

EL GOUNA FILM FESTIVAL

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EL GOUNA STAR

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GFF

THE REBELS ARE BACK AT GFF!

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Today

Red Carpet



Two films take to the red carpet tonight at Festival Plaza, alongside celebrities and creative talents attending the festival! Egyptian documentary *Big Boys Don't Cry* celebrates its **world premiere** as part of the **GFF's Feature Documentary Competition**, with director **Muhammad Mutapha** joined by the film's protagonist **Abdullah Al-Araby** and producers **Philipp Maurice Raube** and **Hala Lotfy**. Also making its **MENA premiere** is *No Paradise If You Are Killed by a Woman*, following its **world premiere** at the **Venice Biennale**. Screening **Out of Competition**, the film brings director **Halkawt Mustafa** to the red carpet alongside actors **Avan Jamal** and **Thorbjørn Harr**.

Meet the Filmmaker

HALIMA

Director:

Yassine El-Idrissi

Sound Engineer:

Rashad Kerdouh

Sea Cinema 1

4:30 PM



**ALL THE
LOVERS IN THE
NIGHT**

Producer:

Kana Matsuda

Sea Cinema 1

6:30 PM



**DREAM OF
ANOTHER
SUMMER**

Director:

Irene Bartolomé

Director:

Elie Kamal

Sea Cinema 2

12:00 PM



WHAT REMAINS

Director:

Yeşim Ustaoglu

Sea Cinema 2

1:45 PM



The Future Speaks Arabic



Written by Sarah Samy

How can Arabic maintain its place in a world increasingly shaped by AI? This question was at the heart of the **CineGouna Forum's** panel titled **'The Future Speaks Arabic.'** Moderated by director **Zeina AbdelBaky**, the discussion brought together megastar **Yousra** and filmmakers **Karim El-Shennawy**, **Abdullah Al-Nuaimi**, and **Majed Al-Mansoori** to explore the relationship between

language, cultural identity, and technology.

"Arabic is one of the richest languages of the world," said **Yousra**, calling for a stronger Arabic presence in the digital world. **El Shennawy** highlighted the importance of cultural context in storytelling, particularly comedy, while **Al-Mansoori** stressed the role of families in keeping younger generations connected to their language. Addressing the dominance of English-language content in AI systems, **Al-Nuaimi** called for greater Arab participation in developing these technologies. "We don't want to be translators; we want to be innovators," he asserted.

Action Behind the Camera

From *The Lincoln Lawyer* to *Black Sails* and *The Old Man*, director and cinematographer **Lukas Ettlin** brings his experience in film and television to a **CineGouna Forum masterclass** on **October 19th from 1:00 to 2:30 PM** at the **CineGouna Theater**. Moderated by renowned Egyptian cinematographer **Abdelsalam Moussa**, the session explores how camera movement, performance, and rhythm build tension while keeping characters at the heart of the story. **Ettlin** will also discuss his transition from cinematography

to directing and the challenges of balancing spectacular action with intimate storytelling.



Short Film Competition Kicks Off

The **GFF's Short Film Competition**, featuring **19 films**, kicks off today with **Short Film Program 1** at **Sea Cinema 1**, bringing together **four films** from Egypt, the Czech Republic, Lebanon, and France. Egyptian director **Doha Hamdy** presents the **world premiere** of her fiction short *Aya Meets Ghosts*, while Czech filmmaker **Anna Belova** brings her animated film *Contact* for its **MENA premiere**. Lebanese director **Marie-Rose Osta** joins the program with *Someday a Child*, winner of the **Golden Bear for Best Short Film** at the Berlinale, also making its **MENA premiere**. Completing the lineup is French director **Antonio Donato's** *Oh Boys*, previously screened at **Cannes' Directors' Fortnight**, now celebrating its **MENA premiere** at the **GFF**.

Reclaiming/Appropriating the Archive: Whose Image? Whose Narrative?

Written by Malak Sherif

As part of the **Cinema for Humanity: Archive as Memory** Program,

filmmaker **Jehan Al-Tahri** led a thought-provoking discussion titled **'Reclaiming/Appropriating the Archive: Whose Image? Whose Narrative?'** exploring the role of archival footage in shaping historical memory and controlling narratives.

