



CineGouna SpringBoard Winners Announced

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★ Today

GFF 4th Edition Closing



Today marks the closing ceremony of the 4th edition of El Gouna Film Festival, which takes place on the newly established Festival Plaza stage. During the ceremony, the fourth recipient of the GFF 2020 Career Achievement Award, celebrated Egyptian actor Khaled El Sawy, will be welcome to the stage to receive his honorary award. El Sawy's name shone in the world of Arab cinema, thanks to his performances in many paramount cinematic works.

The 4th edition program consisted of the three official competitions (Feature Narrative Competition; Feature Documentary Competition; and Short Film Competition), the Official Selection out of Competition, and Special Presentations.

Around 80 films screen yearly at the festival, which bestows awards of more than US \$224,000, along with trophies to the winners of the competitive sections. Feature-length films with a humanitarian theme across any section are eligible for GFF's special Cinema for Humanity Audience Award. In its Special Presentations section, the festival showcases iconic films from

the past that continue to be cherished by film-loving audiences.

The festival also presented the 4th edition of CineGouna Platform, an industry oriented event created to support and empower Arab filmmakers, helping them find artistic and financial support among Arab and international professionals. Through the CineGouna SpringBoard and CineGouna Bridge programs, providing opportunities for sharing and learning. This year, the platform is expected to award an estimate of US \$350,000 to the winning projects in development and films in post-production. The prizes are funded by El Gouna Film Festival along with its sponsors and partners.

El Gouna Film Festival has secured its position as one of the leading film festivals in the MENA region, showcasing a wide variety of films and talents to a passionate audience and experienced industry professionals. With the aim of fostering better communication between cultures through the art of filmmaking, as its editions have succeeded in highlighting the people, films, and projects shaping the film industry in the Middle East and beyond.

Film star Kaled El Sawy on his career achievement award: It's the GFF Champions Edition!

Nada Saad

A press conference was held today for the Egyptian Star Khaled El Sawy in the Festival Plaza on the occasion of his Career Achievement Award. Among the attendees were El Gouna Film Festival director, Intishal Al Timimi, in addition to Egyptian and Arab journalists. El Sawy expressed his gratitude, saying, "This is the best thing that has ever happened to me!"

El Sawy described this year's El Gouna Film Festival as the "Champions Edition", adding that GFF management are considered industry heroes for holding the festival in the midst of everything that's happening in the world due to the Coronavirus. He also highlighted the safety precautions that are being taken all over the coastal town of El Gouna. "Egypt is a huge country with great heritage in art, so we need to be leaders in what we're offering, not followers... and we can do that by discussing the important, major issues through the Egyptian cinema, with movies that reflect our Arab identity," he added.

With regards to his artistic career, El Sawy said that he carries the responsibility for all of his choices. And although he sometimes may feel intimidated to take on certain new roles, like the hesitation he experienced before accepting the roles in The Yacoubian Building and The Blue Elephant, he was certain that he would have regretted if he hadn't.

Throughout his career, El Sawy worked with different generations of Egyptian directors, such as Mohamed Khan in Knight of the City (1991); Khairy Beshara in Hazelnut Shells (1995); Marwan Hamed in The Yacoubian Building (2006) and The Originals (2017). He also worked with director Sherif Arafa on Al Jazeera (2007) and Tarek Al Eryan in Sons of Rizk 2 (2019).

The 4th edition of El Gouna Film Festival honored four names in the world of film. They are the renowned Khaled El Sawy; iconic production designer Onsi Abou Seif; international Moroccan film star Saïd Taghmaoui; and the established French actor Gerard Depardieu.



★ Tomorrow

Watch the Winning Films of the 4th Edition

Tomorrow marks the screening of the award-winning films at El Gouna Film Festival's 4th edition's competitions. The screenings include the winners in the Feature Narrative Competition, the Feature Documentary Competition, and the Short Films Competition. This in addition to the winner of the Cinema for Humanity Audience Award.

The screenings will take place at the Sea Cinema venues from 12:00 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. as per the screening program schedule.

El Gouna Film Festival's program consists of the three official competitions (Feature Narrative Competition, Feature Documentary Competition and Short Film Competition), the Official Selection out of Competition, and Special Presentations.

