



## CineGouna Winners!



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Over \$400,000 in Awards for 21 Film Projects  
**Winners Revealed for the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition of CineGouna Funding**

**Bashayer Al Baker**

Last night at the GFF Plaza, **CineGouna Funding**, El Gouna Film Festival's project development and co-production platform, concluded its journey in the festival's seventh edition with a remarkable awards ceremony.

The event celebrated a full roster of winners, with awards exceeding **US \$400,000** in financial and service support provided by the festival and its esteemed sponsors. CineGouna Funding's jury, comprised of Swiss industry expert Nadia Dresti, Sudanese director and producer Amjad Abu Al-Ala, and Tunisian critic and Carthage Film Festival Artistic Director Lamia Guiga, awarded a total of 40 significant prizes to 21 competing projects, after consultations with sponsoring companies.

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It is the place where projects are born and later become great films chosen by major festivals around the world

Amr Mansi, co-founder and CEO of the festival, expressed his delight at the impressive variety and record-breaking value of the awards, remarking, “The interest of regional film and cultural institutions in supporting CineGouna Funding confirms the trust that El Gouna Film Festival has gained from everyone, as it is the place where projects are born and later become great films chosen by major festivals around the world.”

Adding to this, Ahmed Shawky, Head of CineGouna Funding, noted, “During this edition, the filmmakers of the 21 participating projects held 174 individual meetings with companies, institutions, and international festivals attending the festival, and the 40 awards were distributed across all projects, underscoring the valuable contributions that CineGouna Funding provides to emerging filmmakers, whether through direct support or by opening new horizons for networking and collaboration with partners who can elevate their work.”

The list of award winning film projects included *The Masters of Magic and Beauty* from Egypt, directed by Jad Chahine and produced by Yousry Nasrallah, which received the CineGouna Award of **US \$15,000** in cash for a project in development.

Additionally, it earned a **US \$10,000** cash grant from Lagoonie Film Production and was invited to the Film Independent Residency in Los Angeles through the American Embassy and Film Independent.

*My Father and Qaddafi*, a USA-Libya collaboration directed by Jihan and produced by David Guenette, Mohamed Soueid, and Jihan, won the CineGouna Award of **US \$15,000** in cash grant for a project in post-production.

*Remind Me to Forget* from Saudi Arabia, directed by Lama Jamjoom and produced by Maryam Sindi and Rami Alzayer, was awarded **US \$20,000** from MBC Studios and MBC Academy. It also received a **US \$10,000** cash grant from Rotana Studios, a **US \$50,000** minimum guarantee (MG) for sales and distribution from MAD Solutions, a **US \$10,000** promotion package from Shift Studios, a European Film Market Badge with **EUR €1,500** travel support, and a year-long DAE membership from DEA and IEFTA.

*The Cow Thief* from Egypt, directed by Mohamed Zedan and produced by Mark Lotfy, received a **US \$10,000** cash grant from Rotana Studios and an invitation to a French film festival through support from the French Embassy and French Institute.

*Leila's Trial*, a Tunisian-French co-production directed by Charlie Kouka and produced by Cyrine Sellami, Dora Bouchoucha, and Caroline Nataf, earned a **US \$10,000** cash grant from Shahid.

*The Settlement*, a project spanning Egypt, France, Germany, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, directed by Mohamed Rashad and produced by Hala Lotfy along with co-producers Etienne de Ricaurd and Kesmat El-Sayed, received two **US \$10,000** cash grants from O West and Red Star Films.

*Son of the Streets*, from Palestine, Poland, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon, directed by Mohammed Almughanni and produced by Rashid Abdelhamid and Glib Lukianets, won a **US \$10,000** cash grant from Blue Bee Productions, a **US \$10,000** grant from IEFTA, a **US \$10,000** DCP package from Big Bang Studios, and an invitation to Mosaic Film Lab by the Royal Film Commission Jordan.

*In This Darkness I See You* from Lebanon, France, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, directed by Nadim Tabet and produced by Georges Schoucair and Eli Souaiby, received a **US \$10,000** grant from Rise Studios.

*Exile*, a Tunisian film directed by Mehdi Hmili and produced by Moufida Fedhila and Mehdi Hmili, won a **US \$10,000** cash grant from The Sound of Egypt, a **US \$10,000** color grading service from Shift Studios, and a **US \$5,000** cash grant from Sard.

*A Pair of Shoes in the Dark Corner of the Moon* from Egypt, directed by Ayman El Amir and produced by Nada Riyadh, received a **US \$10,000** cash grant from ESLSCA University and a **US \$10,000** grant from Arab Radio & Television (ART).

