



## Celebrating Hemida

### Bashayer Albaker

*The CineGouna Theater was alive with excitement as mega star Mahmoud Hemida engaged in an exclusive conversation, after receiving the prestigious GFF 2024 Career Achievement Award for his remarkable contributions to Egyptian cinema. With a career spanning over 70 films, Hemida's unique talent has left a lasting mark on the industry.*

Moderated by the enchanting actress Mariam El Khosht, the event began with her praising Hemida's influence, stating, "Some actors leave footprints, and Mahmoud Hemida is one of them." She also highlighted Inas Eldeghedy's representation of Hemida during the opening ceremony, creating a heartfelt atmosphere.

Hemida captivated the audience by reflecting on acting's essential role in society, likening it to communication with the divine. "Acting is like talking to God," he remarked, emphasizing the need for a deeper understanding of the craft. He addressed the challenges actors face regarding public perception, advocating for acceptance and open dialogue.

The conversation shifted to Hemida's experiences filming *Fairs El Madina*. He shared anecdotes about the chaotic nature of production and the importance of remaining grounded in one's character. Hemida also discussed the evolving landscape of filmmaking, noting that today's industry is filled with educated professionals, but requires

regulations for growth.

During a Q&A session, Hemida underscored the significance of generational support in cinema. "Success often seems coincidental, but it's rooted in personal dedication," he stated, emphasizing the importance of nurturing emerging talent.

The event was graced by stars like Hussein Fahmy, Ashraf Zaki, and director Yousry Nasrallah, creating an atmosphere of celebration for Egyptian cinema. Mahmoud Hemida's legacy continues to inspire filmmakers, reminding all those present of cinema's profound impact on society and the need to support the next generation of talent.

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# Today

## Red Carpet



The cast and crew of *The Brink of Dreams* will walk the red carpet tonight at **7:30 PM** at the **GFF Plaza**. The event features co-directors Nada Riyadh and Ayman El Amir, along with the Panorama Al-Barsha Troupe members: Majda Massoud, Haidy Sameh, Marina Samir, Mariam Nassar, Yostine Samir, and Lydia Haroun. Following its premiere at Cannes, where it won the Golden Eye Award for Best Documentary, the film is now competing in the **GFF's** Feature Documentary Competition and for the Cinema for Humanity Audience Award. This evening marks its MENA premiere and will be followed by a screening.

## Meet the Filmmaker

### GHOST TRAIL

**Director:** Jonathan Millet  
**Producer:** Pauline Seigland  
**Sea Cinema 3**  
2:00 pm

### SOUNDTRACK

**TO A COUP D'ETAT**  
**Producer:** Rémi Grellety  
**Sea Cinema 2**  
2:15 pm

### CRICKETS, IT'S YOUR TURN

**Director:** Olga Korotko  
**Actress:** And Inzhu -Abeu  
**Sea Cinema 1**  
3:45 pm

### ELEMENTARY

**Director:** Claire Simon  
**Sound Editor:** Elias Boughedir  
**Protagonist:** Mohamed Ameer  
**Sea Cinema 2**  
5:15 pm

### DUST TO DUST

**Director:** Kósaí Sekine  
**Fashion Designer:** Yuima Nakazato  
**Sea Cinema 3**  
5:30 pm

### BORJ ROUMI

**Director:** Moncef Dhoubib  
**Cast:** Eskander Dhoubib  
Shawki Khouja  
Bilal Slim  
**Sea Cinema 1**  
6:00 pm

### THE CRONE

**Director:** Catherine Kasima Kanda  
**Sea Cinema 2**  
7:45 pm

### TELL THEM ABOUT US

**Director:** Rand Beiruty  
**Sea Cinema 2**  
9:00 pm

## In Conversation: Hany Abu-Assad

Today at **2:00 PM**, join us at the **CineGouna Theater** in the **GFF Plaza** for an intimate conversation with acclaimed filmmaker Hany Abu-Assad. With two Oscar nominations for *Paradise Now* (2006) and *Omar* (2013), he is a powerful voice in international cinema, advancing Palestinian narratives. Moderated by Ahmed Shawky, President of FIPRESCI and Head of CineGouna Funding, this discussion promises insights into Abu-Assad's artistic journey and the importance of representation in film. Don't miss this opportunity to hear about his contributions to Palestinian cinema!



