

مهرجان الأفلام العربية

ARAB FILM FESTIVAL  
AUSTRALIA

2 - 5 JULY 2009  
RIVERSIDE THEATRES PARRAMATTA

[www.arabfilmfestival.com.au](http://www.arabfilmfestival.com.au)

Starting in 2001 as a Sydney-based cultural event, this year marks the debut of the Arab Film Festival Australia. First stop Sydney with a fabulous program of features, shorts, documentaries and animation, then Brisbane, Melbourne, Canberra and Adelaide with a selection of screenings and forums.

The Arab Film Festival has grown significantly over the past 8 years with ongoing support from the New South Wales Government through the Film and Television Office and Arts NSW. We are also pleased to announce that we have a three-year partnership with the Australia Council and the Australian Human Rights Commission to tour the festival.

The Arab Film Festival continues to be a critical force in facilitating dialogue and generating ideas, and providing a cultural space for Arab filmmakers to tell their stories to diverse audiences. The Festival's achievements were recognised with the 2008 Integral Energy National Multicultural Marketing Award.

ICE will continue to invest in and provide a home for this developing creative social enterprise, and support the Festival on the road to independence and sustainability.

Congratulations to Festival Directors Mouna Zaylah and Fadia Abboud, and to the Organising Committee for their drive, passion and creativity.

I would like to acknowledge our many supporters, sponsors and audiences for contributing to the success of the Arab Film Festival as a key cultural event.

**Lena Nahlous**  
Executive Director  
Information and Cultural Exchange

With the help of a lot of strong Arabic coffee, we have pulled together an impressive selection of films that delve deeper into the diversity, complexity and beauty of the Arab world and diaspora.

Over four packed days, we celebrate Arab cinema and showcase some amazing stories. We open with *Captain Abu Raed*. The first Jordanian feature to be screened in Australia, this film takes us on many journeys, appealing to young and old.

We are excited to present the first Australian screening of a Kuwaiti film, to host the world premiere of *Huriyya and Her Sisters* — an Australian animation by young Muslim women, to commemorate critically acclaimed Egyptian Director Youssef Chahine by presenting his 1958 classic, *Bab Al Hadid*, and to get you all moving with the hottest Arab hip hop grooves and video clips.

There's something for everyone.

*Yallah! See you at the movies.*  
*Fadia and Mouna*



**Arab Film Festival Australia (formerly known as Sydney Arab Film Festival) continues to develop and grow, the team working closely to bring local and international Arab films to Australian audiences.**

The Arab Film Festival aims to showcase stories from diverse Arabic-speaking cultures to broad Australian audiences that reflect the complexity and diversity of Arab communities and experiences. We aim to address the (mis)representations of Arab culture through film by providing critical spaces to present alternative representations of Arab cultures, subjects and narratives.

As a community-managed cultural event, the Arab Film Festival supports freedom of thought, expression and information, as well as diversity of screen media to enable cultural expressions to flourish. We especially promote diversity of cultural expressions that allow individuals to share their ideas, values, and experiences of the world.

Managed by Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE) and driven by an organising committee, ICE continues to support and build the festival to ensure that it becomes an independent and sustainable creative enterprise.

