



## Chahine, Again and Forever

Last night, Festival Plaza lit up for the red carpet of *Alexandria: Again and Forever* (1989), marking the official opening of the *Centenary Tribute to Youssef Chahine: The Godfather of the New Arab Cinema Waves*.

Screened under the **Special Presentations Program**, the evening celebrated the timeless cinematic legacy of the late master, whose influence continues to shape Arab cinema.

The film – co-written by **Youssef Chahine** and **Yusry Nasrallah** – brought together an iconic cast of Egyptian stars and industry pioneers who helped define modern Arab filmmaking. The red carpet witnessed the presence of major figures from the film industry and distinguished

guests of the **GFF**, who gathered to honor **Chahine's** enduring impact.

The film was introduced on the **plaza stage** by GFF Artistic Director **Marianne Khoury**, who is also **Chahine's** niece, a filmmaker, and producer. **Khoury** spoke with warmth and pride as she opened the tribute to her late uncle's legacy, recalling his boundless creativity and the spirit of mentorship that continues to inspire new generations.

Introducing the film on stage, **Khoury** said, "Tonight, we are not simply screening a film; we are opening a celebration of a man who reshaped the soul of Arab cinema. In January 2026, it will be **100 years** since **Youssef Chahine** was born, and his **centenary** is being honored not only

in Egypt but also in France, Japan, Switzerland, and beyond."

**Khoury** also invited stars **Youssef** and **Hussein Fahmy** – both of whom appeared in the film – to join her on stage. **Youssef** addressed the audience with affection, saying, "This film is one of the closest to my heart. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do every time I watch it."

Meanwhile, Hussein Fahmy – actor and President of the Cairo International Film Festival – shared his own recollections, reflecting on his early connection with **Chahine**, saying, "**Youssef Chahine** was my professor at the Higher Institute of Cinema. He believed in me from the very beginning, and working with him in this film was an honor I will never forget."

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The man who reshaped the soul of Arab cinema

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# Today

## Red Carpet



Tonight at 7:00 PM, the Festival Plaza red carpet hosts *50 Meters*, directed by **Yomna Khattab** and produced by **Ahmed Amer**, competing in the **Feature Documentary Competition** of the 8th GFF, in the presence of the film's team, alongside distinguished filmmakers, stars, and guests of the festival. A **CineGouna alumna**, *50 Meters* premiered at **CPH:DOX**, earning praise for its emotional depth and authenticity.

## Meet the Filmmaker

### BYE BYE SOIRTY

**Director:**

Daoud Aoulad-Syad

**Sea Cinema 3**

11:00 AM

### SHADOWBOX

**Cinematographer:**

Saumyananda Sahi

**Actress:**

Tillotama Shome

**Sea Cinema 1**

3:45 PM

### YOUNG ARAB CINEMA

**Director:**

Ferid Boughedir

**Sound Engineer:**

Elias Boughedir

**Sea Cinema 3**

3:45 PM

### MY FATHER'S SCENT

**Cast & Crew**

**Audimax**

1:30 PM

### SHORT PROGRAM 1

#### OF BURNING MEMORIES & WOUNDS

**Director:**

Suha Soliman

**Producer:**

Salma Sharnouby

**Cast:**

Gehad Hossam

Menha El Batrawi

#### CLOSE YOUR EYES HIND

**Director:**

Amir Zaza

**Actress:**

Sundus Al-Bashah

**Sea Cinema 1**

1:00 PM

## Meet the Diva

Happening 2:30 PM today at the **CineGouna Theater**, the legendary Youssra sits down for a special conversation marking **five decades** of art, charisma, and influence. In an intimate talk moderated by **Mohamed Omar** from **Meta**, she reflects on her iconic roles, evolving bond with audiences, and how Arab cinema continues to shape – and be shaped by – her enduring legacy.



## A Morning with Sherif Arafa

At 11:00 AM in the **CineGouna Theater**, acclaimed director **Sherif Arafa** opens up about his creative journey – from iconic films to the craft of storytelling and the future of Arab cinema.



The conversation is moderated by writer, actor, and podcaster **Abbas Abu El Hassan** – a rare chance to dive into the mind of a true filmmaking master.

## Love Imagined!

At 9:30 PM, Festival Plaza lights up for the **world premiere** of *Love Imagined*, the dazzling debut feature by **Sarah Rozik**, screening as an **Official Selection – Out of Competition** at the 8th GFF.