With the exciting film screenings and activities that took place during its 4th edition, El Gouna Film Festival is sure to maintain its unique positioning as the meeting point for filmmakers, critics and audiences who gather to celebrate the art, craft and business of cinema.



★ Schedule

BEGINNING Sea Cinema 2 11:00 AM	THE BIG HIT Sea Cinema 1 12:00 PM	JOSEP Sea Cinema 3 2:15 PM	MICA Grand Cinemas Hurghada 3:00 PM	UNDER THE STARS OF PARIS Grand Cinemas Hurghada 8:45 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
SOFTIE Sea Cinema 3 11:15 AM	SHORT FILM PROGRAM 3 Sea Cinema 2 2:00 PM	I NEVER CRY Sea Cinema 1 2:45 PM	THE WHALER BOY Grand Cinemas Hurghada 6:15 PM		

CineGouna SpringBoard Announces the Winners of its Fourth Edition

Through its CineGouna Platform, El Gouna Film Festival continues to empower Arab filmmakers in their quest to acquire artistic and financial support. This business and industry-oriented event provides CineGouna SpringBoard and CineGouna Bridge, offering opportunities for learning and experience sharing.

Within the activities of the seventh day of the festival, 29 October 2020, the closing ceremony of CineGouna Platform was held at the Gouna Convention and Culture Center, where the committee announced the winning projects and films.

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.

Competing directors and producers have submitted their projects and films to producers, sponsoring institutions, distributors, film sellers and festivals programmers, for their technical advice. In addition, one-on-one meetings were held between filmmakers, industry experts and consultants to develop scenarios or incomplete versions of films and enhance opportunities for regional and international cooperation. The CineGouna SpringBoard jury consisted of Clément Chautant, French sales agent and Head of Festivals at the Paris-based company Indie Sales, Lebanese director and producer Dima Al-Joundi, and Jordanian writer, director and producer Layali Badr.

Goodbye Julia by Mohamed Kordofani (Bahrain, Sudan) won the prize for best project in development (CineGouna Platform Certificate and a cash prize of US \$15,000); and Life Suits Me Well by Al Hadi Ulad Mohand (Morocco) received the prize for best film in post-production (CineGouna Platform Certificate and a cash prize of US \$15,000).

The award-winning projects and films of the CineGouna SpringBoard Sponsorship prizes were also announced, and they are as follows:

Hamlet from the Slums by Ahmed Fawzi-Saleh (Egypt) received a prize of \$20,000 from Shahid and a prize of \$10,000 from Sparkle Media Services, as well as participation in the Film Independent Virtual Residency award from Film Independent and The U.S. Embassy, in addition to participation in one of IEFTA's partner development lab or workshop from IEFTA.

Bye Bye Tiberias by Lina Soualem (Palestine, France) won a \$10,000 prize from iProductions, a \$10,000 prize from Synergy Films, and \$10,000 from Dakhli West El Balad by Al Ismaelia for Real Estate Investment.

Hajj to Disney by Maha Al-Saati (Saudi Arabia) received a \$10,000 prize from Arab Radio & Television Network (ART); and Seeking Haven for Mr. Rambo by Khaled Mansour (Egypt) won a prize of \$10,000 from Rotana, and another \$10,000 from Lagoon Film Production.

A \$10,000 prize from New Century Production, a \$30,000 prize fund— a minimum guarantee from MAD Solutions & Ergo Media Ventures, and a \$10,000 prize from Sparkle Media Services also went to Goodbye Julia by Mohamed Kordofani (Bahrain, Sudan). On the other hand, Streams by Mehdi Hmili (Tunisia) received \$10,000 from Weyyak. I Am Here But You Can't See Me by Feyrouz Serhal (Lebanon, Spain) was granted \$80,000 worth of production services from Shahid.

The Maiden's Pond by Bassem Breche (Lebanon) received an award in the form of \$50,000 pre-sale from OSN; and Life Suits Me Well by Al Hadi Ulad Mohand (Morocco) won a \$10,000 worth of a full DCP package from The Cell Post Production, and \$30,000 worth of VFX services from Mercury Visual Solutions. Another \$10,000 worth of a full film promotions package from The Cell Post Production went to Communion by Nejib Belkadhi (Tunisia).