Throughout the session, **Al-Tahri** examined questions surrounding the ownership of historical images, the authority to interpret them, and the responsibility of filmmakers in reclaiming archival materials. The discussion explored how archives can reflect dominant perspectives while overlooking marginalized voices, highlighting cinema's potential to challenge established narratives and revisit history through different lenses.

The session also explored the ethical considerations surrounding the use and reinterpretation of archival

footage, raising questions about representation, identity, and historical accuracy.

Audience engagement formed part of the discussion, with questions focusing on who has the right to tell historical stories and how filmmakers can responsibly reclaim images to preserve collective memory.

The discussion underscored the archive's significance not only as a historical record but also as a powerful tool for reclaiming narratives and reshaping perspectives.



Mohamed Khan's Unlikely Heroes



Written by Sarah Azer

Yesterday, the **CineGouna Forum** revisited **Mohamed Khan's** unconventional male characters in a panel titled **'The Unlikely Hero: Men in the Cinema of Mohamed Khan,'** marking **ten years** since the filmmaker's passing. Moderated by Egyptian writer and critic **Ramy Abdelrazek**, the panel featured the likes of director **Nadine Khan**, CineGouna Funding Head **Ahmed Shawky**, and actors **Hussein Fahmy** and **Ahmed Dawood**, along with several prominent actors and filmmakers in attendance.

Nadine explained how her father's characters were shaped by their surroundings, while **Shawky** described them as men driven by passion and chivalry, whose apparent failures could represent personal victories. **Fahmy** recalled playing a weak man pretending to be powerful in *A Dinner Date*, and remembered **Khan's** playful spirit on set. And **Dawood** spoke about the trust he placed in **Khan** and the lessons he learned from working with him. **Nadine** also highlighted **Khan's** equally nuanced portrayals of women, including their flaws and struggles.

Mohamed Khan's Cinema... Reels of reality

Mohamed Khan was one of the most important filmmakers of the **Neo-Realist Movement** that emerged in Egyptian cinema in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This movement also included filmmakers of the same generation, such as **Atef El-Tayeb**, **Khairy Beshara**, and **Daoud Abdel-Sayed**. These directors rebelled against the form of realism practiced by earlier masters, such as **Kamal Selim**, **Salah Abu Seif**, and **Tawfik Saleh**. Their most significant departure was moving out of the studio and into real locations, seeking to capture reality within its authentic environment.

The economic difficulties that affected Egypt during the second half of the 1970s, particularly in the years following the 1973 war, may have been among the factors that encouraged these filmmakers to reduce production costs, including the expenses associated with studio shooting and elaborate set construction. Nevertheless, the principal themes they explored remained closely related to those

addressed by the first generation of realist filmmakers: The economic and social problems confronting Egyptian society, especially its lower-income classes.

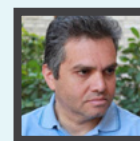
Khan was one of the leading contributors to this cinematic trend through films such as *The Desire* (1979) – his debut feature, adapted from **F. Scott Fitzgerald's** *The Great Gatsby* – followed by *Sunstroke* (1980), *A Bird on the Road* (1981), *A Dinner Date* (1981), *The Street Player* (1983), *He Left and Did Not Come Back* (1984), *Return of a Citizen* (1986), *The Wife of an Important Man* (1988), *Dreams of Hind and Camilia* (1988), and *Supermarket* (1990), among many other films over a career spanning more than **35 years**.

Khan was more attracted to realist subjects than to any other type of material. Yet he frequently sought to incorporate elements drawn from other dramatic genres. Some of his films adopted a crime-oriented atmosphere close to the thriller genre, as in *Sunstroke*, while others ventured into the



realm of low-budget independent and digital cinema, such as *Klephty* (2004).

From his earliest films, **Khan** developed an artistic approach that differed markedly from that of his predecessors. In many of his works, he reinforced the realism of the cinematic experience through highly authentic soundtracks built around the sounds of Egyptian streets, including radio broadcasts and everyday ambient noise. He often dispensed with conventional film scores altogether, allowing songs heard on the radio to serve as a realistic substitute for non-diegetic background music, thereby strengthening the sense of authenticity that became one of the defining features of his cinema.