Joining the red carpet are **Sarah Rozik**, **Omar Rozik**, **Mayan El-Sayed**, **Ahmed El-Saadany**, and **Farida Ragab**, alongside the film's creative team, in a night of sparkle, rhythm, and celebration.



## Yunan Wins at Arab Critics Awards for European Films

Last night at Festival Plaza, *Yunan* by **Ameer Fakher Eldin** won **Best Film** at the **Arab Critics Awards for European Films**. The award was presented on stage by GFF Artistic Director **Andrew Mohsen**, who invited Arab Cinema Center Co-Founders **Alaa Karkouti** and **Maher Diab** to announce the winner.

Jury President **Ola Al Sheikh** appeared via video message, saluting the international critics who voted and congratulating the **Arab Cinema Center** for its continuous support of cinema.

Director **Fakher Eldin** also joined by video, saying: "This wonderful **Critics' Award** is a seal of approval. The film is yours until the first person sees it – then it becomes everyone's film. I want to thank the award, the center, every critic who watched the film, and everyone who stood by the film's journey."

## Cate Blanchett on Storytelling and Humanity

**Aya ElHaddad**

At the **8th GFF**, Oscar-winning actress and UNHCR Global Goodwill Ambassador **Cate Blanchett** captivated audiences in a heartfelt conversation moderated by **Raya Abirached** at the **CineGouna Theater**. Surrounded by stars like **Youssra, Hussein Fahmy, Dorra Zarrouk, and Amr Mansi, Blanchett** reflected on how acting and humanitarian work stem from the same core: Empathy and the ability to listen.

She spoke about her journeys with the **UNHCR** over the past **eight years**, meeting refugees in **Sudan, Syria, Bangladesh**, and beyond. One story, she said, never left her: "A child in Sudan told me, 'I miss home – the sound of my name in the morning, and the smell of rain.'"

**Blanchett** also praised Egypt's compassion toward displaced communities, calling the Egyptian people "remarkably warm and responsible in a vulnerable world."

Talking about storytelling, she noted: "Cinema isn't about giving lessons – it's about provoking thought." Whether through her series *Stateless*, or her advocacy work, she emphasized that stories of refugees are not just about loss – but also love, resilience, and hope.

On censorship and creativity, she added: "If a story is silenced, I lose interest. But like mushrooms, creativity grows even in darkness." She ended simply: "Being a celebrity means nothing unless it gives others a voice."



## Shorts Kickoff

**Today, at 1:00 PM, in Sea Cinema 1**, the eagerly awaited **Short Film Competition** kicks off with **Short Film Program 1**. This year's short film selection is curated by filmmaker and producer **Mohamed Taimour**, and the competition is judged by a distinguished jury headed by Danish Palestinian filmmaker **Mahdi Fleifel**. Joining him on the jury are award-winning composer **Suad Bushnaq**, Head of Short Films at Cannes' La Semaine de la Critique **Juliette Canon**, Italian filmmaker Andrea Gatopoulos, and Egyptian cinematographer and producer **Mostafa El Kashef**.

**Program 1** features **four** films: *Of*



*Burning Memories & Wounds* (World Premiere) by American Egyptian filmmaker **Suha Bilal**, animated short *Dog Alone* by **Marta Reis Andrade**, *Agapito* by **Kyla Danelle Romero & Arvin Belarmino**, and the international premiere of *Close Your Eyes Hind* by Dutch Syrian director **Amir Zaza**. The screenings *Of Burning Memories & Wounds* and *Close Your Eyes Hind* will be followed by a Q&A with the filmmakers.

## Video Library Now Open

The **GFF** has launched its **Video Library** – a free service for accredited industry guests, offering on-demand access to festival films. Located in the **Festival Hub** and open daily from **10 AM to 5 PM**, it allows

professionals to catch up on short films, features, and festival highlights like **Jafar Panahi's** *It Was Just an Accident*. This initiative ensures guests can explore the full program at their convenience.

# 8 Editions Questions



**Mohammad Taymour**  
Short Films Programmer

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

A loyal but crazy, exciting, and overwhelming friend = )

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

Attending the outstanding pitches of some of the projects in CineGouna Funding in the morning and then enjoying an amusing film in the chilly breeze of Festival Plaza at night

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

I'm so excited for the lineup of feature films this year!

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

The outstanding lineup of short films, of course!

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

Gathering short films from all over the world, and investigating, digging, and scouting for the most suitable and interesting films that can suit the GFF's audience.