## Meet Esaad Younis



Join us today at **4:00 PM** at the **CineGouna Theater** in the **GFF Plaza** for *Sahebat Al Sa'ada!* We're thrilled to host Esaad Younis, an industry icon known for her roles as an actress, producer, and TV host. With over 100 performances and more than 50 influential Egyptian films, her impact on cinema is immense.

In this special conversation, Esaad Younis will share her remarkable journey alongside the legendary Yousra. Since beginning her producing career in 2000, she has crafted some of Egypt's most celebrated films. Don't miss this inspiring discussion!

## Gemini CinemaTech Pitching Competition

Join us today at **11:30 AM** at the **CineGouna Theater** in the **GFF Plaza** for the 4<sup>th</sup> Gemini CinemaTech Pitching Competition, sponsored by Gemini Africa, where ten innovative startups will showcase their tech solutions for filmmaking. A panel of judges, including actresses Nelly Karim, Amina Khalil, Adly Thomas (Chairman and CEO of Gemini Africa), director Youssry Nasrallah, and actor Mohammed Farrag, will evaluate the pitches and select the top three ideas. Moderated by Sarah Bissada, Deputy Executive Director at GFF, this is an event you won't want to miss!

## Panel Discussions

Join us in the **Forum Room** at the **GFF Plaza** today for a series of engaging panel discussions on Arab cinema production and distribution

At **11:00 AM**, the panel "**International Distribution: How to Travel With Your Film?**" will explore the global reach of Egyptian and Arab films with industry experts including Michel Zana, Alaa Karkouti, Jessica Houry, Alice Kharoubi, and Gary Springer, moderated by Alaa Alasad.

From **1:00 PM** to **2:30 PM**, join "**Co-production: Opportunities and Challenges**" featuring Mohamed Hefzy, Dorothe Beinemeier, Amjad Abu Elela, and Claire Chassagne, moderated by Rula Nasser. In this panel they will share actionable strategies for successful collaborations.

Finally, at **3:00 PM**, don't miss "**Film Markets: The Business Side of Festivals**" with Jerome Paillard, Magdalene Reddy, and Marcello Paolilo, moderated by Mohammed Taymour. This panel will focus on navigating the commercial aspects of filmmaking.

Be sure to attend these valuable discussions that promise to enhance your understanding of the Arab cinema landscape!

# Tomorrow

## ✦ GFF x Zawya



Tomorrow, the **GFF x Zawya** program kicks off at Zawya Cinema in Cairo, extending the magic of GFF's 7<sup>th</sup> edition to a wider audience. From October 27<sup>th</sup> to November 2<sup>nd</sup>, immerse yourself in a daily cinematic experience featuring 14 exceptional films. Highlights include Cannes Official Competition titles: *The Substance*, *The Seed of the Sacred Fig*, and *Caught by the Tides*. Additionally, the program showcases thought-provoking documentaries *Soundtrack to a Coup D'etat* and *Mistress Dispeller*

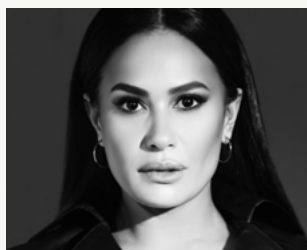
(with Arabic subtitles), Pedro Almodóvar's captivating *The Room Next Door*, Algeria's Oscar submission *Algiers*, Sundance favorite *Girls Will Be Girls*, and the Cannes prize-winner *Souleymane's Story*. Don't miss this unforgettable cinematic journey in Cairo!

## ✦ CineConcert - Hesham Nazih



Tomorrow 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. Tickets for this unique event are exclusively available through TicketEgypt. Don't miss this unforgettable night of cinema and sound—see you there!

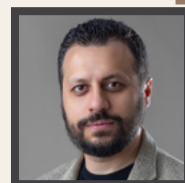
## ✦ Meet Hend Sabry



Join us tomorrow at **11:00 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!

