



REVOLUTION
ROMANCE
REALITIES

مهرجان الأفلام العربية

ARAB FILM FESTIVAL
AUSTRALIA

SYDNEY | MELBOURNE | CANBERRA | ADELAIDE | BRISBANE
30 JUNE – 31 JULY

arabfilmfestival.com.au



FROM THE FESTIVAL DIRECTORS

This year the Arab world is standing up! The voice of the people is getting louder and firmer as they speak out, speak back, and deftly wield the image as a tool, weapon, and a witness.

Arab people are on the streets with their hands in the air – holding up slogans, mobile phones, cameras and creating stories that are already fuelling and igniting big screens all over the world.

REVOLUTION is obvious and ongoing –
let's hope it affects the censorship.

ROMANCE happens, it cannot be stopped –
it is the same passion that fires your heart to fight for your country, your ideals, your love!

REALITIES reflect our culture and communities –
beautiful, complex and diverse, filled with people of passion living with the struggles and dreams of the daily grind.

We share with you a collection of films celebrating our rich tradition of storytelling through films made with love by Arab filmmakers from across the world.

Enjoy the fiery journey.

Mouna and Fadia

PREFACE

A key cultural event in Australia, engaging thousands of film buffs each year, the Arab Film Festival has expanded from a Sydney-wide event that started in Parramatta to an award-winning national film festival since 2001.

AFF is a creative cultural enterprise born out of Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE) and we're very proud that over six years the festival has experienced a period of consolidation and become a sustainable business model, now recognised as a significant cultural event.

One of ICE's fundamental beliefs as an organisation is in people's capacity to change and discover new ways of experiencing the world. We hope that by submerging yourself in this outstanding program of films you will further develop your understanding of the changing world around you and gain some fresh perspectives about the Arab world.

My sincere thanks go to our many important partners, investors and supporters (each acknowledged in this program on page 31), for creating the conditions that have allowed the Arab Film Festival's success.

Warm thanks must also go to you as an audience member in Parramatta, Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Canberra – the future of this festival is contingent on your continued support.

Congratulations to AFF Festival Directors Mouna Zaylah and Fadia Abboud and their programming committee for producing such an outstanding event. It is their combined spirit, imagination and work ethic that defines this festival and gives it such prominence.



Lisa Torrance

Executive Director

Information and Cultural Exchange

مهرجان الأفلام العربية

ARAB FILM FESTIVAL

A U S T R A L I A



ABOUT US

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.

Managed by Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE) and driven by a volunteer organizing committee, ICE continues to support and build the festival to ensure that it becomes an independent and sustainable creative enterprise. ICE is a not-for-profit community and arts organization who nurtures new voices, amplifies existing urban cultures and contributes to the arts and cultural sector so that it can become truly representative of Australia's diversity.





TEAM

FESTIVAL DIRECTORS MOUNA ZAYLAH and FADIA KISRWANI ABOOD

ORGANISING COMMITTEE MEMBERS (FROM LEFT) DR PAULA ABOOD, ALISSAR GAZAL, FIRAS NAJI, JOANNE SAAD, SALEH SAQQAF, OMEIMA SUKKARIEH and FARID FARID

PUBLICITY NICHOLAS PICKARD

GRAPHIC DESIGN MEIYING SAW | RAGINGYOGHURT.ORG

MULTIMEDIA SUPPORT ZAHRA ALSAMAWI

DOCUMENTATION VIDEO ARTIST VANNA SEANG

MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORT KRISTY MAYHEW, JACKIE LEEWAI and YU YE WU

COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT MONIQUE CHOY

WEBSITE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT MAISSA ALAMEDDINE – MEDIALOFT



Australian Premiere

The Cry of an Ant

Egypt | 2011 | 107 min | Dir: Sameh Abdel Aziz

The first feature film to address the Egyptian Revolution of January 2011. The film reveals the struggle of daily life in Egypt, through the eyes of Gouda Al Masri. Gouda loves his country, but fuelled by unemployment, humiliation from the authorities and police corruption, he decides to fight back. He is detained and tortured by police, advised to stay out of trouble and lives his life like an ant. But Gouda, like so many of his fellow Egyptians, never gives up hope that change is possible.



