



A Golden Lion at Gouna: Blanchett Honors Jarmusch

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Blanchett will sit down today for an inspiring In Conversation at CineGouna Theater

In a dazzling night at **Festival Plaza**, the GFF welcomed its Guest of Honor, two-time Academy Award winner and UNHCR Global Goodwill Ambassador **Cate Blanchett**, as she walked the **red carpet** to present *Father Mother Sister Brother* – **Jim Jarmusch's Golden Lion winner at the Venice Film Festival**, now competing in the **eighth GFF's Feature Narrative Competition**.

Blanchett was greeted on the **red carpet** by GFF Executive Director **Amr Mansi**, Founder of the GFF and Chairperson of Orascom Investment Holding **Naguib Sawiris**, Founder of El Gouna and Chairperson of the

Festival Samih Sawiris, and GFF Artistic Director Marianne Khoury. Before the screening, the GFF's Head of Programming, **Andrew Mohsen**, welcomed **Blanchett** on stage and introduced the film to a packed audience.

Jarmusch's poetic triptych explores delicate family bonds – adult children, distant parents, and unresolved fractures – unfolding across the US, Ireland, and France in a meditation on memory, silence, and human connection.

Blanchett's presence also reflects a shared vision between the **GFF**,

UNHCR, and the festival's impact partner, the **Sawiris Foundation for Social Development**: a belief in cinema's power to spark empathy, bridge divides, and champion humanity.

The gracious star will also appear today at CineGouna Theater, where she will sit down for an inspiring In Conversation Session. Together, they will delve into **Blanchett's** iconic roles and her belief in cinema as a force for empathy, humanity, and meaningful change, reinforcing her commitment to the festival's vision of **Cinema for Humanity**.

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Today

Red Carpet

Tonight, at 7:00 PM in Festival Plaza, the red carpet of *Alexandria: Again and Forever* (1989) – screening as part of the **Special Presentations Program** – will celebrate the timeless legacy of the late legend **Youssef Chahine**, opening the *Centenary Tribute to Youssef Chahine: The Godfather of the New Arab Cinema Waves*.

Co-written by **Youssef Chahine** and **Yousry Nasrallah**, the film features an iconic ensemble of Egyptian stars and influential figures who shaped the modern Arab film industry.

As part of the global centenary celebrations of **Youssef Chahine (1926–2008)**, the **GFF** honors the great Egyptian master whose work transformed Arab cinema. The tribute includes screenings of



landmark films inspired by his legacy, such as *Nahla* (1979), *Halfaouine: Boy of the Terraces* (1990), and *Bye Bye Souirty* (1998), alongside a restored version of Féréd Boughedir's *Caméra Arabe* (1987).

Meet the Filmmaker

ALWAYS

Director

Deming Chen

Producer

Hansen Lin

Sea Cinema 2

1:00 PM

A POET

Actor:

Ubeimar Rios

Producer:

Manuel Ruiz

Sea Cinema 1

4:00 PM

SOUND OF FALLING

Actor:

Florian Geißelmann

Sea Cinema 2

6:15 PM

Today at CineGouna Theater

Two key panels highlight the day's **CineGouna Forum** lineup. **At 1:00 PM**, *Egyptian Industry Onward* unites top industry voices – screenwriter and Head of Censorship **Abdel Reheem Kamal**; producers **Ahmed Badawy**, **Mohamed Hefzy**, and **Shahinaz El Akkad**; and Egypt Film Commission's **Ahmed Badawi** – to discuss the future of Egypt's screen industries under the moderation of media investment expert **Gamal Guemeih**.

Later, *Journey with the Master – Youssef Chahine: From Chahine's Lens to Their Own Worlds* sees acclaimed directors **Yousry Nasrallah**, **Daoud Aoulad-Syad**, and **Féréd Boughedir** reflect on Chahine's enduring influence in a talk moderated by President of the FIPRESCI **Ahmed Shawky**.



GFF Spirit Hits Cairo!

The **third edition of GFF x Zawya** kicks off today, bringing the buzz of the **GFF** to Cairo through its ongoing partnership with **Zawya Cinema**. From **October 19th to the 25th**, audiences in Cairo can enjoy **10 standout films** from this year's **GFF lineup**, screened **daily at Zawya**.

