



BRITISH ACADEMY
OF FILM AND TELEVISION ARTS



BAFTA CELEBRATES ARAB CINEMA

BAFTA Goes To The Arab World in Association with Dubai International Film Festival

11–14 July 2008 at 195 Piccadilly

LONDON – Monday 16 June 2008. The British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) in association with the Dubai International Film Festival is to celebrate Arab cinema with **BAFTA GOES TO THE ARAB WORLD**, a four-day event next month that runs from Friday 11 to Monday 14 July, in recognition of Arab cinema's contribution to the global film industry and World Cinema.

This prestigious event will herald some of the best recent releases from filmmakers who defy simple categorisation – most of them UK Premieres, including the award-winning *Captain Abu Raed* (Audience Award at Sundance Film Festival, Best Actor Award at the Muhr Awards – Dubai International Film Festival), *Under the Bombs* (EIUC Award at Venice Film Festival, Winner of the Golden Muhr Award – Dubai International Film Festival), *Paloma Delight* (Lumiere Awards, France), and two new short film documentaries from emerging Iraqi filmmakers.

The Weekend shines the spotlight on a new trend of auteur film making from Egypt through *Eye of the Sun*, as well as on the well-established and distinctive Syrian auteur cinema, which deserves greater recognition outside of its boundaries, with the screening of *Out of Coverage* and *A Plate of Sardines*. It also introduces for the first time to UK audiences *The Water Guard*, an Emirati short that highlights the Gulf as a new destination for cultural creativity.

The selection of feature films at BAFTA includes themes that range from love, war and friendship to the underworld of crime and sado-masochism. The short films give a unique perspective on current hot issues in the region as well as an insight into a wide range of filmmaking approaches. Films from Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and the Emirates will enable audiences to enjoy a carefully crafted programme with Q&As and a talk charting the 100 years history of Arab cinema.

In recognition of this year's European and Arab cultural capitals, Liverpool and Damascus, BAFTA Goes to the Arab World features Syrian films by two of Syria's most eminent directors, and will go on tour to Liverpool as part of the Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival.

BAFTA Goes To The Arab World highlights will include:

- **Special film screenings** with Q&As with their directors – seven recent feature films:
 - Philippe Aractingi's ***Under the Bombs*** (Lebanon)
 - Borhane Alaouie's ***Khalass*** (Lebanon) (Won Best Screenplay and editor at the Muhr Awards – Dubai International Film Festival)
 - Abdellatif Abdelhamaid's ***Out of Coverage*** (Syria)
 - Ibrahim El Batout's ***Eye of the Sun*** (Egypt)

Amin Matalqa's **Captain Abu Raed** (Jordan)
Nadir Moknèche's **Paloma Delight** (Algeria)
Eyes Baccar's **She and He** (Tunisia)

A selection of eight short films:

A Stranger in His Own Country (Iraq)
A Candle For The Shabandar Cafe (Iraq)
The Singing Barber of Mosul (Lebanon)
Ashura: Blood and Beauty (Lebanon)
And To The Arabs of Haifa A Special Message (Palestine)
A World Apart Within 15 Minutes (Palestine)
A Plate of Sardines (Syria)
The Water Guard (Emirates)

+ Q&A with directors Maysoon Pachachi, Katia Saleh and Walid Al Shehhi

- **History of Arab Cinema** – a lively discussion on Arab cinema hosted by Walter Armbrust, chairman and director of the Middle East Centre at Saint Anthony's College, Oxford, Albert Hourani Fellow, and university lecturer in Modern Middle East Studies at Oxford University. This talk explores the history of Arab Cinema across its different countries since the days of silent movies to this day.
- **Filming in the Arab World** – a focus on filming in the Arab region with contributions from major filmmakers from the UK, US and Europe and Q&As with key industry names. This event will bring together industry professionals to highlight the benefits of filming in the Arab Region, in particular in Tunisia, Jordan, the Emirates and Morocco. Films that have famously shot in this region include the *Indiana Jones* series, *Star Wars*, *The English Patient*, *Gladiator* and *Syriana*.
- **Industry Network Event** – a filmmakers' and distributors' networking lunch hosted by BAFTA. BAFTA wishes to repeat its success from previous global events in bringing together filmmakers and distributors with a view to exploring possible production and distribution partnerships between the Arab World and the UK. The prospects are promising as the trend increases for a penetration of Arab films into mainstream cinemas. This includes *Caramel*, *Days of Glory*, *Paradise Now*, *Divine Intervention* and *West Beirut*.
- **Opening and Closing Night Receptions** – hosted by BAFTA, these events will be a chance for a cultural crossover of filmmaking discussions and networking opportunities.

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Notes to editors:

1. **Contemporary Arab filmmakers** are currently producing films that defy simple categorisation but instead challenge the established tradition of filmmaking in their countries. Arab cinematic production started in Egypt with the first news film

in 1909, and silent movies in the 1920s and went on to become the third biggest film industry after Hollywood and Bollywood. The selection of feature films at BAFTA includes themes that range from love, war, friendship to the underworld of crime and sado-masochism. The shorts give a unique perspective on current hot issues in the region as well as an insight into a wide range of filmmaking approaches.

2. About BAFTA – as the leading organisation dedicated to the promotion of excellence in the film, TV and interactive industries, BAFTA is renowned for its high profile Awards ceremonies and outstanding programme of events.

3. About Dubai International Film Festival – in 2004, the Dubai International Film Festival launched with its theme of 'Bridging Cultures. Meeting Minds. 'Going into its fifth year, DIFF is held under the Honorary Chairmanship of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum. DIFF is a not-for-profit cultural event, presented and organised by the Dubai Technology and Media Free Zone Authority. Reflecting Dubai's cosmopolitan and multicultural character, the festival showcases a wide selection of features, shorts and documentaries from around the world. DIFF aims to establish itself as a major international festival, while continuing to act as a platform for showcasing excellence in Arab Cinema and contributing to the development and growth of the regional industry and talent. The 5th Dubai International Film Festival will be taking place in Dubai from 11 to 18 December 2008.

4. Culture Capitals – BAFTA Goes To The Arab World features two films by leading Syrian directors – *Out of Coverage* by Abdullatif Abdulhamid and *A Plate of Sardines* by Omar Amiralay – Syrian films are rarely shown internationally despite their high quality and distinctive influences from the former Soviet Union. The screenings mark Damascus being cultural capital of the Arab World. BAFTA Goes To The Arab World will also be touring to Liverpool, cultural capital of Europe as part of the Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival (LAAF). For press information on LAAF contact Adrian Pennington on 07737 970 930 or email penningtonadrian@hotmail.com.