### TEAM

#### FESTIVAL DIRECTORS

Mouna Zaylah and  
Fadia Kisrwan Abboud

#### PUBLICIST

Janine Collins

#### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Meiying Saw

#### SPONSORSHIP

Mohamed Duar

#### VIDEO ARTIST

Fadle Elharris

#### FESTIVAL MASH-UP VIDEO

Paul Laoumitzis

#### FESTIVAL TASTER PROMO

Vanna Seang

#### SHOE THROWER ANIMATION

Layal Najj

#### SHOE THROWER SOUND DESIGN

Emma Ramsay

#### WEBSITE DESIGN AND

Maissa Alameddine - MEDIALOFT

#### DEVELOPMENT

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr Paula Abood

Charles Billeh

Mohamed Duar

Alissar Gazal

Firas Najj

Joanne Saad

Khaled Sabsabi

Saleh Saqqaf

Omeima Sukkarieh

### SHUKRAN AND THANKS

The 2009 Arab Film Festival has come together with the support and commitment of many individuals, our partners, funding bodies and sponsors. We would like to especially thank Cecelia Cmielewski - Australia Council for the Arts, Robert Love, Pene Bloch, Spiros Hristias and Jonathon Llewellyn - Riverside Theatres, Vivian Accardo and Nicholas Pickard - Parramatta City Council, Consul General Tarek Abousenna, Vice Consul Bassel Taman, and Marcia Leadbeatter - Consulate of Egypt in Sydney, Eliane Raheb - Ayyam Beirut Al Cinemayat, Nouf Al Hammadi - Gulf Film Festival, our amazing graphic designer Meiying Saw at [ragingyoghurt.org](http://ragingyoghurt.org), Layal and Layla Najj, Paul Laoumitzis, Timo Mueller, Jonathon Spring, Nathan Roxburgh, Cheryl Cook, Norhan Youssef and the fabulous team at Etihad Airways.

*A special shukran and thanks* to the ICE Board and Staff.

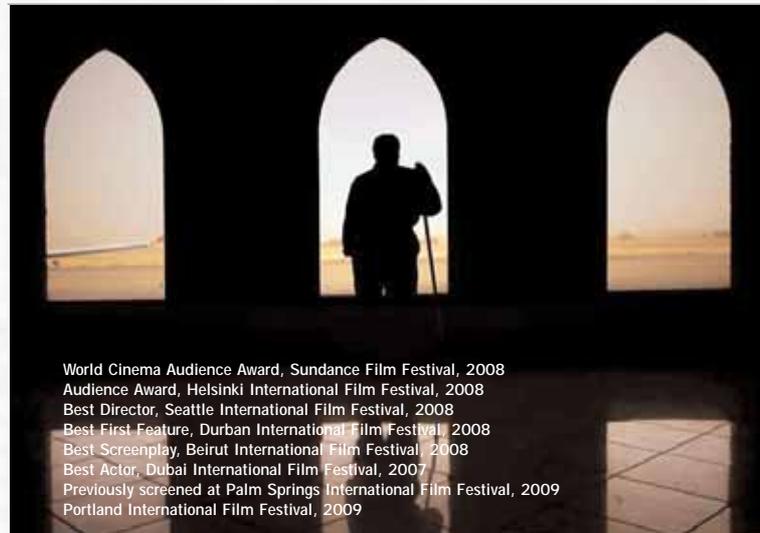


**Captain Abu Raed** *Australian Premiere*

Jordan | 2007 | 95 min | Dir: Amin Matalqa

Winner of the Audience Award at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, this crowd-pleasing Jordanian feature film is a gentle yet hard-hitting drama set in Amman, Jordan. Abu Raed is a lonely and generous man who works as a janitor at Amman airport. He is mistaken by the kids in his neighbourhood as a captain and he plays along. As he gets further involved in the lives of the children, he recognises that each and every one of them is desperately curious about the outside world and the captain begins to weave elaborate stories for the wide-eyed children. His adventures serve not only as entertainment but as the key to transforming the lives of the children and their parents.

This is the first Jordanian feature film to be screened in Australia.



World Cinema Audience Award, Sundance Film Festival, 2008  
Audience Award, Helsinki International Film Festival, 2008  
Best Director, Seattle International Film Festival, 2008  
Best First Feature, Durban International Film Festival, 2008  
Best Screenplay, Beirut International Film Festival, 2008  
Best Actor, Dubai International Film Festival, 2007  
Previously screened at Palm Springs International Film Festival, 2009  
Portland International Film Festival, 2009

Join us for sweets and entertainment after the screening  
Groove to the sounds of DJ Patrick Abboud spinning Middle Eastern lounge and electronica.