The collaboration continues to bridge **El Gouna** and Cairo, celebrating daring storytelling and new cinematic voices. As always, **Zawya** remains Cairo's beating heart of independent cinema, keeping the festival's creative energy alive **for everyone to experience**.

Meet Cate Blanchett

This morning at 11:00 AM in the **CineGouna Theater**, two-time Academy Award winner and UNHCR Global Goodwill Ambassador **Cate Blanchett**, the Guest of Honor of the **eighth GFF**, is sitting down for an inspiring conversation on art and advocacy. From her iconic roles in *Elizabeth*, *Blue Jasmine*, and *TÁR* to her commitment to **Cinema for Humanity**, **Blanchett** shares insights on creativity, compassion, and the power of storytelling to drive change.



Sawiris Screenplay Lab Showcase

In collaboration with the **Sawiris Foundation for Social Development** and **Sard – Mariam Naoum**, the *Sawiris Screenplay Lab – Meet the Projects* will spotlight five selected screenwriters as they pitch their feature projects to producers, broadcasters, and international platforms. Building on the legacy of the **Sawiris Cultural Award**, the initiative continues to nurture both emerging and established talents, supporting their journey from page to screen.



Third CineGouna Market Launches!

Menna El-Nakib & Youssef Sarhan

On the **third day** of the **GFF**, the **CineGouna Market** was inaugurated at **Festival Plaza** in the presence of GFF Artistic Director **Marianne Khoury**, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Indian Embassy in Egypt **C. Sushma**, and Director of the Maulana Azad Indian Cultural Center **Prakash Choudhary**, along with a number of participants and cinema enthusiasts.

In a speech, **Khoury** expressed her delight at the opening of the market and announced that India is expected to be the guest country in the next edition of the festival.

Also, in an interview with Creative Economy Lead at the British Council **Sami Creta**, he announced that **this year**, the **British Council** is supporting **19 startups**, with a **subject matter expert in the film and entertainment industry from the UK** expected to arrive soon to foster more partnerships between the UK and Egypt.

This year, the **CineGouna Market** seeks to expand its engagement with local and international film bodies and companies, hosting **30 exhibitors** from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iraq, India, China, alongside a diverse representation of the Egyptian industry. The **market** offers a variety of **professional programs** and **dedicated spaces**, including the **Guest Country Pavilion, Market Salon, and Cinematography Corner**. **Khoury** highlighted the growing intersection of innovation and film craftsmanship, reaffirming CinemaTech's evolving role within the GFF's creative landscape.



Gemini CinemaTech Turns Five

Menna El-Nakib

Yesterday, the **CineGouna Theater** hosted the **fifth Gemini CinemaTech Pitching Competition**, marking **five years** of innovation and creativity at the intersection of film and technology.

This special anniversary edition brought together an exceptional judging panel featuring Founder of the GFF and Chairperson of Orascom Investment Holding **Naguib Sawiris**, alongside celebrated actors **Asser Yassin**, **Nour El Nabawy**, and **Dina El Sherbiny**. Joining them were **Adly Thoma** – Chairperson and CEO of Gemini Africa and Founder of CinemaTech – and CEO of Moniify **Lana Sawiris**, with the session moderated by **Yasmina El Abd**.

Reflecting on reaching this milestone, **Thoma** said, "We're celebrating **five years** of **CinemaTech** at the **GFF**; a journey that began in 2020, during one of the most challenging times for the industry... Today, we proudly stand with over

1,000 startups shaping the future of film technology."

The event wrapped with the announcement of this year's winning startups: **IDMAG**, an inclusive tech startup pioneering accessibility across the Arab World by bridging daily communication gaps for the hearing-impaired and hard-of-hearing communities; and **Renaldi**, an Egyptian brand specializing in tailor-made furniture, offering bespoke designs that precisely align with the vision of cinema art directors, digital producers, and creative professionals.



8 Editions Questions



Raman Chawla
Senior Programmer

• **If GFF were a person, what kind of friend would they be?**

A friend who always encourages you to take the creative leap and never settles for the status quo – a constant, inspiring collaborator.