SAMEH ABDEL AZIZ

graduated with a Bachelor of the High Institute of Cinema, Editing Department 1996. He was awarded best Director in Africa 2009, Khouribga Prize. The Cry of an Ant is his eighth film. Sameh moved quickly to capture the moment in history as it unfolded on the ground in early 2011. Abdel Aziz sees his film as a testament to the bravery of the protesters who spoke out against the brutality of Mubarak's regime.

The Director Sameh Abdel Aziz will be present at screening, with thanks to Etihad Airways.



الإتihad
ETIHAD
AIRWAYS

A photograph of actress Katrina Kaif and three friends on an Etihad Airways flight. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. Katrina is in the foreground, wearing a pink jacket over a yellow top. One friend is holding a bowl of popcorn. The background shows the interior of the aircraft cabin.

She likes
a film festival in
the sky.

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Katrina enjoys the best of everything. Such as her own film festival in the sky with over 600 hours of English and Arabic movies featuring directors like Ahmed Saleh and stars like May Selim and Ahmed El Sakka. All while flying direct from Australia daily to the Middle East. Then connecting to over 65 destinations worldwide.

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*2010 and 2009 World Travel Awards.

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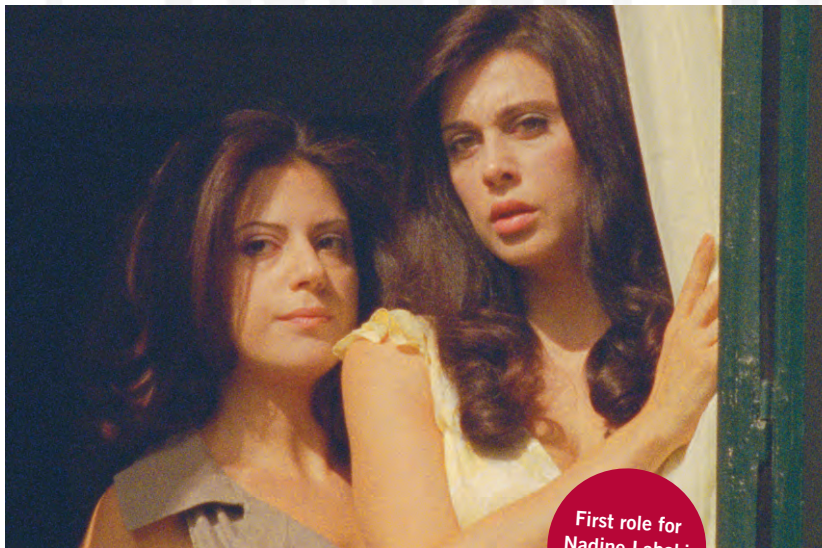
Award-winning Bollywood actress Katrina Kaif in our Coral Economy Class.

etihad.com

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ARAB FILM FESTIVAL

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2011 Arab Film Festival.

الإتجاه
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AIRWAYS



First role for
Nadine Labaki
after *Caramel*

Australian Premiere

Stray Bullet

Lebanon | 2010 | 75 min | Dir: Georges Hachem

It's the end of summer 1976, in the northern suburbs of Beirut, and Noha is getting married. It's her last chance before she becomes an old maid like her elder sister. But 15 days before the wedding, Noha changes her mind.



Australian Premiere

Cairo Exit

Egypt | 2010 | 100 min | Dir: Hesham Issawi

A powerful account of life in contemporary Cairo. This raw drama about a pair of star-crossed lovers shines a spotlight upon the social and cultural taboos that riddle the city's diverse population. Heralding a bold new shift for contemporary Egyptian cinema, *Cairo Exit* is a gritty and uncompromising work from a major new cinematic talent.