The feature documentary film in development Big Boys Don't Cry by Muhammad Mustapha (Egypt) received a participation in the Film Independent Virtual Residency presented by Film Independent and The U.S. Embassy; while the feature documentary Take Me to The Cinema by Albaqer Jafeer (Iraq, Egypt) received an editing residency for a period of up to 10 weeks coupled with tailor-made consultancy sessions from DOX BOX. Finally, The Day Of Arafah by Alaa Al Qaisi (Jordan) won a participation in IEFTA's Global Film Expression initiative, presented by IEFTA.

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. It received long-form fictional and documentary projects in development, and post-production films that were submitted at the specified submission time.



The Truffle Hunters: Digging for the Taste of Life

One of the most expensive food items in the world, "the white truffle", is a high-value fungus found deep in the forests of Northern Italy. One kilogram of this fungus costs more than 5000 euros, and it is usually sold on auctions. The Italian documentary The Truffle Hunters directed by Michael Dweck and Gregory Kershaw describes some of the details around this specific business.

The film starts with the expedition of villagers from the areas where truffles are found. They move inside the jungles with their hounds, trying to find and collect the expensive fungus. From the very first scenes, it is very clear to the audience that the artistic values of the cinematography seemed to be of great importance to the filmmakers, especially the scenes where the truffle collectors do their excavations on the unpaved roads of the woods. In a couple of scenes, the filmmakers utilize an avant-garde method of shooting as they use the POV (point of view shots) of one dog during the excavation by situating a camera on the dog's head. These scenes beautify the already eye-pleasing cinematography of the film."

The essence of the drama in The Truffle Hunters lies within the different characters of the villagers, one of whom is 87-year-old Carlo. The camera follows the details of his life with his wife as they eat their meals, make wine at home, as well as how anxious--and careful--the wife is with regards to her husband's health, since he had an old injury that took place during truffle hunting. In other scenes, we follow the relationship between an old villager and his dog, Birba. We see him talking to his friend about the dog as if she were his daughter, and the conversation

“The filmmakers utilize an avant-garde method of shooting, which beautify the already eye-pleasing cinematography of the film.”



Hani Mustafa

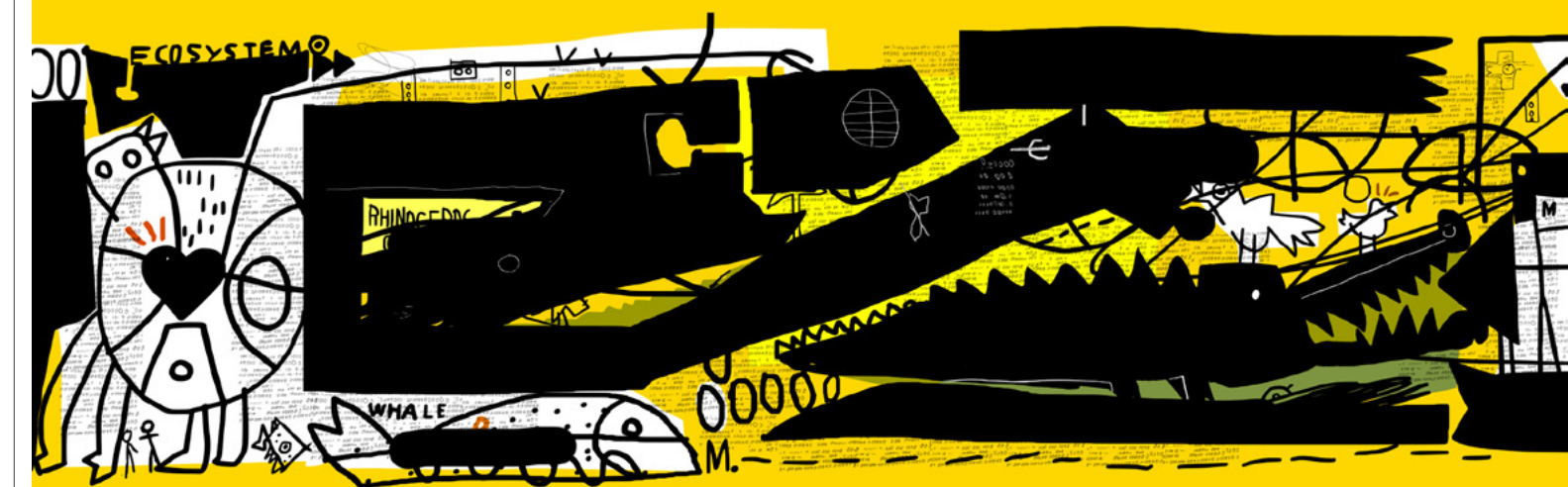
assumes an emotional air when he reveals his fears of dying and leaving Birba alone. The film mainly revolves around these humane stories, enclosing the lives of those poor old villagers who dig for the rare and high-priced fungus, without ever having tasted it themselves.