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

The CineGouna Platform has truly become one of the leading and most influential industry hubs in the Arab World today. Every year, I find the GFF's film lineup uniquely distinct from anything else in the region – consistently bold, surprising, and exceptionally well-curated.

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

With good films, company, and laughter that'll, naturally, make it an unforgettable time of the year.

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

Having Palestinian director Mahdi Fleifel as Head of the GFF Short Film Competition; he is so dear to my heart, and his films have influenced my career as a filmmaker. It's also his first time visiting Egypt – so, it's a big thing!

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I had to confront the reality of my dad, not the version I imagined while writing



Yomna Khattab, Director of *50 Meters*:

## In Approaching My Father, I Got Closer to Myself

*“Screening 50 Meters at the GFF feels special. I’m very keen to screen the film at home, for the people it was originally made for. I’m curious to see how they’ll respond – how they’ll engage with its humor, but also with its honesty and intimacy”*

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My personal journey was at the heart of the film from day one; I had written it with a clear intention to understand why I was making it in the first place

**Nahed Nasr**

**As an award-winning screenwriter, how do you compare directing your first film to writing?**

It was a completely different experience. Being on set is a far broader challenge than sitting at a desk imagining a film on paper. Still, I relied heavily on my background as a writer; it became my anchor. I wrote extensively throughout the process. Writing gave me clarity and control on set, helping me visualize where I was heading and manage each scene with confidence.

**Your film evolves from a father-daughter story into a personal exploration of time and self. How did that transformation happen, and was it challenging to present on camera?**

My personal journey was at the heart of the film from day one; I had written it with a clear intention to understand why I was making it in the first place. But its presence and expression evolved during the editing process. We decided to bring that inner layer to the forefront, allowing it to hold all the other storylines together.

In the end, I realized that by

approaching my father, I was, in fact, getting closer to myself. At first, I thought my presence would be limited to voiceover and archives, but as filming progressed, I naturally appeared. When the emotional thread with my father stopped evolving, I chose to step closer – to be with him and break the barrier between us.

**As a woman in your thirties, how did you manage to break into a world of closely bonded older men? And what moments of warmth or surprise stayed with you?**

I knew I had a certain privilege entering this world, since these men were my father’s friends and teammates, which helped build initial trust. Keeping it over three years, though, took effort and honesty. I was transparent about my intentions and genuinely curious about their stories and how they faced aging, which deepened our bond. Despite the challenges, we had many joyful moments – especially a football match I organized for the water aerobics team, where we laughed, played, and watched them relive their younger days.

**What were the biggest challenges of working with your father, given his barriers between feelings and public image?**

My father was very enthusiastic about the film and fully supportive, but working with him meant confronting the real person, not the version I had imagined while writing. As a director, I had to accept his way of communicating, embrace his presence, and let it naturally serve the story. As a daughter, the challenge was to portray him truthfully while honoring my love and respect for him and staying true to the film’s honesty.

**You collaborated with Ahmed Amer; how did he contribute to developing the film?**

Ahmed joined early on in the film’s development. Making a personal film is never easy; you need someone who shares your vision and offers honest, ethical feedback, and Ahmed did that with great care.

We spent long sessions refining the script and learning together through workshops and pitching forums. He also helped expand the film’s international reach through a key collaboration with Danish producer Patricia Drati, which brought an exceptional Danish team on board for sound, music, and color. It was a truly collaborative journey that enriched the film on every level.

**How long did it take to make *50 Meters*? How difficult was the journey, and what did you learn?**

It took about five years to make *50 Meters*, including two years of editing. I learned everything about filmmaking through this process, but most importantly, I learned to stay flexible, embrace setbacks, and transform them into part of my style. I also realized how much persistence and hard work it takes to actually finish a film, something often underestimated in this journey.

**After the GFF, where do you see *50 Meters* heading next, and what comes after it for you as a filmmaker?**

After the GFF, *50 Meters* will continue its journey across Europe, having screened in Florence and Montpellier, with its French premiere at Cinemed, and its next stop in Valencia. I’m also eager to take it to Arab festivals so regional audiences can experience it firsthand. At the same time, I’ve begun developing my second feature documentary, where I continue exploring new ground in creative documentary filmmaking.



