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Listen Walks the GFF Red Carpet

«Believe that the idea of the film is based on reality, and doesn't only exist on the screen. It is happening. I've lived this reality.»

Habiba Osama

The cast and crew of Listen walked the red carpet of the Festival Plaza today as part of the MENA premiere of the award-winning film. The film director Ana Rocha De Sousa and actors Lúcia Moniz and Kem Hassan were presented at the event.

Amir Ramsis, film director and the Artistic director of GFF, invited the film cast and crew to the stage, saying, «We are very lucky to have the MENA premiere of one of the Venice International Film Festival award

winners in the GFF Official Competition.»

Ana Rocha De Sousa stated that she is proud that the film is here in GFF, commenting, «Believe that the idea of the film is based on reality, and doesn't only exist on the screen. It is happening. I've lived this reality. And I hope that my message reaches everyone in the world.»

Listen portrays the tireless battle of a couple of Portuguese immigrant parents and

their three children--living on the outskirts of London--against strict laws, in attempts to keep their family intact. Trouble ensues when a misunderstanding arises with their deaf daughter at school, and the British social services become concerned for the safety of the children. The film won the Lion of the Future Award for a Debut Film, as well as the Special Orizzonti Jury Prize at the 77th Venice International Film Festival.

Festival Director

Intishal Al Timimi

Editor in Chief

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Mostafa Abdelaty

★ **Meet the filmmaker**



Softie

Doc. Competition

Guest (s) are attending

Director:

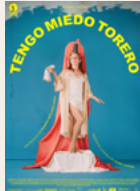
Sam Soko

Producer:

Toni Kamau

Sea Cinema 2

3:15 p.m.



My Tender Matador

Out of Competition

Guest (s) are attending

Director:

Rodrigo

Sepulveda Urzua

Actor:

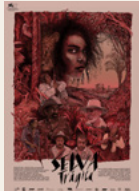
Leonardo

Ortizgris

Sea Cinema 2

9:30 p.m.

3:15 p.m.



Tragic Jungle

Out of Competition

Guest (s) are attending

Actress:

Indira Rubie

Andrewin

TUB

3:15 p.m.



Listen

Narr Competition

Guest (s) are attending

Director:

Ana Rocha De Sousa

Actors:

Lucia Moniz,

Kem Hassan

Sea Cinema 1

12:00 p.m.

Arena

6:30 p.m.

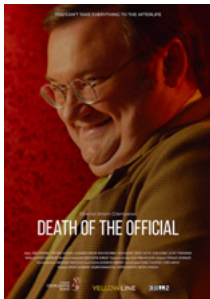
World and MENA Short Film Premieres

Today, the screening of 6 short films will mark their world and MENA premieres as part of GFF 4th edition's Short Film Competition.

This is the third on the schedule of three screening programs dedicated for the 18 short films in the festival. The Shorts Program 3 consists of the world premiere of Obvious Offside by Tunisian film director Sami Tilili; and Being My Mom by Italian film director Jasmine Trinca, which was selected in the Orizzonti section of the 77th Venice International Film Festival. This is in addition to Bullmastiff by Anastasiia Bukovska; Pilar by Yngwie Boley, J.J. Epping and Diana van Houten; Death of the Official by Artem Gilemyanov; and End of September by Valentina Casadei.

This year, 18 films are participating in GFF's Short Film Competition. The prizes are: El Gouna Golden Star, Certificate and US \$15,000; El Gouna Silver Star, Certificate and US \$7,500; El Gouna Bronze Star, Certificate and US \$4,000; as well as El Gouna Star for Best Arab Short Film Trophy, Certificate and US \$5,000.

The short film screenings will take place at Sea Cinema 1 at 6:30 p.m.