*Australian Premiere*

### **Doukhan Bila Nar / Beirut Open City**

Lebanon | 2008 | 100 min | Dir: Samir Habchi

An American flag flies at the head of five identical jeeps heading straight for the city of Beirut. A man sits on the rear brandishing a heavy machine gun. Khaled's camera captures this moment, and many moments after that, and thus the stories of fear, violence, repression and corruption begin. A feature action-drama set at the height of the Syrian presence in Lebanon and an insight into Beirut's underbelly.

Previously screened at The Carthage 22nd Film Festival, 2008  
The Times BFI 52nd London Film Festival (World Cinema), 2008  
The Middle East International Film Festival Abu Dhabi, 2008

Samir Habchi will be introduced by Tony Ishak,  
Managing Director of World Media International,  
MySat and 2Moro Radio.

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**Samir Habchi** was born in Lebanon in 1961. He completed a Master of Fine Art at the Institute of Theatre and Cinematography in Directing in the Ukraine, USSR. He returned to Lebanon to write, direct and produce feature films and television. He has directed many films including *Gebran Khalil Gebran* (2008), *Sayadat el Kasr (Lady of the Palace, 2003)* and *Meshwar* (2005), a feature drama showcased at the 2005 Sydney Arab Film Festival). His television credits from 1996 to 2007 include *Hakaya, Al Hall Bi Idak, Al Sanina* for NTV; *Ras Beirut, Bent el Hay, Leamhet Hobb and Bawahir* for LBC1, and *Darb Alfounoun* for ART.

**Samir Habchi** was flown by Etihad Airways from Beirut to Sydney as a guest of the festival, to present his film and participate in a Q&A session with audiences. Be sure to meet Samir on Friday 2 July at 8pm.

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## Makhlouta

An eclectic mix of shorts, video clips, creative documentaries and animation

### Phatwa *Australian Premiere*

Canada | 2009 | 10 min | Dir: Hala Alsalman

Bringing back the art of the epic music video à la Michael Jackson's "Bad", this video clip for The Narcicyst will make you laugh, bob your head and question the role of Americans as well as Arabs in the so-called War on Terror. Passengers are reminded: moustaches, beards, goaties, side-burns, lamb chops and excessive chest hair are required to be shaved before boarding.

### Ya Saydaty

Palestine | 2007 | 5 min | Dir: Marwan Asad

A music clip set in an underground nightclub in Palestine where they still party, dance and fall in love. "Ya Saydaty" means "My Lady" and features on DAM's album, *Dedication*.

### From Ya to Alef

Palestine | 2008 | 4 min | Dir: Suhell Nafar of DAM

DAM is the first Palestinian hip hop group.

### Funky Arab

Lebanon | 2009 | 5 min | Dir: Yehya Saade

"Funky Arab" is a music video clip for the singer Jad Choueiri on his first English album. "Every individual that has participated in the following video is an Arab," are the first words in the clip as it takes us into the underground world of Beirut's nightlife, shot at the famous BO18 nightclub. Yehya Saade is known for his controversial depictions of Arab women and men, and in this clip he once again pushes those boundaries.



### The View *Australian Premiere*

Jordan/Palestine | 2008 | 16 min

Dir: Hazim Bitar and Rifqi Assaf

This one-take film tells the story of an Israeli sniper who takes aim at an unsuspecting Palestinian couple. With a finger on the trigger, he kills time with small talk about life, death, and romance.

### A Boy, a Wall, a Donkey *Western Sydney Premiere*

Palestine | 2008 | 4 min | Dir: Hany Abu-Assad

How do three young boys make a movie living under occupation?

### Ashura: Blood and Beauty *Australian Premiere*

Lebanon | 2007 | 20 min | Dir: Katia Saleh

Amid the passion of Imam Hussein's martyrdom, there is romance in a new generation. The mix of modernity and tradition in Southern Lebanon has made the annual Shiite Muslim Ashura festival a platform for young people to meet each other and find potential husband and wives.