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



Australian Premiere

The Circle

UAE | 2009 | 82 min | Dir: Nawaf Al-Janahi

Ibrahim, a poet and a journalist, discovers that he is dying fast from a fatal disease. He confronts his partner in crime, Bader, and demands his share to make sure that his wife has a better life after he's gone. Shihab, a professional thief forced by his boss to do his bidding in order to pay off a huge debt, plans to quit the crime world to take care of his younger sister. They both meet accidentally and begin to see the world from a different perspective. This powerful film has been described as "a major turning point in Emirati and Gulf cinema".



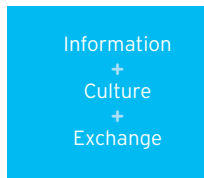
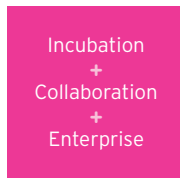
The Director, Nawaf Al-Janahi will join us for the screening in Sydney with thanks to Etihad.

الاتحاد
ETIHAD
AIRWAYS

*Australian Premiere***Majid****Morocco | 2010 | 116 min | Dir: Nassim Abassi**

Ten-year-old orphan Majid sells books and shines shoes on the streets of Mohammedia while his older brother Driss dreams of Norway and Norwegian girls. After recurrent nightmares about his lost parents, Majid embarks on a journey to Casablanca to track down a photo – and memories – of them. His new friend Larbi joins him in his quest, but danger and adventure await them on their journey to the big city. This brilliantly observed and acted film marks the debut of a bevy of new talent, from the young Moroccan director Nassim Abassi to child star Brahim al Bakali.





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Australian Premiere

Grandma, a Thousand Times

Lebanon | 2010 | 48 min | Dir: Mahmoud Kaabour

A poetic and playful magic-realist documentary that puts a feisty Beiruti grandmother at the centre of brave film exercises concocted by her filmmaker grandson to capture and commemorate her many worlds before they are erased by the passage of time.

Australian Premiere

Kingdom of Women: Ein el Hilweh

Lebanon | 2010 | 54 min | Dir: Dahna Abourahme

Documenting an important chapter in the history of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, this film tells the story of the women of Ein El Hilweh refugee camp between 1982 and 1984. After the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the camp was destroyed and its men imprisoned. The film documents the community and organising spirit of the women during this period, how they were able to rebuild the camp and provide for their families while their men were held captive. Weaving between past and present, evocative animation and daily life, the documentary focuses on seven of these women and how they contribute to their community's survival.





Australian Premiere

This Is My Picture When I Was Dead

Palestine, Netherlands | 2010 | 75 min | Dir: Mahmoud al Massad

Athens, 1983 – the press reports that four-year-old Bashir has been killed during the assassination of his father, a top PLO lieutenant. A tragedy, yet what if Bashir's death was not the end of his journey? Today, he would be 29 years old. He would have to dig through his past to find out what kind of life he would have lived, only to witness the dream of a Palestinian state his father died for turning to dust. In this experimental, highly original and occasionally surreal film, Mahmoud al Massad combines archival footage and photos with dramatic re-creations to delve into the history of the PLO. His work redefines what a documentary can be, with fascinating results.



Son of Babylon

Iraq, Kurdistan | 2009 | 91 min | Dir: Mohamed Al-Daradji

It's northern Iraq, 2003. Two weeks after the fall of Saddam Hussein, Ahmed, a 12-year-old boy begrudgingly follows in the shadow of his grandmother who has heard that prisoners of war have been found alive in the south. She is determined to discover the fate of her missing son, Ahmed's father, who never returned from the Gulf War. From the mountains of Kurdistan to the sands of Babylon, the two of them hitch rides from strangers and cross paths with fellow pilgrims, on all-too-similar journeys. Struggling to understand his grandmother's search, Ahmed follows in the forgotten footsteps of a father he never knew.

Beautifully directed by Mohamed Al-Daradji, and featuring a magnificent performance from young Yasser Talib as Ahmed, *Son of Babylon* is fulfilling as both a cinematic and emotional experience. It is a rugged road movie, a story of hope and forgiveness; one that palpably, and with great humanity, illustrates reality for many Iraqi and Kurdish people in the aftermath of Hussein's reign.