*The Guardian* from Algeria, directed by Muhannad Lamin, and produced by Lynda Belkhiria with co-producer Maytham Jbara, won a **US \$5,000** cash grant from New Century Production.

*Those Who Watch Over*, a Belgium-France-Qatar co-production directed by Karima Saïdi and produced by Julie Freres, received a **US \$5,000** grant from New Century Production.

*Dwellers of the Cabins*, a project from Egypt and Qatar directed by Hend Bakr, who also co-produced it with Tamer Nady, earned a **US \$5,000** grant from Her Story Films, an invitation to a French film festival from the French Embassy and French Institute, and an invitation to the MediMed Lab 2025.

*Running with Beasts* from the Czech Republic and Lebanon, directed by Leila Basma and produced by Natália Pavlove, received a **US \$5,000** grant from the Red Sea Foundation and a mentorship for development to release by IEFTA.

*La Vie d'Après/Life After Siham* from France, directed by Namir Abdel Messeeh and produced by Camille Laemle and Aly El Araby, received a **US \$5,000** cash grant from the Red Sea Foundation.

*The Myth of Mahmoud*, a Qatar-based project directed by Mayar Hamdan and Shaima Al Tamimi and produced by Shaima Al Tamimi, was awarded post-production services worth **US \$11,500** from Bee Media Productions.

*House No. 7* from Syria and Qatar, directed by Rama Abdy and produced by Hazar Yazji, received **US \$11,500** in post-production services from Bee Media Productions.

*Elsewhere* from Sweden, directed by Issraa Elkogali Häggström and produced by Lars Lovén, was granted an online

invitation to TFL NEXT by Torino Film Lab & IEFTA.

*Al-Madeeneh 2008* from Yemen, directed by Youssef Assabahi and produced by Ala'a Amer, received **US \$5,000** in script development services from Sard.

*Amara*, a Denmark-France-Lebanon-Jordan project directed by Michelle Keserwany and produced by Tine Mikkelsen, received a **US \$50,000** MG for sales and distribution from MAD Solutions, an invitation to the Rotterdam Film Lab from the Arab Cinema Center, and an invitation to the Rawi Film Lab by the Royal Film Commission Jordan.

*The Meursault Investigation*, an Algerian-French-Swiss film directed by Malek Bensmail and produced by Hachemi Zertal and Fred Premel, received **US \$10,000** in post-production services from Big Bang Studios.

This year at the GFF, **CineGouna Funding**, formerly known as CineGouna SpringBoard and led by Ahmed Shawky, continued its mission by selecting 13 diverse projects from over 230 submissions. Filmmakers are eligible for two cash prizes of **US \$15,000** each, along with additional awards from local and international partners, benefiting from expert mentorship and industry exposure.

This year's CineGouna celebrated innovation and creativity from October 25<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>, reinforcing its commitment to empowering Egyptian and Arab filmmakers through artistic and financial support.

The **CineGouna Forum**, previously CineGouna Bridge and managed by Mariam Naoum, enhanced professional development with dynamic discussions, masterclasses, and workshops, featuring executive roundtables and "In Focus" panels for diverse insights.

**CineGouna Emerge**, managed by Hayat Al Jowaily, returned for its second edition, showcasing "CineGouna Rising Stars" and connecting young actors with industry professionals.

The **CineGouna Market**, held from October 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>, united industry collaborators with 22 exhibitors and a program for engaging with experts, featuring the "Emerge Corner" and over 60 curated short films.

Additionally, the **CineGouna Shorts Awards**, one of the largest production grants in the region, awarded **EGP 2,250,000** for three projects from eight outstanding submissions.

# CineGouna Shorts Awards



Yesterday, during the closing ceremony of the CineGouna (CGP), **CineGouna Shorts** proudly announced the winners of its inaugural production grants. This dynamic new section within the industry arm of the El Gouna Film Festival is dedicated to elevating Egyptian short films and championing authentic local storytelling. This year's selection, chosen for its artistic innovation and cultural resonance, underscores CineGouna Shorts' mission to support the unique voices shaping Egypt's cinematic landscape.

Three exceptional projects will receive generous production grants powered by O West, a fully integrated town developed by Orascom Developments. The esteemed jury, consisting of Sherif El Bendary, Sameh Alaa, and May Odeh, made their selections after a pitching session at the El Gouna Film Festival on October 31<sup>st</sup>, attended by a full house of industry professionals.