★ **Schedule**

LISTEN Sea Cinema 1 12:00 PM	MAINSTREAM Audimax (TU Berlin) 3:00 PM	THE WHALER BOY Audimax (TU Berlin) 5:45 PM	MY TENDER MATADOR Sea Cinema 3 7:15 PM	NOWHERE SPECIAL Sea Cinema 1 9:15 PM	Short film program 3 BULLMASTIFF - 25 min OBVIOUS OFFSIDE - 19 min PILAR - 9 min DEATH OF THE OFFICIAL - 16 min BEING MY MOM - 12 min END OF SEPTEMBER - 15 min
TRAGIC JUNGLE Sea Cinema 3 12:30 PM	BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ Sea Cinema 3 3:00 PM	SHORT FILM PROGRAM 3 Sea Cinema 1 6:15 PM	QUO VADIS, AIDA? Audimax (TU Berlin) 8:15 PM	MAINSTREAM Tik Tok Arena 9:15 PM	
FALLING Grand Cinemas Hurghada 2:15 PM	SOFTIE Sea Cinema 2 3:15 PM	BANKSY MOST WANTED Sea Cinema 2 6:30 PM	BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ Grand Cinemas Hurghada 8:15 PM	FALLING Sea Cinema 3 9:45 PM	
THE TIES Sea Cinema 1 2:45 PM	FATHER Grand Cinemas Hurghada 5:15 PM	LISTEN Tik Tok Arena 6:30 PM	THE FURNACE Sea Cinema 2 9:00 PM		

At the Festival Plaza: The Closing of CineGouna Platform's 4th Edition

Today marks the closing of the CineGouna Platform program activities with a ceremony that takes place at the Festival Plaza. CineGouna Platform is an industry-oriented event created to support and empower Egyptian and Arab filmmakers, helping them find artistic and financial support. The platform carries two divisions, CineGouna SpringBoard and CineGouna Bridge programs, providing channels for sharing and learning.

CineGouna SpringBoard is a project development and co-production lab that offers opportunities to find creative and financial support for Arab film directors and producers with projects in development or films in post-production.

For its 4th edition, CineGouna SpringBoard received 99 submissions (65 projects in development and 34 films in post-production) from all parts of the Arab world. A panel of experts reviewed the submissions and made a selection of 12 projects in development (9 narratives and 3 documentaries) and 6 films in post-production (5 narratives and 1 documentary) on the basis of their content, artistic vision, and overall financial feasibility.

On the other hand, CineGouna Bridge is a meeting point and a forum for dialogue between different cinematic voices, where Arab filmmakers and their international counterparts engage in and share their perspectives on a wide range of subjects related to the social and business aspects of cinema.

The CineGouna Bridge program included four panel discussions entitled "Women's Empowerment in Film" and "Digital Media in the Wake of a Global Pandemic", as well as two



virtual panel discussions that tackled "The Role of Film Festivals in the Time of Covid-19" and "Filmmaker's Journey from Film Lab to VOD Platform, Presented by IEFTA". This is in addition to the "Netflix's Master Class by Christopher Mack" virtual event.

The program also included two master classes with world-renowned Bollywood star Ali Fazal and established DOP Ahmad Al Morsy. Al Morsy's master class was on "Choosing How to Tell a Story Visually and Having the Flexibility to Adapt to Changing Conditions".





Remi Itani, director of A Long Breath: Ibrahim is the Victim of a Broken System

Nahed Nasr

How was the world premiere of your debut at IDFA?

It was very good timing for my film to be selected in IDFA back in October 2019. It coincided with the beginning of the October revolution, which shed light on Tripoli, where my film takes place in Bab Al Tabbaneh. I was very emotional about this moment, and it gave me a very good space to speak about Lebanon, drawing the foreign audience's attention to what is happening in my country.

How do you view having the MENA premiere of A Long Breath at GFF?

The film has received a couple of invitations from film festivals in the MENA region, and my producer and I chose to bring it to GFF. The festival supported my film in 2019 with the Best Film in Post-production prize. This really helped me complete my project. I also have immense respect for the director of GFF, Intishal Al Timimi, and its artistic director Amir Ramses. It is a relatively new film festival, but its potential is huge and I would love to maintain this relationship with such a great establishment.

The production of a debut feature film is never an easy journey. How was it with A Long Breath, especially in the time of the pandemic?

I finished the film before the Covid-19 pandemic, but it affected festivals procedures because everything went online and it was a bit messy. In terms of the production process, the thing was, when I started my first film, I was young and I had no idea that documentaries would take

that long. This experience taught me a lot. It is very intense, because at moments you feel that it will never go forward, yet other times you believe that the possibilities are infinite. This only confirms that a film can only be built by staying true to myself. I owe the people in my documentary the trust they have placed in me, and the fact that they allowed me to delve deeper into their personal lives.