Written by
Hani Mustafa



Danielle Arbid, Director of *Only Rebels Win*: I Wanted Love to Win in the End

***Only Rebels Win* tells a love story between two lonely people facing barriers of age, race, class, and social prejudice. When writing, did you begin with the love story or the barriers surrounding it?**

I wrote *Only Rebels Win* to calm my anger and console myself, to relieve the powerlessness I feel watching tragedies unfold in Palestine, Lebanon, and around the world, especially the suffering of refugees.

The film is an attempt to purge some of that rage and, above all, tell a story of rebellion through love. Trapped by conventions that do not suit them, a modest, courageous woman and a vulnerable man fight against an entire society. Their love itself is a defiant gesture.

What were the main production challenges of *Only Rebels Win*, and how did being unable to shoot in Beirut shape the filmmaking process?

It's a film that had to resist in order to exist, in both content and form. With tight financing and Lebanon inaccessible, we shot entirely using rear projection. Israel was bombing Beirut and southern Lebanon just as we were supposed to start filming, and no insurance company would cover the shoot.

So, a Lebanese team filmed deserted locations under my remote direction from Paris while Beirut was under attack by Israeli drones and planes. These images were then rear-projected at Montjoie studio outside Paris, combining projected images with live action. To my knowledge, no recent feature film has been made this way entirely.

***Only Rebels Win* recalls Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, though the films take different paths, particularly in their endings. Was this parallel intentional, and why revisit this story in contemporary Beirut?**

Of course, my film could be compared to **Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul***, **Douglas Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows***, and **Radu Jude's *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn***. They share a cinema of opposition, pursuit of social justice, and a more empathetic world. Today, we need to hold on to these ideals before they become fiction.

Beirut, like **Fassbinder's** Berlin in the 1970s, is a city on the brink of modernity, a laboratory for regional and global upheavals. Lebanese communities live alongside Palestinian, Syrian, Armenian, and other refugees. Outwardly open and generous, Lebanese society remains highly compartmentalized, where perceived social class counts at least as much as skin color in racial profiling.

How did you bring together Hiam Abbass and Amine Benrachid, whose personal journey echoes aspects of Osmane's story, while keeping the character distinct from his biography?

Hiam Abbass was the first actress I cast in my first short film, *Raddem*, in 1998. We've been close friends ever since. Her talent and freedom

in choosing roles are rare. Our love and mutual trust guide everything. A filmmaker needs to be loved to create a beautiful world, and with Hiam, I've never doubted that love.

Amine is Sudanese Chadian. He arrived in France as a refugee and built himself up against all odds. He's a mature, talented young actor, shaped by his life experience. His connection with Hiam was immediate and natural. We worked together in dozens of sessions over two years.

Actors' lives nourish their characters, but Osmane isn't based on Amine's biography, nor is Suzanne on Hiam's. It's more complicated than that.

The title *Only Rebels Win* suggests that rebellion leads to victory, yet by the end there seem to be no real winners. Is there an irony in the title? Does winning become another illusion?

No irony at all. This is a story based on contrast and opposition. I wanted to defend the feminist idea that a 70-year-old woman can fall in love with a 30-year-old man. Nothing prevents that. I created opposition on every level: Age, color, ethnicity, and religion, and wanted love to win in the end. Suzanne and Osmane are exemplary heroes to me, like in old Hollywood movies. Two wounded souls, on the edge, but still battling.

What does it mean to present *Only Rebels Win* to Arab audiences, given its bold confrontation with social and cultural taboos?

Ah, this will be a great adventure! I'm looking forward to the feedback!

More seriously, the world is becoming more radicalized every day, and I believe cinema, like all art, is political. This film resonates with the current troubling times in the Arab World and across the West.

I live on the edge of both worlds, so perhaps that's why I feel so acutely how freedom has become a daily battle for us all. It's a global struggle.