# 7 Editions Questions



**Ahmed Shawky**  
Head of CineGouna Funding

- Engaging with upcoming Arab film projects through **CineGouna Funding** offers a glimpse into the future of Arab cinema, showcasing the success of alumni at major international festivals and box offices—a constant source of pride and excitement.
- The unique mix of a stunning location, vibrant atmosphere, and carefully crafted film program, along with impactful industry activities, is the secret to **GFF's** success over 7 editions. El Gouna truly delivers a one-of-a-kind festival experience.
- I'm proud that nearly every major film festival features an Arab film from our program. **GFF** fosters an ecosystem supporting regional talents from development to global screenings, both worldwide and in El Gouna, as seen in the growing number of filmmakers eager to participate.
- What I enjoy most about being part of the **GFF** is working with a talented and supportive team, witnessing projects come to life, and having the opportunity to follow and support the most significant film initiatives in the Arab region.
- A memorable moment was attending the groundbreaking first edition as a guest, which transformed the Arab film industry. As a team member, the period between the 6<sup>th</sup> edition's postponement in October and its realization in December was filled with challenges that offered invaluable professional experience for everyone involved.
- For the next seven editions, I hope **GFF** expands its impact in the Arab film industry by extending funding to include films in production, as well as development and post-production, while also sustaining educational initiatives to incubate regional talent and films.
- To the **GFF** audience: The days filled with great films and joyful vibes are rare, so make the most of every moment. You can sleep after November 1<sup>st</sup>!

Rand Beiruty, director of *Tell Them About Us*:

## Teenage Voices of the Diaspora Are Overlooked

Bringing diaspora stories to an Arab audience through **GFF** is important to me. It's about sparking a conversation on how migration shapes both the individual and the collective, and creating a space where these voices can be heard and understood within their own cultural context.

**Nahed Nasr**

**What inspired you to tell this story through young female protagonists in your debut feature?**

I was drawn to telling this story through the eyes of young girls because their experiences resonated with me on a personal level and because teenage girls' voices are often overlooked. Teenagers, especially girls, experience the refugee journey in a unique way—not just navigating a new country, but also dealing with the challenges of adolescence, societal expectations, and cultural shifts.

**In what ways has your personal journey influenced the themes woven throughout *Tell Them About Us*?**

My personal journey influenced the themes in *Tell Them About Us*, particularly the exploration of belonging. Like the girls, I navigated the complexities of migration and the search for self-determination, a recurring thread in my work. This connection allowed me to approach their stories with empathy while reflecting on my own experiences. However, the differences in our positions—my role as a PhD candidate and filmmaker, and the privileges that come with it—were evident. While we shared a common language and cultural background, their realities differed from mine, deepening my desire to portray them not as victims but as young women with agency and ambitions facing unique challenges.



**Can you share any memorable moments or interactions with the girls during filming that deeply impacted you or shifted your perspective?**

There was this one time when we were set to film an important event, my sound recordist canceled at the last minute. This was when I didn't have funding or a team, and I was left scrambling for a solution. Seeing how stressed I was, the girls gathered around to figure out what was wrong, then immediately offered to hold the boom mic and record the sound themselves. Their care and support touched me deeply and gave me the strength to keep pushing forward.

**What challenges did you face in balancing the documentary's tone between optimism and the harsh realities of your subjects' lives?**

My time with the girls was always full of laughter and dancing, and that energy naturally came through



in the film. Their stories cannot be reduced to the hardships they face, their humor, joy, and friendship are a big part of who they are. At the same time, I didn't want to ignore the harsh realities, but rather let those

moments speak for themselves—without letting them define the girls or overshadow the full scope of their personalities and experiences.

**Your film highlights the impact of art and dreams on people's lives. How do you see art shaping aspirations and fostering hope in challenging circumstances?**

Art can be a refuge and a means to process complex experiences. I aimed to introduce this to the girls by bringing in workshop mentors who shared their journeys in self-expression, offering role models and showing them they could do the same.

**What specific insights did you want European audiences to gain about migrant women's realities, and how did this shape your filmmaking?**

I aimed to capture the complexity of young migrant women's experiences without catering to European stereotypes or victimization. My goal was to create a film that celebrates them, resonating with others in similar situations. This intention shaped my process, emphasizing participatory re-enactments and a focus on experimentation.