### Garbage *Australian Premiere*

Tunisia | 2008 | 23 min | Dir: Lotfi Achour

Mounir is a reserved and idle night watchman. On a lonely night, he finds a strange way to enter the life of Latifa, his pretty neighbour with whom he is secretly in love.



### Valley of the Sun *World Premiere*

Australia | 2009 | 5 min | Dir: Nadine Chamas

A young girl plays in a park — she once played war. The filmmaker will be present for Q+A.

### Naked Human *Australian Premiere*

Kuwait | 2009 | 12 min | Dir: Omar Al-Masab

An experimental film that is part of a trilogy asking philosophical questions about how we acquire, process and pass on knowledge. This is the first film from Kuwait to be screened in Australia at a film festival.

### It Snows in Marrakech *Australian Premiere*

Morocco | 2008 | 14 min | Dir: Hicham Alhayat

Karim wants to fulfil the last wish of his dying father who has always dreamt of skiing. When their visa to Switzerland is denied, Karim needs another plan.



### At Day's End *Australian Premiere*

Egypt | 2008 | 15 min | Dir: Sherif El Bendary

Based on a short story by the Egyptian writer Ibrahim Aslan, this subtle meditation on ageing has a father contemplating the physical changes of his adult son.



**Taquim Shakhsi / Personal Calendar** *Australian Premiere*

Iraq | 2008 | 9 min | Dir: Basheer Almajid

On a bus trip in downtown Iraq, no one can agree what day it is.



**Her Man** *Australian Premiere*

Egypt | 2006 | 10 min | Dir: Ayten Amin

Battles between first and second wives can get dirty.

Previously screened at Ayam Beirut Al Cinema'iya  
(Cinema Days of Beirut), 2008

etihad ad

## Iraq, Past, Present and Future



### **Life after the Fall** *Australian Premiere*

**Iraq | 2008 | 100 min | Dir: Kasim Abid**  
This is the story of the director's family in Baghdad as they struggle to accommodate the massive changes in their lives since the fall of the regime in 2003. The documentary follows the family over four years as we see their lives change in this intimate epic. Told chronologically, it juxtaposes the rhythms and concerns of everyday life with the events

of history. As the film unfolds, the family's mood gradually moves from hope to a growing sense of despair as the situation in the country becomes chaotic and fragmented and as violence moves closer to them.

Second Best Documentary Prize, Gulf Film Festival Dubai, 2009  
Best Film, Arab Film Festival California, 2008  
Best Film, Munich International Film Festival, 2008  
Golden Hawk Prize, Arab Film Festival Rotterdam, 2008

### **Taqouim Shakhsi / Personal Calendar** *Australian Premiere*

**Iraq | 2008 | 9 min | Dir: Basheer Almajid**

On a bus trip in downtown Iraq, no one can agree what day it is.



### **Mesopotamia** *Australian Premiere*

**Denmark/Iraq | 2008 | 26 min | Dir: Fenar Ahmad**

In 2020, the coalition has left Iraq in the throes of civil war. A group of Iraqis hides beneath the earth and we follow their lives through the eyes of Tariq, a boy who is about to take a difficult decision.



### **Paloma Delight** *Australian Premiere*

**Algeria | 2007 | 134 min | Dir: Nadir Mokneche**

Need a building permit? Feeling lonely tonight? Call the national benefactress, Madame Aldjeria — she has the answer. When it comes to surviving in today's Algeria, no scam is too daunting for Madame Aldjeria. If they're pretty and lacking in principles, her recruits can make a career for themselves. The latest of these, Paloma, is quite a hit, especially with Riyad, Madame Aldjeria's son. But the purchase of Caracalla Springs, the dream that should allow Aldjeria's clan to start a new life, proves to be one scam too many. The Algerian icon Biyouna plays the wonderful Madame Aldjeria.

