film Festival, 2019

IT MUST BE HEAVEN dir. by Elia Suleiman | France, Palestine

The promise of a new life turns into a comedy of errors when a man leaves Palestine, seeking an alternative homeland.

Winner of the Jury Special Prize and Fipresci International Critics Prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

Opening Night is co-presented with the Sahouri Insurance & Financial and the Middle East Institute. ***It Must Be Heaven** will be screened on Friday, October 18 at 6:30 pm and will be followed by an Opening Reception. Tickets are \$20.00.*

ADAM dir. by Maryam Touzani | Morocco, France

In her stunning directorial debut, Maryam Touzani shares the beautiful story of two women in Casablanca who transform each other's lives.

Audience Award winner at the Angouleme French Film Festival, Best Director Award at Almaty Film Festival, winner Best Actress (Nisrin Erradi) at Durban International Film Festival, and Morocco's submission to the Academy Awards. This screening is co-presented with the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco. ***Adam** will be screened on Sunday, October 20 at 5:15 pm and Friday, October 25 at 6:30 pm.*

Advocate

Directed by Rachel Leah Jones & Philippe Bellaiche | Israel, Canada, Switzerland

A documentary portrait of Israeli human rights lawyer Lea Tsemel who has represented Palestinian political prisoners for nearly 50 years.

Winner of the Documentary Jury Prize at the Hong Kong International Film Festival, Grand Jury Prize (World Cinema) Nominee at the Sundance Film Festival. ***Advocate** will screen Sunday, October 27 at 4:00 pm.*

Arab Blues

Directed by Manele Labidi | France

After years abroad, a woman returns to Tunis with the dream of opening up her own psychotherapy practice.

Winner of the Audience Award at the Venice International Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival Official Selection, winner of BNL People's Choice Award at the Venice Days Film Festival. *Arab Blues* will screen Saturday, October 26 at 8:30 pm and Sunday, October 27 at 8:15 pm.

Baghdad in My Shadow
American Premiere

Directed by Samir | Switzerland, Germany, UK, Iraq

From award winning director Samir, this thrilling drama sets his characters the challenge of contending with the three greatest taboos of Arab society: atheism, adultery and homosexuality. American Premiere. ***Baghdad in My Shadow*** will screen Saturday, October 19 at 6:15 pm and Friday, October 25 at 8:30 pm.

Diamond Dust

Directed by Marwan Hamed | Egypt

Marwan Hamed's (**The Yacoubian Building**, Filmfest DC '07) Egyptian box office hit follows a man seeking to avenge the death of his father, but gets caught in a web of corruption in the process. ***Diamond Dust*** will screen Saturday, October 19 at 3:15 pm.

Escape from Raqqa

Directed by Emmanuel Hamon | France

Understanding that the French services are powerless to help, Sylvain recruits a few friends to carry out a high-risk exfiltration operation to save his wife and son, who left Paris to join ISIS in Syria. ***Escape from Raqqa*** will screen Friday, October 18 at 8:30 pm and Sunday, October 27 at 6:15 pm.

The Guest

Directed by Hadi El Bagoury | Egypt

Amidst his troubles facing trial, Dr. Yehia welcomes his daughter's suitor Osama into his home to get to know him better. This guest, however, brings more harm than good. **Malmo Arab Film Festival Official Selection. *The Guest*** will screen Saturday, October 26 at 2:00 pm.

Home After War

PRESS RELEASE

Muna Abdulkader, Press Relations

For Immediate Release

202.234.3456 or filmfestdc@filmfestdc.org

Directed by Gayatri Parameswaran | Iraq, Germany, US

An award-winning interactive virtual reality experience which chronicles the ever-present dangers for civilians like Ahmaied Hamad and his family, who have returned to their villages in Iraq after the war against IS finally ended.

Jury Award winner at SXSW Film Festival, winner of Best Virtual Reality Video at the NYC Independent Film Festival, winner of Best Sound, Best VR Experience, Creative Advocacy, and Journalistic Achievement at the Social Impact Media Awards. *Home After War* is FREE and will play every half hour from 2:00 pm to 8:00 pm on Saturday, October 26.

New Biz in the Hood!
North American Premiere

Directed by Mohamed Hamidi | France

An unexpected bond results when a young French Algerian employee has to teach his boss how to maneuver in their newly located offices located in an underprivileged suburb of Paris. ***New Biz in the Hood!*** will screen Saturday, October 19 at 8:30 pm and Sunday, October 27 at 2:00 pm.

Rashid & Rajab

Directed by Mohammed Saeed Harib | UAE

A freak accident causes a wealthy Emirati executive and a carefree Egyptian fast-food deliveryman to switch bodies. The unlikely pair gain a different perspective into each other's lives as they desperately look for a way to revert to their former selves. ***Rashid & Rajab*** will screen Saturday, October 26 at 4:15 pm.

What Have We Done To Deserve This? dir. by Eva Spreitzhofer | Austria

Wanda, an atheist feminist from Vienna, faces her worst nightmare when her teenage daughter Nina announces that she has converted to Islam and from now on should be called Fatima. A comic search for explanations, a sense of belonging, and identity. ***What Have We Done To Deserve This?*** will screen Sunday, October 20 at 8:00 pm and Saturday, October 26 at 6:30 pm.

Short Cuts

Short Cuts is FREE will screen Sunday, October 20 at 3:00 pm.

Ambience directed by Wisam Al Jafari | Palestine

Are You Volleyball?! directed by Mohammad Bakhshi | Iran

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Aziza directed by Soudade Kaadan | Lebanon/Syria

Dunya's Day directed by Raed Alsemari | Saudi Arabia/USA

The President's Visit directed by Cyril Aris | Lebanon/USA/Qatar

What Remains directed by Areej Mohmoud | USA

The *Arabian Sights Film Festival* is presented by the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates and supported by the University of the District of Columbia, Crescent Enterprises, the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco, Georgetown University's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, The Middle East Institute, The Arab Gulf States Institute, The Jerusalem Fund, El Gouna Film Festival, Sahouri Insurance & Financial, Georgetown Design Group, and Hartford Technology.

Please visit filmfestdc.org/arabiansights for additional descriptions on films, special events, film trailers and complete schedule. Click the catalog cover image on our homepage for a downloadable PDF of the catalog.

The Arabian Sights Audience Award will be awarded to the film voted the most popular by the audience. The **Arabian Sights Jury Award** is a competitive award to go to one of four participating films.

Tickets are \$14 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 Opening Night film. Tickets may be purchased online through the Festival web site filmfestdc.org/arabiansights until noon the day of the show; tickets are also available at the theater starting one hour before the first show of the day.

Theater Location

AMC Mazza Gallerie Theatre

5300 Wisconsin Ave., NW

Washington, DC 20015

Take Metro Red line to Friendship Heights. Street parking and the garage at Mazza Gallerie are available.

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

About Filmfest DC:

Since its inception in 1987, Filmfest DC has become one of Washington's major cultural events, enhancing the profile of the nation's capital both nationally and internationally. Filmfest DC is a District-wide event, bringing together the city's major cultural institutions in a spirit of cooperation and celebration. Films that have premiered at past Festivals encompass a broad range of international cinema. Arabian Sights is one unique annual festival created and administered under the FFDC umbrella. For more information, visit www.filmfestdc.org.

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