How did you get to know Ibrahim?

In my childhood, I used to hear about Bab Al Tabbaneh from my school bus driver who—as a cautionary speech—used to say, “If you do anything wrong I will take you to Bab Al Tabbaneh and make you hang out with drug junkies.” Many years later, I was passing by, close to Bab Al Tabbaneh with my sister,

and that was when I met Ibrahim for the first time. I was waiting for my sister in the car when I noticed a group of guys gathered next to me. For some reason, I felt like I was so close to my childhood fears, so I decided to face it and strike up a conversation. Ibrahim was the most introverted person in the group, and although they teach you in film school to find extroverted subjects for your documentary, I somehow connected with Ibrahim and was touched by his presence.

For how long has the film followed Ibrahim and his life as we saw it?

It took about three to four years, intermittently though, because sometimes there was a lot of violence, or funding shortage, or when he was in jail. In the



editing phase, I came up with a structure, some kind of a mosaic of time—instead of going linear with the past, present and future—since they are so entangled within each other. There is a kind of cycle that I wanted to represent in my film; a kind of timelessness.

As a young female outsider with a camera in a male dominated area, what were the challenges you faced during the shoot in Bab Al Tabbaneh?

Maybe back then I could not articulate it like now, but as we all know that gender is behavioral, and that being a woman is tied to certain roles, expectations and actions. I think I earned their respect by acting very natural, speaking my mind, and subverting these stereotypes that come with being a woman; passive and silent. Instead, I was very confrontational and outspoken, which I think it helped a lot.

Sometimes, the protagonists were aware of the camera presence. Some of them were even posing for it. Was that part of the realistic approach of the film?

Well, I believe that no film—whether documentary or fiction—is really realistic. I knew where I wanted to place my camera, and didn't mind if the protagonist was aware of it, and that was a decision. My film is not trying to be realistic or to film things that are not supposed to be filmed. It is just there, a visitor, a friend, positioned in spaces where a visitor naturally comes to sit and observe.

Although the main protagonist is a man in a male dominated public space, the presence of women was very influential. What was your vision?

As I mentioned before, I made this film when I was quite young and wanted something so far away from myself. But now I think all my films are centered around women, and this film has confirmed my interest. As interested as I was in Ibrahim, the women whom I met, like Mahasen, his wife, and his mother, confirmed a lot of what I knew about Bab Al Tabbaneh. There are stereotypes about those people and broken spaces, and they're never blamed on the system, but on their families. When I spent time inside Ibrahim' house, these two women were extremely loving and caring. The problem with Ibrahim is not his broken family, but because he belongs to a broken system. I was more interested in shedding light on his internal world, and to portray his private space, filled with love and care, reflected by the women around him.

How challenging was it to film in the detention center?

That was the first thing I filmed. I wanted to have a camera when I heard that Ibrahim was in jail. It took a lot of time for me to be granted permission, and when I went there, it felt like a forgotten place and time. It was one of the saddest days I have ever experienced. The detainees were so hopeless, emotionless about what was happening, as if they had been there for so long that nothing made them feel alive anymore. Some of them were more receptive than others, so I managed to speak with them. There were so many in the



jail cell where I had placed my frame that I had to take everybody's permission to film. The challenge for me was more about the discomfort I brought to the place, which always makes me question myself as a filmmaker. Those scenes, in that space, so forgotten in time... they haunt me until this day.

How do you see your next step as a filmmaker with a remarkably successful debut?

I am currently working on my first feature narrative film. A Long Breath was a great step in my film career, since it has provided

me with the tools to experiment, and taught me a great deal about how I'm going to approach my fiction film. The experience I gained from this is invaluable on all levels.

Is it harder for a female filmmaker to make films in the Middle East?

To be a female with a filmmaking career in the Middle East comes with a package of what is expected of you as a woman, both from the outside and the inside. What do the people of the region expect of you as an Arab woman? And how could you be defined by Western standards? I think it is so hard to be a woman, period.



“These scenes of the detainees in that jail space, forgotten in time, haunt me until this day.”