Best Foreign Film, Lumiere Award, France, 2008





## Dreaming of 1001 Rights

Films and forum that explore social justice, artistic expression and cultural activism

### Huriyya and her Sisters *World Premiere*

Australia | 2009 | 8 mins

Khadija finds solace in the spiritual beauty of the moving word. Mariam discovers wisdom in the most fantastical of places. Assia wants to stop bombs falling on children. And Fatima? She wants to know what will become of Huriyya.

**Huriyya and her Sisters** is a short animation created by young Muslim women and girls exploring their experiences of the world. Creative workshops were held over 18 months at community centres in south-west and western Sydney where participants developed the visuals, sound and storylines.

This film is a community cultural development (CCD) project managed by Bankstown Area Multicultural Network (BAMN) and has been proudly supported by the Australian Government through an initiative between the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Australia Council for the Arts, Bankstown City Council, and TAFE NSW South Western Sydney Institute.

The creative team includes Alaa Sukkarieh, Asmah Gebara, Aya Sukkarieh, Fatima Gebara, Hend Kandeel, Layal Naji, Leila Darbas, Maysa Succarie, Nahla El Ghazawi, Sara Shehata, Sara Zawit, Sarah Khodr, Sawsan Khodr, Shafigheh Rafat, Soheir El Sayah, Yasmine Khodr, Paula Abood, Fatima Mawas, Nadyat El Gawley, Meiyong Saw, Shaia Kaia, Fadle El-Haris, Mohamed Youssef, Tarek Sawires, Jaime Bohm and Barry Gamba.





### My Journey

Australia | 2008 | 10 min | Dir: Nawal Abdi  
Based on the recollections of the director's grandfather, Mahmoud Abdi, this film traces his journey from 1948 when he was forced to leave his homeland Palestine to present day Australia where he now lives.



### The Secret World

Palestine | 2008 | 60 min | Dir: Nicholas Rowe  
An adaptation of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* set in Ramallah, this feature follows a group of Palestinian school children who wake up one day to find all the adults have disappeared.

### Dreaming of 1001 Rights: Forum

Guest speakers include:

Romaine Moreton, Australian Indigenous artist and writer

Randa Abdel-Fattah, acclaimed author, lawyer and human rights activist

Nawal Abdi, director, *My Journey*

Nicholas Rowe, director, *The Secret World*

Aya Sukkarieh and Sarah Khodr, creators, *Huriyya and Her Sisters*



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The Australian Human Rights Commission is a proud supporter of the Arab Film Festival Australia.



### Bab al-Hadid / Cairo Station

Egypt | 1958 | 76 min | Dir: Youssef Chahine

Bab al Hadid tells the story of Qinawi (played by Chahine), a disabled newspaper seller who works at Cairo's bustling main railway station. Drawn to the beautiful Hanuma (Hind Rustum), Qinawi's obsessive desire ultimately leads to tragic consequences. Considered Chahine's masterpiece, this gritty neo-realist drama is a powerful social commentary on sexuality, repression and violence in the margins of Cairo. Nominated for a Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival in 1958.



Born in the cosmopolitan city of Alexandria to a Greek mother and a Lebanese father, **Youssef Chahine** is perhaps the most famous auteur to emerge in the illustrious history of Egyptian cinema. Chahine directed his first feature film in 1950, *Baba Amin* (*Daddy Amin*) at the age of 23, two years before the revolution of 1952 that saw the overthrow of the monarchy and the rise of the charismatic leader Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Chahine's cinema is a cinema of ideas that visually chronicles the social, cultural and political history of modern Egypt. His incisive and compelling narratives have challenged and entertained audiences alike for over half a century. A legendary auteur, his artistic legacy continues to influence filmmakers both within and outside the Arab world. Youssef Chahine died in Cairo in July 2008 at the age of 82.