**How has *Tell Them About Us* been received at various festivals, and how do you hope it resonates with Middle Eastern audiences?**

What struck me most is how women of all ages and backgrounds connect with the film, finding shared experiences in girlhood that cross cultural lines. In the region, I hope it celebrates resilience and sparks dialogue on the challenges young women face in the diaspora.

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I wanted to make a film “with” the girls, rather than just “about” them

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My personal journey influenced the themes in *Tell Them About Us*

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Although life is far from rosy for women, the film retains hope



## The Brink of Dreams: A Keen Insight into Girls' Dreams

*The Brink of Dreams*, co-directed by Nada Riyadh and Ayman El Amir, is competing at the El Gouna Film Festival after winning the Golden Eye Award at Cannes. It stands out among authentic Egyptian documentaries, gaining global recognition.

Set in Al-Barsha, Upper Egypt, the film follows four girls forming a street theater troupe. Over four years, the film examines their evolving dreams and changing personalities, showcasing their courage in a society that often frowns upon

girls performing, particularly in conservative areas.

The film devotes the first part to introducing the girls and their theater project, showcasing performances that tackle critical issues like a girl's freedom to choose her partner and clothing. It captures varied reactions from the street audience—who watch eagerly despite labeling the girls as “lacking a proper upbringing”—to family members who oscillate between appreciating the girls' hobby and mocking them, insisting that, “a

girl's destiny is marriage and staying at home.” Despite its simplicity, this segment effectively captures the numerous challenges women face in Egypt and the Arab world without resorting to shouting or emotional outbursts, and without focusing on a single issue.

The film's characters are perfectly crafted for the narrative, each aspiring to an artistic career: one dreams of becoming a ballet dancer, another an actress, and the last a singer. The second part delves deeper into reality, showing the girls' gradual changes, especially as two of them fall in love. It contrasts supportive and controlling male figures, enriching the film's theme while reflecting societal realities.

As it nears conclusion, the characters' fates become clearer, yet the film retains themes of hope. The final scenes reveal unresolved paths: some hold onto their dreams, while others succumb to pressure or strive to make their dreams a reality.

Although life is far from rosy for women and girls in Egypt, *The Brink of Dreams* addresses many of these issues with sensitivity, avoiding preaching, emotional manipulation, or demonization of others. It also offers an ending that provides a glimmer of hope.

A version of this article originally appeared in Arabic Hia Magazine.



Andrew Mohsen



## Exhibition: Egyptian Cities Embracing Cinema

### Youssef Sarhan

The Egyptian Cities Embracing Cinema exhibition opened yesterday at the Festival Plaza, inviting guests to embark on a journey through Egypt's cinematic legacy. This remarkable showcase celebrates Egyptian cities, not merely as film locations, but as integral elements of storytelling that enhance the cinematic experience.

In tribute to the prominent photographer Mohamed Bakr, the event began with a film honoring his contributions to Egyptian cinema. Featuring iconic landmarks, the film illustrated how Egyptian cinema promotes national culture and history on a global scale, highlighting the power of these

locales in shaping impactful narratives.

Attendees included prominent figures such as Mohamed Amer, CEO of El Gouna; Mohamed Ashour, Chief Commercial and Business Development Officer at Orascom Development Egypt; Amr Mansi, co-founder and Executive Director of GFF; Marianne Khoury, the GFF artistic Director; and Laila Hosni, Executive Director at Sawiris Foundation for Social Development.

Running from October 25<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>, the exhibition invites festival-goers to explore the cinematic portrayal of Egypt's cities, including Fayoum, Luxor and Aswan, the Canal Cities, Alexandria and Marsa Matrouh, Sinai and Red Sea cities, Cairo, and the Oases. Powered by Cairo



Design District (CDD) and supported by the Sawiris Foundation, this exhibition is inspired by Marina Ibrahim's vision from the CineGouna Emerge Program 2023, rooted in the research by her father, journalist Ibrahim Masiha. Curated by Shereen Farghal and realized by JY Studio, the exhibit is a captivating tribute to Egypt's lasting impact on global cinema.