The winners of the 2024 CineGouna Shorts Production Grants are: the first award of **EGP 1,000,000** goes to *In Such Moments, We Cry*, directed by Ahmed Sobhy and produced by Marwa Tammam. The second award of **EGP 750,000** is awarded to *The Last Wish*, directed by Hozifa Abdelhalim and produced by Noura Abdelrahman. The third award of **EGP 500,000** goes to *Lemon Trees*, directed by Mariam Nasser and produced by Mohamed Gaber.

In addition to the three official awards, the jury honored another project by granting a special jury prize for mentorship and development sessions to *Dead Tired*, directed by Beshoy Youssef and produced by Ramy El Gabry.

This selection highlights diverse Egyptian narratives that challenge creative boundaries and underscores CineGouna Shorts' commitment to nurturing the short film scene through development opportunities, mentorship, and global exposure, marking a promising chapter in Egypt's filmmaking industry.



## Yoro Mbaye, director of *Lees Waxul*: African Voices Are Underrepresented



“As one of the major film events in the MENA region, the El Gouna Film Festival offers a valuable platform for African filmmakers to reach a wider international audience”

### Nahed Nasr

**Your film beautifully reflects Senegalese culture and traditions. What was your approach to authentically depicting daily life in Senegal?**

Authentically representing Senegalese culture in film is an enriching journey that begins with immersing myself in local traditions and my own narrative, complemented by thorough research and consultations with family. Choosing real locations, authentic settings, and traditional costumes is crucial for cultural representation. Incorporating local languages and cultural expressions adds depth, while music and social dynamics—such as modesty and subtle emotional expressions—reflect our culture’s intricacies. Collaborating with both seasoned professionals and passionate newcomers has greatly enhanced my efforts to present a faithful and nuanced depiction of Senegalese culture.

**The cinematography of *Lees Waxul* turns harsh realities into a visually stunning narrative. How did you balance beauty with tough themes in your creative process?**

*Lees Waxul* tackles deep-seated issues in Senegalese society, focusing on the relationship between urban and rural communities and family ties. My creative process involves close collaboration with the art direction team, and the director of photography, to capture the beauty of landscapes and intimate moments while addressing the characters’ harsh realities. By blending natural and artificial light, using careful

compositions, and a thoughtful color palette, we created contrasts that highlight the narrative’s emotional depth.

**Why is bread a central theme in your film, and what significance does it hold for your characters and story?**

Bread symbolizes both survival and communion. In the film, it serves as a backdrop representing the daily struggles of the characters and their quest for survival and dignity. As an essential and fundamental food, it evokes socio-political themes, memory, and hope, grounding personal stories in a universal context. My aim was to show how simple elements can carry profound meanings in everyone’s life.

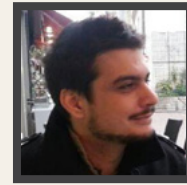
**What challenges did you face during the production of *Lees Waxul*, and how did they influence the film’s final outcome?**

We faced major challenges during production due to violent political protests in Senegal that coincided with our shooting schedule. This instability made it difficult to collaborate with suppliers and technicians, despite our allocated budgets. However, these trials enhanced our resilience and creativity, ultimately enriching the final result.

**Are African voices and stories well-represented in contemporary cinema?**

In truth, African voices and stories are still underrepresented in contemporary cinema. As a young Senegalese director, I draw inspiration from figures like Sembène Ousmane, Djibril Diop Mambety, and Alain Gomis to tell authentically African stories. The challenges include a lack of funding and the need to deconstruct colonial

# 7 Editions Questions



**Mouwafak  
Chourbagui**  
GFF Programmer

- The most exciting highlight of the programming department is the privilege of watching films from all over the world and the opportunity to travel to festivals.
- The secret behind **GFF**’s success over seven editions lies in its location—a charming seaside resort—combined with a dedicated and hardworking team.
- The **GFF** emerged when regional festivals like Dubai and Abu Dhabi were closing, providing a crucial boost to the filmmaking industry. It offers filmmakers both the chance to create and a platform to showcase their work.
- Having worked for **GFF** since the first edition, what I enjoy most about being part of it is the strong sense of family.
- A memorable moment is the feeling of satisfaction when the first edition concluded after all the hard work.
- For the next 7 editions, I hope **GFF** continues to thrive and grow.
- To the **GFF** audience: Enjoy the films!

stereotypes. It is essential to value diverse narratives that reflect the richness of our cultures and experiences.

**As a director and producer, do you believe filmmakers from the Global South should establish their own production companies to navigate the international film landscape?**

Yes, filmmakers from the Global South should create their own production companies, which is why I launched NAFI FILMS to control narratives in a challenging landscape. However, a lack of production knowledge can slow progress. I’ve noticed a shortage of producers in Senegal, so I trained in production and international sales at La Fémis and the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg to prepare for international co-productions. There are many talented producers in Senegal.