## Chahine: A Living Legacy



### Aya ElHaddad

As part of the **8th GFF**, a special panel titled *'A Journey with the Master: From His Lens to Their Worlds'* paid tribute to the centenary of **Youssef Chahine**, the godfather of New Arab Cinema. Moderated by President of the FIPRESCI **Ahmed Shawky**, the session brought together some of the people who knew him best – actress **Yousra**, producer **Gaby Khoury**, and directors **Daoud Aoulad-Syad** and **Férid Boughedir** – sharing personal stories of the man who reshaped Arab cinema.

**Khoury** recalled how **Chahine** changed his life: “I was an electrical engineer. He told me, ‘Work with me three hours a day, and I’ll teach you.’ Soon, I realized he knew music, editing, lighting – everything happening on set.”

**Yousra** described him as “a dictator at work but full of humanity... He made you fall in love with cinema.” Meanwhile, **Boughedir** reflected: “I show *Bab El Hadid* to my students every year. They always discover something new. For me, *The Sparrow* is his most powerful film – because creativity, to **Chahine**, was another word for freedom.”

The session concluded with a shared truth: **Chahine** was not only a visionary director but a mentor, teacher, and heartbeat of Arab cinema – and **100 years** later, his voice is still alive on screen and in those he inspired.

## CineGouna Rising Stars

The **GFF** has announced this year’s **CineGouna Rising Stars**, celebrating visionary Arab and African filmmakers reshaping cinema today. Launched in the **seventh edition**, the **initiative** continues to spotlight bold cinematic voices whose films and projects are featured across this year’s lineup and **CineGouna Forum**.

“These filmmakers are redefining Arab cinema for a global audience,” said GFF Executive Director **Amr Mansi**. GFF Artistic Director **Marianne Khoury** added, “**The Rising Stars Program** isn’t just a list – it’s a constellation of voices whose

work reveals, questions, and reimagines our world.”

Program Director **Hayat Aljowaily** also praised this year’s laureates, saying, “Each of them carries a truth – intimate yet universal – proving that cinema can still move us and change how we see.”

This year’s Rising Stars include: **Amel Guellaty** (Tunisia), **Mariam Al-Dhubhani** (Yemen), **Sameh Alaa** (Egypt), **Sarah Goher** (Egypt/US), **Valentin Noujaim** (Lebanon/France), **Yassmina Karajah** (Jordan/Palestine), and **Yomna Khattab** (Egypt).



## Sawiris Screenplay Lab

### Sara Azer

Yesterday, **The Sawiris Screenplay Lab: Project Pitches** brought together writers, directors, and producers in a collaborative effort to turn powerful stories into films.

Organized by the **Sawiris Foundation for Social Development** in partnership with **Sard**, the session reaffirmed its

mission to support promising voices in Egyptian and Arab cinema.

“We’re creating a space where ideas meet filmmakers and become real films,” said Head of CineGouna Forum and Founder of Sard **Mariam Naoum**.

This year, **five** projects were presented: *Better Chance Next Time*, *Physical Therapy*, *Moon Dust*, *The Manager*, and *Nadine*.



## Egyptian Industry Onward

### Menna Elnakib

At **CineGouna Theater**, leading voices of Egyptian cinema gathered under the banner of *'Egyptian Industry Onward'* to tackle a central question: How can Egypt reclaim its position as a true global filmmaking powerhouse?

The panel featured Producer and Founder of Film Clinic **Mohamed Hefzy**, screenwriter and Head of Censorship **Abdel Reheem Kamal**, Managing Director of the Egypt Film Commission **Ahmed Badawi**, CEO of Lagoonie Film Production **Shahinaz El Akkad**, and Head of Content at United Media Services **Ola El**

**Shafie**, and was moderated by film investor and Film Clinic Board Member **Gamal Guemeih**.

Financially, the industry is booming – **43 Egyptian films in 2024 generated nearly EGP 1bn locally**, and screenings in Saudi Arabia added **another EGP 2bn**.

Yet, **Hefzy** stressed that growth must go hand-in-hand with international collaboration, training, and co-production agreements: “Partnerships with China, Russia, and India aren’t just symbolic – they expand our skills, markets, and ambition,” he asserted.

From the state’s side, **Badawi**



confirmed a **new one-stop system for production permits**, aiming to make Egypt easier, faster, and more attractive for filmmakers. And **Kamal** emphasized that censorship “doesn’t exist to restrict – but to protect audiences and national values while leaving space for creativity,” while **El Akkad** called for updated infrastructure and stronger distribution systems.