### Ein Shams / Eye of the Sun *Australian Premiere*

Egypt | 2008 | 90 min | Dir: Ibrahim El Batout

Ein Shams was once the capital of Pharaonic Egypt and a sacred location marked by the visit of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. Now it has become one of Cairo's poorest and most neglected neighbourhoods. Through the eyes of Shams, an 11-year-old girl living in this neighbourhood, the film captures both the sadness and magic of everyday life in Egypt. In a series of heart-rending events, the diverse characters showcase the intricacies of Egypt's political system and social structure, and give a glimpse into the grievances and complex relationships of the Middle East region.

First independent feature film to be distributed in Egyptian cinemas

The Golden Bull, Top Prize at the 54th Taormina Film Festival, 2008

The Golden Hawk, Rotterdam Festival, 2008

International Carthage Festival Award, 2008

Previously screened at Ayam Beirut Al Cinema'iya (Cinema Days of Beirut), 2008

## Calendar of all Events

### THURSDAY 2 JULY

8pm Captain Abu Raed **Opening Night**

### FRIDAY 3 JULY

8pm Beirut Open City **Discussion with the director Samir Habchi**

### SATURDAY 4 JULY

2pm **Makhlouta: an eclectic mix of shorts**

Ashura: Blood and Beauty + A Boy, a Wall, a Donkey +  
At Days End + Ya Saydaty + From Ya to Alef + Funky Arab +  
Garbage + Her Man + It Snows in Marrakech + Naked Human  
+ Personal Calendar + Phatwa + The View + Valley of the Sun

5pm Life After The Fall + Personal Calendar + Mesopotamia

8pm Paloma Delight

### SUNDAY 5 JULY

2pm Dreaming of 1001 Rights **Forum + Films**  
includes the World Premiere of Huriyya and Her Sisters  
(Australia) + The Secret World (Palestine) + My Journey  
(Australia) followed by a panel of guest speakers exploring  
social justice, artistic expression and cultural activism.

5pm Cairo Station

8pm Eye of the Sun

All non-English language films are subtitled. All festival events begin at the advertised times, however ending times may vary according to the session program. CLASSIFICATION The Office of Film and Literature Classification Board has approved the screenings of these films. Persons under 15 must be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian.

*Yallah!*  
*Arab films on the move.*

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## TICKET PRICES

Opening Night \$30 per person (includes film + sweets + party)

Session Tickets \$18 / \$12 (excludes opening night)

Marathon Package \$99 / \$69

Conditions apply. See [www.arabfilmfestival.com.au](http://www.arabfilmfestival.com.au) for details.

## CONDITIONS

- All tickets purchased over the internet can only be collected from the Riverside Box Office.
- To do so you must be the credit card holder or have a letter of authorisation signed by the credit card holder.
- Dates and times are correct at the time of publication, but may need to be altered. We therefore reserve the right to withdraw, change and replace programs without notice.
- All seating is reserved.
- Festival tickets once acquired are non refundable.
- We anticipate that door sales will be available for most festival sessions however this cannot be guaranteed.
- Patrons are urged to purchase their tickets well in advance to avoid disappointment.
- All films have English subtitles unless otherwise indicated on the program.
- Lost or stolen tickets will not be refunded or replaced.
- All festival films start at the advertised starting times.

## VENUE



Riverside Theatres is located on the banks of the scenic Parramatta River in the heart of Parramatta — within walking distance to cheap parking and all major public transport.

## DISABILITY ACCESS

Riverside Theatres offers level access to all venues. Accessible bathrooms are also available. Wheelchair access is available in all theatres. A hearing loop is installed in the Riverside Theatre only. Hearing devices with a T-Switch can access this system. Limited paid parking is available at the venue for patrons with a current disability parking permit. Patrons with particular seating needs, parking requirements, guide dogs or other special needs should advise Box Office at the time of booking.

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