



Triumph of Dreams

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Thank you so much to Variety Magazine and GFF, it's an honor to receive this award

Youssef Sarhan

Nada Riyadh and Ayman El Amir, co-directors and producers of *The Brink of Dreams* received the prestigious annual MENA Variety Award at the festival plaza last night. Upon receiving the award, Nada expressed her gratitude, stating, “Thank you so much to Variety Magazine and GFF. It's an honor to receive this award on our premiere day, and we're very thankful for your support.”

The vibrant cast and crew of *The Brink of Dreams* graced the red carpet at the GFF Plaza, creating an atmosphere of excitement and

anticipation. The event showcased a significant number of talented individuals behind the film, including co-directors Nada Riyadh and Ayman El Amir. Among the attendees were members of the Panorama Al-Barsha Troupe, each bringing their unique flair to the occasion, including: Majda Massoud, Haidy Sameh, Marina Samir, Mariam Nassar, Yostine Samir, and Lydia Haroun, all of whom played vital roles in the film.

Following its triumphant premiere at Cannes, where it earned the prestigious Golden Eye Award for Best Documentary, *The Brink of Dreams* is now competing in the GFF

Feature Documentary Competition and vying for the Cinema for Humanity Audience Award.

This evening marks a significant milestone as the film celebrates its MENA premiere, a moment that resonates deeply with both the cast and the audience, highlighting the film's universal themes and cultural significance. The screening promises to captivate viewers, shedding light on the remarkable stories within its frames. As the audience gathered for the screening, there was a palpable sense of connection, anticipation, and the shared belief in the power of storytelling.

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Today

🌟 CineConcert - Hesham Nazih



Today at **8:00 PM**, join us at the **Festival Plaza** for “Cinema in Concert”, a captivating musical journey through Egypt’s most iconic film scores. For the first time, Emmy-nominated composer Hesham Nazih will perform live, joined by a full orchestra conducted by Ahmed Farag. Hear the unforgettable scores from *Snakes & Ladders*, *Ibrahim Labyad*, *The Blue Elephant*, *Diamond Dust*, and more as they come to life on stage. Don’t miss this unforgettable night of cinema and sound!

🌟 Meet the Filmmaker

WE ARE INSIDE

Director:
Farah Kassem
Producer:
Cynthia Choucair
Line Producer:
Noor Jarraus
Sea Cinema 2
1:45 pm

HYDROELECTRIC JOY

Director:
Alexander Markov
Sea Cinema 3
3:30 pm

SNAKES AND LADDERS

Director:
Tarek Alarian
Writer:
Mohamed Hefzy
Sea Cinema 1
4:00 pm

MISTRESS DISPELLER

Director:
Elizabeth Lo
Producers:
Maggie Li
Michala Sabnani
Dani Fung
Sea Cinema 3
5:15 pm

THE MIRACULOUS TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORKING CLASS INTO FOREIGNERS

Director:
Samir
Sea Cinema 2
5:30 pm

ON FALLING

Director:
Laura Carreira
Sea Cinema 1
7:00 pm

SOUNDTRACK TO A COUP D'ETAT

Producer:
Rémi Grellety
Sea Cinema 3
8:00 pm

OLIVIA AND THE CLOUDS

Director:
Tomas Pichardo Espallat
Sea Cinema 2
9:15 pm

🌟 In Conversation: Hend Sabry

Join us today at **11 AM** in the **CineGouna Theater** at **GFF Plaza** for an intimate conversation with the renowned actress and producer, Hend Sabry. From her breakthrough role in *Silences of the Palace* (1994) to her successful ventures as the chairwoman of a digital film company, Hend has seamlessly navigated both commercial and critically acclaimed projects. Moderated by industry expert Chadi Zeneddine, this session promises insightful discussions and personal anecdotes. Don’t miss this opportunity to learn from one of Arab cinema’s most influential figures!



🌟 Moon Knight



This afternoon from **1:00 PM** to **2:30 PM**, the **CineGouna Theater** will host a panel discussion titled “Moon Knight; Marvel - International Success.” Filmmaker Mohamed Diab, joined by Sarah Gohar, Ahmed Hafez, composer Hesham Nazih, and costume designer Reem El Adl, will discuss the Egyptian crew’s contributions to the global success of *Moon Knight*. The session will be moderated by Mohammed Bassiouny, Co-Founder of Tayarah World.