“To be a female with a filmmaking career in the Middle East comes with a package of what is expected of you as a woman, from the outside and the inside.”

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“The outer layer is family drama, but I think my film talks more about how the Christian minority in Egypt is outcast in the society.”



Sandro Canaan, director of The Other Cheek: I Hope My Film Upsets Everyone

Nahed Nasr

How do you perceive having the world premiere of The Other Cheek at GFF?

It is a great honor to premiere at such a prestigious festival, and to screen it amongst the industry's finest. I couldn't be happier.

Would you tell us more about your background and how/why you decided to become a filmmaker?

I graduated with an economics major from the American University in Cairo. After graduation, I proceeded to pursue my master's degree in film directing at the International Film School of Paris, EICAR, where I spent three years. That's how I stepped into the film industry.

The Other Cheek is your debut short. Why did you decide to start your career as a film director with this story?

I didn't really choose; I just fell in love with the story and the conflict in it, and immediately knew that I had to film it and present it to the world.

In one layer, your film is a social drama that runs in the frame of a family. But one can also think of other layers beyond the surface. Would you like to talk more about the bigger context of your film?

Yes, of course, the exterior layer is family drama, but I think it tells more about how the Christian minority in Egypt is outcast in the society, and how suppression leads to outbursts. Within the religious theme itself, I think the story reflects how difficult it is to live by the book when placed in such tough situations.

Choosing the film's title with its religious reference, is it a coincidence?

Of course it's not; it's from a verse in the Bible, one which I personally find the most challenging to achieve. It is what

Christianity is most famous for, to turn the other cheek when someone has wronged you. But what about my daughter's cheek, and the parental instinct to protect your child? What about when the perpetrator is your neighbor's dog? Is it possible to "love thy neighbor" and then "turn the other cheek" then?

One of the scenes in your film will upset animal rights activists. What do you think about that?

I hope it upsets everyone! Not in the sense that it should traumatize anyone in any way; I am totally against animal cruelty. But I hope that it incepts a thought that keep people up at night... same thing that happened to me when I heard the story.

Why did you choose Tarek Abdel Aziz for the main role? And as an established actor in cinema and television, how was it working with him on a debut short?

I always admired Aziz's acting skills, I think he's very talented—a natural. After I finished the final draft, I realized how complicated the character was, and knew that I had to bring the best—not only to bring it to life on the screen, but to also elevate the material. Luckily, I think that's exactly what he did.

How your cooperation with Kawthar Younes on this project started and what was interesting about this cooperation, especially your film is also Kawthar's debut as a film producer?

I've known Kawthar for almost four years now. Ever since we met, we couldn't stop working with each other. She's very sharp and experienced, and I think she was the best choice for, because I always admired her as a filmmaker and storyteller. She makes a great producer, because she ensures that the director brings his full vision to the screen.

How did your previous experience as an assistant director and second unit director help you while making your first film?

I think serving as an assistant director makes you sharper and more aware of the mechanics of the shoot. It also teaches you how to be well prepared and economic with your time on set. It's an acquired skill that every director should have.

Who are the film directors whose style you admire the most? Who would you like to follow in your career?

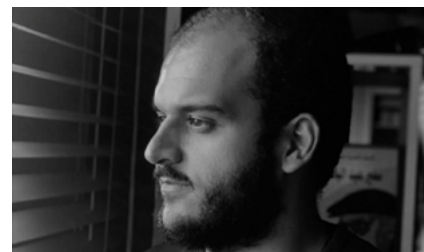
My biggest admiration goes to Martin Scorsese, since I admire his character studies from the 70's and 80's. I love character-driven films, as well as films with conflicts that challenge our moral codes. That's why Hirokazu Kore-eda is another hero of mine, as well as Michael Haneke and the Dardenne brothers.

What are you looking forward to as a filmmaker, and what is your next step?

I'm looking forward to telling stories that keep me up at night, and most importantly, to share them locally and globally.

How challenging is it to be a filmmaker in Egypt?

I think the challenges are everywhere in the world. Generally, it's a very competitive industry, full of talented people. The ones who make it last are the ones who persevere the most.



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“I look forward to telling stories that keep me up at night, and most importantly, to share them locally and globally.”