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Australian Premiere

I Come From a Beautiful Place

Lebanon | 2011 | 30 min

Dir: Carol Mansour

A moving film following the lives of five refugees in Lebanon. One of them, Mohammad from Darfur, finds his three brothers and three of his sisters killed, his mother moments away from death. He decides to flee the conflict in Sudan and make his way to Lebanon, where he becomes one of the 9000 non-Palestinian refugees and asylum seekers being cared for by UNHCR.



Mary

Australia | 2009 | 6 min

Dir: Fatima Mawas

When a new neighbour moves in next door, Samantha's curiosity is aroused sending her on a mission of espionage.



Australian Premiere

Habibti

UK | 2010 | 16 min | Dir: Nour Wazzi

Iman, a conservative woman, pays a surprise visit to her estranged daughter in London and is shocked to find her living with a boyfriend.



Australian Premiere

Mish Mush

Syria, Canada | 2010 | 19 min | Dir: Amar Chebib

Like many frustrated young poets before him, Ahmed rails against the constraints of society. He detests his life in Damascus and when he's drafted for military service, he decides to flee the country in search of freedom. But his actions pit him against a complex bureaucracy, a conservative family, and his reluctant lover. En route to Lebanon, he finds himself in an unexpected place.

Australian Premiere

Sabeel

UAE | 2010 | 20 min | Dir: Khalid Al Mahmood

Two small boys live with their ailing grandmother in a hut deep in the mountains of the UAE. Spending their days tending their vegetables and then selling produce on the road, they put all their meagre earnings into buying medicine for their sick grandmother. The road they work alongside becomes a symbol of their link to the world and their fate.





Australian Premiere

Once

UAE | 2009 | 15 min | Dir: Nayla Al Khaja

This short traces a day in the life of a teenager as she gets ready for a blind date with a boy she imagines is the man of her dreams. She transforms herself from a child into a woman, taking risks and telling lies, all in the quest for true love.



Australian Premiere

Garagouz

Algeria | 2011 | 22 min

Dir: Abdenour Zahzah

Beautifully shot in the Algerian countryside, Garagouz follows Mokhtar, a travelling puppeteer who visits outlying schools with his son in a beat-up blue van. Along the way he encounters prejudices and obstacles but he teaches his son it's still possible to bring joy and dreams to children.



Australian Premiere

The Rodba

France | 2010 | 15 min | Dir: Hafsia Herzi

Matteo, a young man of Italian origin, has come to ask Nina to marry him. Her family comes from the Maghreb, and he's hoping to pop the question the way her family expects it to be done with the traditional rodba.



Australian Premiere

Show & Tell

Australia | 2010 | 7 min | Dir: Haidar Noor

A beautiful meditation on memory and history, *Show and Tell* is a collection of intimate portraits using personal objects to unlock memories and stories. The film examines the way human beings establish relationships with objects in order to strengthen our contact with the past.



Australian Premiere

A Tuesday

Lebanon | 2010 | 19 min

Dir: Sabine El Chamaa

One sunny Tuesday morning in Beirut, an elderly lady walks out of an elegant boutique, wearing an expensive black dress. There is just one problem – she has not paid for it. A policeman stops her, launching this compelling story.



Australian Premiere

Gaza Shield

Lebanon, USA | 2011 | 17 min

Dir: Tania Khalaf

Gaza Shield follows three unconventional Lebanese artists as they seek to protest the injustices of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by developing a conscientious online video game.



Australian Premiere

Into the Belly of the Whale

Palestine, Jordan | 2010 | 25 min

Dir: Hazim Bitar

Younis is making his last run to bring in goods via the warren of tunnels 100 feet under the border zone between Israel, Gaza and Egypt. The tunnels evade Israel border controls but they are highly dangerous –

threatening collapse and suffocation at any moment. After an Israeli attack, Younis is trapped in the middle of the 'whale' tunnel. While stuck underground, he ponders existential questions about his fate in a film which uses the potent symbolism of the story of Jonah and Whale to examine the plight of Palestinians trapped within the belly of a hostile world.