• **What tradition from past editions feels most rooted in GFF now?**

The holistic, 360-degree support for emerging Arab talent – a tradition rooted in all our pillars, nurturing the next generation of filmmakers and fostering dialogue with international peers.

• **And what's the boldest new beginning this year?**

Focusing on formal innovation, exploring hybrid forms and the craft of experimental expression, while balancing space between established and emerging voices.

• **The highlight of your department this year in one line?**

Curating a slate of films that are not only critically acclaimed but also speak directly to the current, urgent social and political state of the region and globe.

• **Biggest challenge you've faced this year & how you beat it?**

Maintaining a high-quality, diverse selection despite the global hurdles and healthy regional competition among festivals, which we overcame through bold choices, early commitments, and solid networks.

• **In eight years, how has GFF changed film culture in Egypt and the region?**

It built a professional ecosystem and global platform that enhanced the visibility of a new generation of Arab filmmakers.

• **How would you like audiences to remember the 8th edition?**

As the year the festival felt both most international and deeply rooted in its mission to support and showcase powerful, essential local and regional storytelling.

• **Name one thing you hold most dear in the 8th edition (a film, or a corner, or a guest, etc) and why?**

The collective applause at the end of a screening – a powerful affirmation of the filmmakers' work, our curatorial vision, and the shared joy of discovery.

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The film is a meditation on coexistence and the universality of death – and, above all, of life



Karima Saïdi, Director of *Those Who Watch Over*:

My Film is a Mosaic of Experiences

*“The GFF has earned international recognition for spotlighting the diversity and quality of Middle Eastern cinema – a showcase that breaks stereotypes and reveals the region’s depth and universality. The Arab World premiere of **Those Who Watch Over** means a lot to me. As a Moroccan filmmaker exploring death, mourning, and migration in Europe, I’m eager to see how Egyptian and Arab audiences connect with it – to feel the shared humanity beneath different rituals. It’s also a return to my roots and to viewers who share my cultural language, as I present this mosaic of experiences about belonging and home.”*

Your film turns a cemetery – a place of loss – into one of tenderness and connection, avoiding melodrama while finding beauty in grief. How did you strike that balance?

My mother wished to be buried in the Muslim section in Belgium. After her death, I discovered this multi-faith cemetery. By visiting her, I met the relatives of her “burial neighbors.” What struck me most was how different these graves were from those I had known in Morocco; here, some were adorned with photos, flowers, pebbles, or small objects, instead of the traditional uniform white tombs.

Walking through the paths, I found Muslim, Jewish, Orthodox, and Christian sections – a miniature version of Brussels, multicultural and vibrant. It felt alive, full of exchanges,

conversations, and gestures of care.

The cemetery came to symbolize immigrants putting down roots in their adopted land. Their choice to remain here reflects their deep attachment to this place – one that allows us, the living, to stay close. The film tells this story: A connection between people, between the living and the deceased, and the enduring bond with the land that unites them.

Your film feels less about loss and more about our shared humanity – beyond religion, nationality, or gender. What core idea did you want to express, and which elements were essential to bringing it to life?

When I visit a cemetery, I encounter stories. Each grave speaks – through how it’s kept, visited, or decorated – revealing fragments of life that keep renewing themselves through the traces left by the living.

The multi-faith cemetery fascinated me because it intertwines the worlds of the dead and the living. It’s a space of freedom, where communities express their rites without constraint, each creating a resting place as unique as a home.

I wanted to show how people recreate life and dialogue, as if in a neighborhood. Families visit their deceased as they once did in life. Orthodox Arameans share offerings at Easter; Syrian Muslims celebrate Eid beside their loved ones. These rituals, far from being about death, are gatherings of life – moments of reunion.

Ultimately, my aim was to express an ode to movement and vitality – to show that while our customs differ,

our experience of loss unites us. The film is a meditation on coexistence and the universality of death – and, above all, of life.

Many people in your film open up with striking honesty. How did you choose your participants and build the trust that allowed such openness on camera?

For me, everything began with trust. When I met my mother’s “neighbors,” we instantly bonded. We talked about our loved ones, our families, and the spaces they rested in – even discovering, together, the cemetery’s different faith sections. The staff also helped by welcoming the project and reassuring visitors about our presence.