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## Mohammed Almughanni, director of *An Orange From Jaffa*:

“The Arab premiere of my film at the El Gouna Film Festival is significant. I’m proud to share it with an Arab audience, as it reveals nuances they might not fully grasp, even with their connection to Palestine.”

**Nahed Nasr**

**Your film has received acclaim at festivals like Clermont-Ferrand and Kraków. How has the international audience responded?**

Many praise the film and its small details, reflecting the time I invested in the script. The drama balances the silent violence that rarely makes the news, with positive feedback from Arab viewers in Europe and America.

**Your film is based on a personal experience. What challenges did you face in turning this event into a cinematic narrative, and how did you tackle its emotional aspects?**

Writing about a personal experience was challenging. I outlined the film idea on two sheets, and my friends’ interest reassured me of its potential, reflecting my frustration at the Hizma checkpoint with a taxi driver. I drafted thirty pages in five days, but it felt superficial. Changing the main character’s name to Mohammed for a personal connection resonated with my friends. Justifying Farouk’s motivations was easier than exploring my own. While emotional depth was strong during writing and rehearsals, it was overshadowed by technical demands during filming, clarifying my vision.

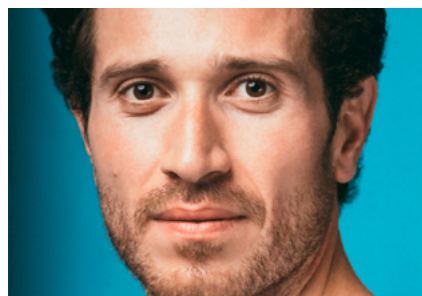
**How did the cast of *An Orange from Jaffa*, including Kamel El Basha and Samer Bisharat, influence the film’s character development and overall production?**

Kamel El Basha was vital to the film; I knew he was perfect for Farouk based on his impressive past performances, so I didn’t audition him—a bold choice

for a young filmmaker. His Jerusalem background ensured he mastered the local dialect, and I believed he would excel even without it. Kamel’s dedication elevated his character and the entire cast’s performances. His tireless efforts on set are evident in the film. For Samer Bisharat, his past films didn’t influence my decision since they differed from his role here. During auditions, he impressed me with his ability to embody the character and master the Gaza dialect. I’m thrilled with my choices and often hear audience praise for the performances, feeling fortunate to work with Kamel and the entire cast.

**What challenges did you face while filming in Palestine, and how did those challenges shape the final result?**

Filming anywhere comes with challenges, but in Palestine, the difficulties are heightened due to the security situation and occupation, making planning difficult as conditions change daily. While filming near the checkpoint, we faced harassment from settlers where a settler revealed a gun. Situations often escalate unexpectedly. We



# 7 Editions Questions



**Hayat Al Jowaily**  
CineGouna Emerge  
Manager

- This year, the launch of the Rising Stars, Perspectives, and expanded SeeMe tracks in the **CineGouna** Emerge program demonstrates our commitment to nurturing young talent and providing industry engagement opportunities.
- The secret to **GFF**’s success over seven editions is its great film program and the opportunity to network with industry professionals in a sunny setting!
- **GFF** has become a beacon of opportunity for young and emerging filmmakers, offering them chances to connect, pitch their projects, and elevate their careers.
- I love being part of an Egyptian festival that leads the regional film industry in discovering emerging filmmakers and debut features.
- A memorable moment last year as the CineGouna Bridge (now **CineGouna Forum**) program manager was seeing our panels filled to capacity, with engaged audiences. That participation made all the hard work worthwhile.
- For the next seven editions, I hope the **GFF** grows and supports young filmmakers, with the **CineGouna Emerge** programs reaching thousands nationwide and beyond!
- To the **GFF** audience: Enjoy the movies, soak in the sun, and try to connect with as many people as possible.

constructed a checkpoint in a safer area, thanks to the incredible work of artist Amer Abu Matar, which sparked curiosity about how we filmed at the Hizma checkpoint. Another challenge was acquiring necessary equipment, much of which was missing. We brought in gear from Poland, but it was detained by Israeli authorities at Ben Gurion Airport for two weeks.

**How can cinema raise awareness of life under occupation in Palestine?**

Cinema builds bridges, and as Palestinians, we aim to create connections that allow the world to experience, if only for an hour, the realities and struggles we face every day.

“Cinema is a powerful medium that resonates with audiences worldwide