Egypt-Saudi Film Bridge

Today at **3:00 PM** in the **Forum Room, GFF Plaza**: Join us for “Egypt and Saudi Arabia: Bridging Cinema’s Legacy with Ambitious New Frontiers.” This discussion will explore the collaboration between Egypt’s rich cinematic heritage and Saudi Arabia’s emerging film industry. Speakers include Producer and Founder of Film Square Ahmed Badawy, Head of The Red Sea Fund Emad Eskandar, General Manager of MBC Studios KSA Zeinab Abu AISamh, CEO of MBC Academy and MBC Talent Wessam Kattan, and General Manager at Egypt Rotana Studios Mohamed Waffa. The panel will be moderated by media investment expert Gamal Guemeih.

Stories Matter

Today at the **GFF Plaza**, two engaging events will explore the profound impact of cinema. At **1:00 PM** in the forum room, “Impactful Stories: Beyond the Film” will feature producer Remi Grellety, actress Kinda Alloush, and UN representatives discussing how films address critical societal issues like gender and war, exploring their potential for inspiring social change. will spotlight filmmakers Muhammed ElMughanni and Rama Abdi. This session delves into the resilience of Palestinian, Sudanese, and Lebanese cinema in the face of conflict, as well as the potential of emerging Yemeni and Syrian projects.

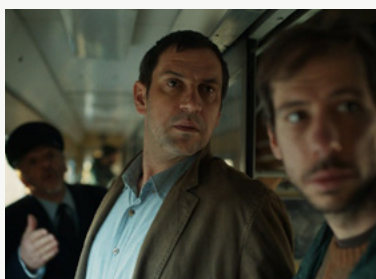
Tomorrow

★ Red Carpet



Tomorrow at **7:00 PM**, the **GFF Plaza** will host the red carpet event of the highly anticipated *Everybody Loves Touda*. Joining us on the red carpet will be award-winning Moroccan director Nabil Ayouch, co-writer Maryam Touzani, actress Nisrin Erradi, and producer Amine Benjelloun. After its world premiere at Cannes, the film is now competing in the GFF Feature Narrative Competition. A screening of the film will follow the red carpet event. Don't miss this exciting opportunity!

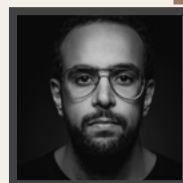
★ Short Film Competition Begins



Tomorrow, **GFF 7** kicks off its short film competition, showcasing 16 films across four programs. Screening at **2:30 PM** in Sea Cinema 1 is the first program, featuring several award-winning titles, including the opening film of GFF 7 and Palme d'Or winner at Cannes, *The Man Who Could Not Remain Silent*. Other highlights include

Sans Voix (Locarno's Best Swiss Short), *A Promise to the Sea* (São Paulo International Short Film Festival), and *Upshot* (winner of Locarno's Pardino d'Oro for Best Auteur Short). This program offers a diverse selection of acclaimed global talent.

7 Editions Questions



Mohammad Taymour
Head of CineGouna Market

- The most exciting highlight of the **CineGouna Market** is that we are expanding, featuring 22 exhibitors from 8 countries, including 7 Arab nations.
- **GFF's** success over seven editions comes from balancing high-quality films with the value of the CineGouna.
- The region acknowledges **GFF's** industry value, evident in the positive feedback I receive from diverse nationalities.
- What I enjoy most about being part of **GFF** is the sense of teamwork, the positive atmosphere, and the strong support among everyone.
- The most memorable moment was celebrating the closing ceremony of the CineGouna in 2023, where the team felt our long-standing efforts were recognized and appreciated.
- For the next seven editions, I hope **GFF** grows larger and gains international recognition for its value to the film industry.
- To the **GFF** audience: Join us at the festival! Enjoy the films and attend the CineGouna to expand your network.

Window on Palestine

Tomorrow, *The Dupes*, directed by Tewfik Saleh, will open the **GFF 2nd** edition of the "Window on Palestine" program. Curated in response to the Gaza crisis, this program features six films that highlight the resilience and humanity of the Palestinian people. Saleh's acclaimed film, based on Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun*, follows three Palestinian refugees seeking a better future. *The Dupes* will be screened at **3:30 PM** in **AudiMax**.