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“I love character-driven films, as well as films with conflicts that challenge our moral codes.”

A CineGouna Panel Discussion The Know-how of Starting Up in Digital Media

Nada Saad

A panel discussion entitled Starting Up In Digital Media was held today as part of CineGouna Platform's prime sessions. A number of experts explained how to start a business in the media and entertainment industry, finding smart solutions for every challenge. The panelists included Tarek El Ganainy, a prominent progressive producer; Bassem Elhady, Co-founder and CEO of Kijamii; and Kareem Abou Gamrah, Co-founder and CEO of Peace Cake. It was moderated by Mariam Farag, Head of Corporate Sustainability & Social Impact at MBC Group.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many companies--especially startups--were negatively affected. However, several projects managed to take the chance to boom. Introducing a very different business module, Peace Cake succeeded in reaching millions of views organically.

“People are spending more and more time online, so we figured that they deserve better content. That was how we got the idea for our show,” said Kareem Abou Gamrah. “The hardest part, naturally, was to convince sponsors to invest in this content,” he added.

On the other hand, and in spite of his academic studies revolving around engineering, Bassem Elhady, Co-founder and CEO of Kijamii, chose to venture into the advertising field. He commented, “We started out with a very small office in Cairo, and now, we have several offices and strong accounts like Netflix and Liverpool F.C.”

“El Gouna Film Festival, and especially the CineGouna Platform, proudly provide the perfect channels to networking and exchanging ideas to innovators from all around the world,” said Omar El Hamamsy, CEO of Orascom Development Holding.



On the Fourth Day of CineGouna Master Class on Creating Worlds Through VFX

On the sidelines of the 4th edition of El Gouna Film Festival, a master class entitled Creating Worlds Through VFX was held, conducted by Meena Ibrahim, the award-winning animation supervisor at Framestore studios. Ibrahim talked about how one builds the imaginary world of HBO's His Dark Materials, bringing the creatures to life, as well as the role of virtual production in achieving groundbreaking visual effects. The lecture was moderated by Yasser El-Naggar, multi-award-winning VFX supervisor and co-founder of Mercury Visual Solutions.

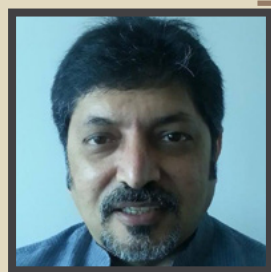
During the session, Ibrahim stated that, “In the last ten years, the company's production expanded, as it won many awards. And today, we focus on the business that we participated in on HBO. We have a large number of specializations, including writing, graphics and visual effects. We create solutions, and our works will always be remembered by the viewers.”

He also added, “The field of visual effects is like a complete process of building a parallel movie alongside the project. For example, HBO's His Dark Materials is a fictional story that revolves around multiple worlds, and every world has different laws and lives. The heroine follows the narrative line in the

story, and discovers the truth, where she can find the answer to any question. The exciting thing about visual effects is that every human character will have a parallel animal character accompanying them, and this was a great challenge for us to create a digital animal that mirrors every human character, with all their movements. It was very difficult. The season consisted of eight episodes, each an hour long. The project began in January and we had to deliver the episodes in August. We are not talking about a two-hour movie, but more like an eight-hour movie. That was what made it a very special challenge and a significant ambition.»



★ Bullet Points



Raman Chawla
Festival Consultant - Programming

- What was the most challenging part for me this year as we prepared for the 4th edition of GFF?

We had started preparing for the 4th edition before the pandemic started impacting life all around the world. Things were just starting to become serious. At first, we did not believe that this lockdown would continue until September, so we simply carried on working. When the restrictions continued for more than two months, there was a concern that the pandemic would last a little longer than we had

imagined. We still carried on preparing and doing the work that we were supposed to do at that stage. The Cannes Film Festival was in the offing, and our team was supposed to travel to Cannes to scout for films. Slowly, it became clear that the Cannes Film Festival would not take place in the physical sense. However, we participated in the Cannes Market to support the festival and observe and learn how a festival could be held online--we studied the pros and cons.