Australian Premiere

We will not Die

Algeria, France | 2010 | 20 min

Dir: Amal Kateb

It's Oran, Algeria, on an ordinary Friday in summer 1994. After doing a report in Kabul, Salim returns to his hometown at the hour of prayer. He joins his lover Houria who is hiding in a safe apartment. To celebrate

their reunion, Salim pulls out a bottle of wine brought back from Afghanistan. The trouble is, Houria doesn't have a corkscrew. The film sets out the difficulty of life for ordinary Algerians during the violence of the 1990s.

CALENDAR

SYDNEY

THURSDAY 30 JUNE	8pm	The Cry of an Ant + OPENING NIGHT PARTY
FRIDAY 1 JULY	8pm	Stray Bullet + A Tuesday + Mary
SATURDAY 2 JULY	2pm	Cairo Exit + Mish Mush + Habibti
	5pm	The Circle + Once + Sabeel
	8pm	Majid + Garagouz + The Rodba
SUNDAY 3 JULY	2pm	Grandma, A Thousand Times + Show & Tell + I Come from a Beautiful Place + Kingdom of Women: Ein el Hilweh
	5pm	This is My Picture When I Was Dead + Into the Belly of the Whale + Gaza Shield
	8pm	Son of Babylon + We Will Not Die

MELBOURNE

FRIDAY 8 JULY	8pm	The Cry of an Ant + The Rodba
SATURDAY 9 JULY	7pm	Stray Bullet + A Tuesday + Mary
SUNDAY 10 JULY	5pm	This is My Picture When I Was Dead + Into the Belly of the Whale + Gaza Shield

CANBERRA

THURSDAY 14 JULY	7pm	The Cry of an Ant + The Rodba
SATURDAY 16 JULY	4.30pm	Majid + Mary
	7pm	Son of Babylon + Habibti

CANBERRA continued

SUNDAY 17 JULY	2pm	This is My Picture When I Was Dead + Gaza Shield
	4.30pm	Stray Bullet + Grandma, A Thousand Times
THURSDAY 21 JULY	2pm	Son of Babylon + Habibti

ADELAIDE

SATURDAY 23 JULY	7pm	The Cry of an Ant + The Rodba
SUNDAY 24 JULY	2pm	Stray Bullet + A Tuesday + Mary
	7pm	This is My Picture When I Was Dead + Into the Belly of the Whale + Gaza Shield

BRISBANE

SATURDAY 30 JULY	7pm	The Cry of an Ant + The Rodba
SUNDAY 31 JULY	4pm	Stray Bullet + A Tuesday + Mary
	7pm	This is My Picture When I Was Dead + Into the Belly of the Whale + Gaza Shield

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 films are exempt from classification and approved for screening by the relevant authority in each state. Persons under 15 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

VENUES

SYDNEY

RIVERSIDE THEATRES PARRAMATTA

Corner Church and Market Streets, Parramatta, NSW

T 02 8839 3399 www.riversideparramatta.com.au

Opening night \$30 (includes film + sweets + party)

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

Marathon Package \$99 / \$69 (excludes opening night)

MELBOURNE

CINEMA NOVA, CARLTON

380 Lygon Street, Carlton, VIC

T 03 9347 5331 www.cinemanova.com.au

Tickets \$17.50 / \$14.50

CANBERRA

ARC CINEMA, NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE OF AUSTRALIA

McCoy Circuit, Acton, ACT

T 02 6248 2000 www.nfsa.gov.au

Tickets \$11.00 / \$9.00 / \$80 for 10 ticket Max Pass

ADELAIDE

PALACE NOVA EASTEND CINEMAS

Rundle Street, Adelaide, SA

T 08 8232 3434 www.palacenova.com

Tickets \$18.00 / \$15.50

BRISBANE

DENDY PORTSIDE

Portside Wharf, Remora Road, Hamilton, QLD

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بعد سنة واحدة
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