Reunion

Tomorrow at **3:00 PM**, the **CineGouna Theater** will host a reunion for *Snakes and Ladders* (ElSelm W El Teebann). Directed by Tarek El Arian, the event features producer Mohamed Hefzy, actress Hala Shiha, actor Hany Salama, and composer Hesham Nazih, moderated by Andrew Mohsen. The discussion will explore the film's lasting impact and what continues to keep this beloved film alive in the hearts of audiences.



In Focus

Tomorrow, the CineGouna Forum will host two informative sessions in the **Forum Room** at **GFF Plaza**.

At **11:00 AM**, "Finance Your Film: Navigating Unconventional Funding and Legal Frameworks" will feature speakers Soleil Gharbieh, Alessandra Speciale, Ahmed Tarek, and Savina Neirotti, moderated by Mostafa Youssef. This session will delve into innovative funding options and legal aspects of production.

Later, at **3:30 PM**, "Platforms: What Are They Looking For?" will provide insights from Aya Medhat, Nashwa Gad, and Joe Al Khawand on in-demand content. Join us for these valuable discussions!

Farah Kassem, director of *We Are Inside:* A Tribute Love Poem to My Father and Tripoli



"I'm thrilled that *We Are Inside* will have its Arab premiere at the El Gouna Film Festival. My father spent a decade in Egypt during the 1960s, dreaming of unity while finding solace in Arab classical poetry. He would have been moved to see his world on screen here."

Nahed Nasr

How did you weave your personal narrative and your father's relationship into your connection with Tripoli, a city you've distanced yourself from for years?

When I began filming *We Are Inside*, I set specific cinematic limitations, focusing on moments shared with my father through the window. Tripoli's character highlights the tension between private and public spaces, illustrating how communities navigate external events. This theme became particularly relevant during the 2019 Lebanese revolution, when private and public lines blurred. The window became a motif for how personal narratives shape perceptions of the outside world.

My father's home, near a military base, captures Tripoli's constant motion; he avoids looking outside, using the television as a surrogate window. This reluctance intrigued me. Returning to Tripoli after leaving at eighteen forced me to reconcile with aspects I once resisted, as I aimed to convey the city's complexities through my images and sounds, highlighting its diverse facades and rich collective memory.

Did your dual role as director and cinematographer challenge your directorial vision?

Filming this project myself allowed for an intimate exploration of the narrative, with my father embracing his role as a collaborator. Our process evolved into a ritual where he chose when to engage. When it

was my turn in front of the camera, I immersed myself fully, relying on my collaborators—Tebbe Schöningh (cinematographer), Joelle Abou Chabke (sound engineer), and my production team—for technical support. We engaged in thorough discussions about the film's aesthetics and sound to ensure authenticity.

Throughout the four-year production, I filmed solo but spent key moments with my team, such as when I read my first poem. Working with Tebbe, who didn't speak Arabic, allowed us to explore imagery beyond language, while Joelle enriched the soundscape, later refined by our sound editor. Each team member was vital to the project's evolution, with Jon Sensmeier composing music that inspired my creative process. Having a team in our home revealed new facets of my father, highlighting his playful side. This camaraderie enhanced my directorial vision and made our intimacy relatable to the external world.

What were the main production challenges you faced during this filmmaking journey?

The production of *We Are Inside* faced significant challenges, reflecting the struggles of many Lebanese films during turbulent times. Initially planned for one year in 2018, filming extended over four years due to the Lebanese revolution, which forced a blend of personal stories with public events.

This period required me to recalibrate my vision while managing my emotions as a filmmaker, citizen, and daughter. The COVID pandemic and economic crisis halted poetry club meetings, and my father's declining health mirrored the country's deterioration.

The Beirut port explosion in August 2020 paused our progress, and my father's passing in January 2021 made editing emotionally difficult. However, producer Cynthia Choucair reminded me that films reflect life's realities. After a couple of years, we resumed editing in 2022 and 2023, completing the project thanks to Cynthia, Anders, and editing consultant Isabella Rinaldi.

What insights or realizations did the journey lead you to? How has it changed you?

Reflecting on this journey, I see the urgency that drove me to create it. The world captured in this film has vanished—my father has passed, Nana returned to Sri Lanka, and the Tripoli poetry club no longer exists. I'm grateful for the fleeting moments shared with that community.



My motivation was to preserve my father's legacy and bridge the generational gap through poetry. My father's view of time shaped my perspective: he believed the past made up 60% of our existence, the present 10%, and the future 30%.