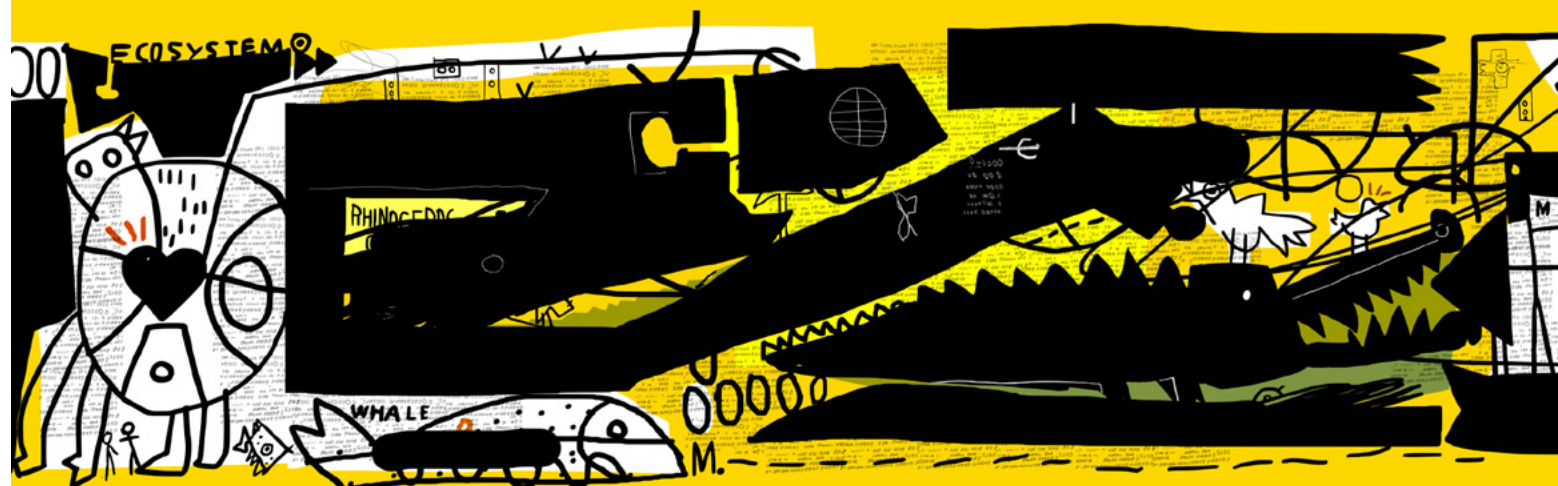
The experience was useful, and we knew that there would be a way to do things, as long as there was a will. We found ways to work online; team meetings and training sessions. We adapted. Our team members reside in different parts of the world; Egypt, Europe, Asia and the USA. So we stayed connected, helping each other stay positive. When you don't know what will happen in the future, you hope for the best and be ready for the worst. And that's what we did, we did not stop preparing the 4th edition even for a moment. We could have told ourselves that it looked difficult, or that it was improbable for GFF 2020 to take place, and slowed down or stopped preparing... but we didn't. GFF leadership was intent on having the 4th edition and our job was to be ready for it... whether the restrictions allowed for the event to take place or not, was not in our hands, so there was no point worrying about it. We carried on doing the things that were in our hands... and here we are today.

Along the way, there was a lot of hope that came from the fact the Venice International Film Festival announced that it was going to happen, and so were the festivals in Toronto and San Sebastian... Although I did not go to Venice, I stayed in touch with our director everyday by phone to get first-hand news of how things were going. I thought Venice did a marvellous job, and so we were positive that we could do it.

We are not going to let a virus defeat us... we will neither underestimate it, nor overestimate it. We have to remain careful, but we refuse to be cowed down.

- What is the key word that describes how we tackled this challenge? "Overcoming doubt"--in our own minds. And I think we met that challenge head-on and conquered it.
- What do I think now that the 4th edition is upon us? It is the result of positive thinking, inspirational leadership, and the efforts of every single person in the team.
- What would I like to say to GFF audiences and guests? I would like to thank them--from the bottom of my heart--for their love of cinema, evident in their presence here with us today.

A CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR PETER WEBBER



MODERATED BY:
KALEEM APTAB

PETER WEBBER



OCTOBER 31, 12:30- 14:00 @ TU BERLIN AUDIMAX