I took time to listen before filming, learning their rituals and asking gentle questions – whether they spoke to the deceased, saw them in dreams, or felt their guidance. What moved me most were the gestures: The way hands touch graves, or someone sits quietly beside them. One woman sprinkled her mother’s grave with orange blossom water – A wedding ritual in Morocco, now transformed into a tender act of remembrance.



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Redefining the Business of Film Distribution



Bishoy Emad

A compelling panel discussion titled *'The Business of Film Distribution: Challenges and Cinemas'* held **yesterday** brought together key voices from across the production, distribution, and media industries to explore the evolving dynamics of global film distribution.

The session featured VP of Business Affairs at Film Clinic **Jessica Khoury**, Head of Acquisitions & Production at Intramovies **Marco Fusco**, CEO of Arabia Pictures **Ahmed Taema**, and Board Director at Henry Crown Fellow **Ivana Kirkbride**, under the moderation of Lebanese producer **Jana Wehbe**. Held amid the festival's vibrant cultural programming, the conversation delved into how producers and distributors are redefining strategies in a world where creativity, commerce, and technology are more intertwined than ever.

The discussion tackled everything from how the **COVID-19 pandemic** reshaped the industry, the increased interest in arthouse films in its aftermath, the marketing-first approach all creatives must adopt nowadays, and the shift in global appetite from long- to short-form content.

The Cinematic Side of Entrepreneurship

Farah Shasha

Yesterday, a dynamic panel exploring the intersection of entrepreneurship and cinema was held on the **GFF's** newly launched **Island Theater**.

The session, titled *'Stories of Now: In Search of the Untold Stories of Arab Entrepreneurs'*, brought together leading figures from both fields, including film director **Karim El Shenawy**, Founder and CEO of TVision Media Productions **Tarek El Ganainy**, CEO of VictoryLink and Co-Founder of iRead **Engy El Sabban**, Director of Entrepreneurship at Egypt's Entrepreneur Awards (EEA) **Rasha Tantawy**, and CEO of S Productions **Sally Wally**, under the moderation of Co-Founder and Managing Director of Tayarah **Mohamed Bassiouny**.

Opening the conversation, **El Sabban** explained that she was inspired by the noticeable absence of Egyptian books or films that explore entrepreneurship. To fill this creative gap, iRead partnered with the **EEA** to launch an open call for writers to submit Arabic short stories based on real entrepreneurial experiences, transforming true-life journeys into sources of cinematic inspiration.

Building on this idea, **Tantawy** elaborated that the goal is to

spotlight the human and emotional dimensions of entrepreneurship rather than just its financial success. She explained that writers can begin submitting their work starting **October 18th**, after which **ten stories** will be shortlisted and **three finalists** selected to participate in a **workshop** led by **El Ganainy**, **El Shenawy**, and novelist **Ahmed Mourad**.

These sessions will guide participants towards adapting their work into cinematic scripts, with the winning story to be produced by **S Productions** as a short film.



The Power of Authentic Storytelling

Aya ElHaddad

Yesterday, a compelling panel titled *'The New Media Age of Storytelling'* examined how authenticity, technology, and purpose intervene in today's content landscape. Moderated by Managing Partner at Women **Amira Salah Eldin**, the discussion brought together CEO of Moniify **Lana Sawiris**; Director of Global Partnerships for the Middle East, Africa, and Turkiye at Meta **Moon Baz**; and **Yusra Mardini** – Olympic swimmer, UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador, and Founder of the Yusra Mardini Foundation.

The discussion opened with **Mardini** sharing how her journey from

athlete to advocate began with her participation in the 2016 Olympics as part of the Refugee Team. She explained that storytelling enables her to share her story with the world, create impact, and advocate for change. Recalling visits to refugee camps in Kenya, she highlighted how documenting these experiences raised awareness and empathy.

From there, the conversation turned to authenticity and connection, which **Sawiris** described as the foundation of meaningful storytelling. "As long as you are true to who you are, it is about earning the emotional trust of the



audience. That is the core," she said, noting that people today crave representation and emotional honesty more than polished perfection.

The session concluded with the panelists agreeing that while technology continues to redefine the medium, authenticity, empathy, and purpose remain the timeless pillars of great storytelling.