We Are Inside is my love poem—a tribute to my father, the film's participants, and Tripoli. It explores temporality and the struggle of remembering and forgetting. Today, I recognize the importance of memory, especially as families and heritages in Palestine and Lebanon are erased.

“GFF is a moment of togetherness, reminding us of our shared history and enduring spirit

“This period required me to recalibrate my vision while managing my emotions as a filmmaker, citizen, and daughter

Heartfelt Moments with Esaad Younis



Roba Hesham

The CineGouna Theater pulsed with excitement as Esaad Younis participated in a meaningful dialogue with the captivating actress Yousra. They reminisced about Esaad's beginnings, which commenced at the age of 16 when she entered the world of radio. Her acting career blossomed in 1977 with the celebrated series *Hekayet Miza*, featuring the legendary Samir Ghanem.

Both actresses expressed gratitude for their collaboration in *Avocato*, reminiscing about their behind-the-scenes experiences with Adel Emam. Esaad sent a heartfelt message to him, saying, "Adel, you are truly missed and will remain in our hearts forever."

Esaad also credited El Sayed Rady for his significant role in her rise to fame and praised Ali El Sherif for his unwavering support. Reflecting on the success of *Bakiza w Zaghoul*, she noted how the streets would empty during its airing, a testament to its popularity. Lastly, she expressed her desire for the film industry to unite in promoting Egypt's beauty, specifically wishing to produce a film in Gouna.

Hany Abu-Asaad at CineGouna

Aya El-Hadad

The CineGouna Theatre buzzed with energy as Palestinian director Hany Abu-Asaad shared his insights in a compelling discussion moderated by Ahmed Shawky, head of CineGouna Funding. Addressing the Palestinian cause, Hany stressed the need for unity against efforts to divide the Arab world. He shared how Egyptian cinema, music, and culture have deeply resonated with him.

Hany shared how youthful love and disillusionment with global hypocrisy inspired his filmmaking, sparking a drive for awareness after witnessing conflicts like the Gulf War and Palestine's occupation.

Hany reflected on the industry's challenges, where filmmakers often face pressure to dilute political themes. He recounted refusing Netflix's request to alter his content, despite risking cancellation. Emphasizing collaboration, he highlighted balancing integrity with star power in casting, valuing new talent, and respecting each actor's unique approach.

Top 3 in the Gemini CinemaTech Competition

Roba Hesham

The fourth edition of the Gemini CinemaTech Pitching Competition, sponsored by Gemini Africa, took place yesterday at the CineGouna Theater. Ten innovative startups presented tech solutions to a distinguished panel of judges, including celebrities Nelly Karim, Amina Khalil, Mohammed Farrag, Adly Thomas (Chairman and CEO of Gemini Africa), and director Yousry Nasrallah, moderated by Sarah Bissada, Deputy Executive Director at GFF. Before an audience of filmmakers, actors, entrepreneurs, and investors, three standout startups were awarded for their exceptional pitches: **Arise Media**, for AI-driven content creation, claimed first place, followed by **El Koshk**, aimed at nurturing young talent in second, and **Panorama Barsha**, a platform connecting actors in Upper Egypt with Cairo filmmakers, securing third. This competition not only celebrates innovation but also reaffirms the potential of technology to revolutionize the cinematic landscape.



CineGouna Market Opens at GFF

Youssef Sarhan

On the third day of the GFF, the CineGouna Market was inaugurated, showcasing over 15 leading companies and institutions in the industry. Headed by Mohammad Taymour, this dynamic hub in the Festival Plaza serves as a platform for professionals eager to connect, collaborate, and explore new opportunities in filmmaking.

The opening event featured Amr Mansi, the GFF Executive Director and co-founder, who commended the dedication of all participating entities. Among the notable attendees was Egyptian actor Ahmed Magdy.

Dina Omar, Senior Marketing Officer of Sound of Egypt, highlighted her company's contribution to the festival's current audio theme, stating, "We pride ourselves on being the first in the market specializing in audio concept development."

Mohamed Saeed, Co-founder of the Egyptian Film Producers Club, shared, "We aim to support fresh graduates passionate about production through an intensive four-month program covering development, financing, execution, and distribution." Lab Palestine also marked its presence at the festival, with Executive Director



Ola Hosny emphasizing their commitment to relatable films for children.

The exhibition features a diverse range of organizations and companies, including ART, the Royal Film Commission of Jordan, Victoria Film, and Lagoon Film Production, all enriching the vibrant tapestry of cinema at El Gouna Film Festival.