“A modest, courageous woman and a vulnerable man fight against an entire society. Their love itself is a defiant gesture

AHMED AMER

HEAD OF CINEGOUNA FORUM

TOWARD A STRONGER, MORE GLOBAL PAN-ARAB CINEMA INDUSTRY

In your first year heading the CineGouna Forum, what did you want to preserve from previous editions, and what did you want to do differently?

My team and I learned from previous programs and made sure that we built on the milestones of previous editions while injecting some new ideas and focusing on a variety of topics that would appeal to a vast range of the cinema industry's interests.

What are this year's forum highlights, and which themes or new formats reflect your vision?

As we remember **Mohammed Khan** a **decade** after his passing, we organized two panels to discuss the layers within **Khan's** work and introduce it to international audiences who may not have had the chance. We also have panels focusing on green cinema, short films, financing, co-production, etc.

With Amra Bakšić Čamo joining as an International Industry Strategist, how do you see the CineGouna Forum's international role evolving?

I believe the forum is on track to becoming more international, and eventually, we're aiming to position it as a hub for international cinema where collaborations with the MENA region may flourish.

How does the forum turn encounters between international professionals and Arab filmmakers into lasting collaborations?

Through panel discussions, networking events, and by ensuring a strong lineup at the market, we maximize the chances for opportunities and deals to unfold on the ground.

How can the CineGouna Forum move beyond discussing industry challenges to finding practical solutions for financing, distribution, and international collaboration?

We're hoping that the top industry professionals coming this year may consider forming an informal think tank to address these issues and challenges.



Despite Arab cinema's growing international visibility, what challenges remain in reaching wider audiences and building sustainable careers, and how can the forum help?

We encourage filmmakers to attend as many events as possible, meet people, and pitch ideas. We created a fertile environment for people to network and promote their projects.

What emerging trends and overlooked challenges in Egyptian and Arab cinema would you like future editions of the forum to address?

The biggest challenge currently is financing and distribution. While we hope it'll improve soon, until it does, we will keep trying to find paths and solutions to create more opportunities for filmmakers and young producers.

NORAH EL-KHATEEB

HEAD OF CINEGOUNA MARKET

BUILDING INDUSTRY CONNECTIONS

What are this year's market highlights in terms of activities, partnerships, and participating companies?

One of this year's main highlights is a new initiative called '**Industry Spotlight**,' which gives our exhibitors a platform to present their latest work and expertise across three areas: Production, post-production and AI, and equipment and education. We're also bringing film institutions and creative voices into the conversation. The **Kurdistan and Egyptian film commissions** will discuss production and servicing opportunities in their respective regions.

How are this year's matchmaking activities designed to meet filmmakers' and industry professionals' needs beyond networking?

This year, we're introducing curated one-on-one meetings through an online system developed specifically for the **CineGouna Market**. We wanted to give our exhibitors a more direct way to connect with the people they would actually like to meet.

The idea is to make networking more focused yet relaxed and give companies a better chance of finding potential partners, rather than leaving everything to chance.

What role can CineGouna Market play in connecting independent Egyptian and Arab films with distributors, streaming platforms, and wider audiences?

I believe the **CineGouna Market** offers a valuable opportunity to meet potential partners, especially for filmmakers who may not otherwise have easy access to them. And the opportunity isn't limited to the companies exhibiting at the market. For independent Egyptian and Arab cinema, creating more of these connections is an important first step towards reaching new audiences.

What would you consider a meaningful measure of CineGouna Market's success, beyond participation numbers, and how would you track its long-term impact?

For me, success isn't just about the number of booths or meetings. It's about whether people leave having discovered



a potential partner, found a solution to a challenge, or started a conversation that continues after the festival. Relationships in cinema take time to develop, and trust is a big part of that process. I'd be happy to see people return to the market in future editions because a connection they made here turned into a real collaboration.

Looking ahead to GFF's tenth edition, what is your vision for CineGouna Market's position in the regional and international film industry?

I'd love to see the **CineGouna Market** become a place where a new generation of filmmakers and industry professionals can start building their careers and find the partners who help them take their projects forward. I also want it to become a meeting point that people return to every year because they know they'll discover new companies, meet interesting people, and find opportunities to work together.