The filmmakers here don't slide down the usual traditional class comparison that is easily seen between the lives of truffle diggers and those of their rich consumers. However, they strategically include some scenes that complete the picture of this extravagant delicacy business. For instance, they showcase how the buyers skillfully sniff the truffles before an auction begins. In another example, we see a very well-off man as he enjoys his meal that consists of eggs topped with the grated truffles.



“The film mainly revolves around these humane stories, enclosing the lives of those poor old villagers who dig for the high-priced fungus, without ever having tasted it themselves.”

A CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR PETER WEBBER



MODERATED BY:
KALEEM AFTAB

PETER WEBBER



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



Anissa Daoud, director of The Bath Men, Too, Are Victims of Patriarchy and Toxic Masculinity

Nahed Nasr

How do you feel about having the MENA premiere of The Bath at GFF?

I am really glad! GFF has, in a way, accompanied me during these last few years in almost every aspect of my work. I had participated in the festival as a Short Film Competition jury member, as well as a producer at CineGouna Bridge where we won a development award with one of our projects. With this selection in competition under my director's hat, I feel that things have come full circle. I'm also eager to hear the feedback of the Egyptian audience, as the experience of presenting my first film Best Day Ever in 2018 at the Cairo International Film Festival was quite memorable.

Do you think that you might give up acting in favor of directing one day?

Absolutely not. Performing as an actress is like air to me; my way of escaping from the world while looking straight at it, a kind of distancing tool that I consider absolutely necessary. Besides, I think we have overcome this need for compartmentalization in our profession. Internationally, there are a lot of actors who are also directors, producers or even both, and it's not an issue at all. At the same time, we accept, in our part of the world, that an individual is not a single monolithic

being, but constitutes a multiplicity, a complexity which makes them unique. This doesn't apply only to artists or creators, but to every one of us.

You worked with many renowned film directors such as Elyes Baccar, Fadhel Jaziri, Hatem Ali, Kaouther Ben Hania, Jilani Saadi and Lotfi Achour. What did you learn from each of them that you use now as a film director?

Wow, it's very difficult to answer this question! I'm a self-taught person and I always thought that my professional experiences were my schools; the directors I worked with, the technicians and the actors were my teachers; and that I'm continuously in training. So you can imagine what your question implies for me, especially since the list of directors I have worked with is longer than that, and each of them has taught me so many things. However, there are three main things; I would say that Jilani Saadi taught me to be faithful to myself; Kaouther Ben Hania, the freedom to try anything; and Lotfi Achour, the ability to talk about complex and sometimes hard topics without revealing any awkwardness, and keeping the entertaining aspect of fiction. I don't know if I've completely absorbed these lessons, but I always try to keep them as goals in mind; as guidelines.

Tell us about your experience as a producer...

When you're an actress, you think about cinema; you get a feel of the trends of the time; you have a critical look at what's happening... but you don't have the space to be able to transform your thoughts into something concrete. Becoming a producer allowed me to take action and contribute to projects that I felt were missing as a spectator--or as an actress. To contribute to making stories exist, and to tackle subjects that seem essential to me. It is also a way of being freer. Throughout my life, my choices have always been guided by this quest for freedom.

The Bath addresses a sensitive subject that is rarely tackled in the Arab cinema. In addition to the focus of campaigns such as #MeToo on women. Why did you decide to tackle the issue from a male perspective?

Since you raised the topic of #MeToo, I would like to say, first of all, that as a feminist I have always believed that the first victims of patriarchy and toxic masculinity are actually the men. In relation to the theme I address in The Bath, it was a choice precisely because, in our part of the world, this subject is even more taboo when it is about a man. There is a collective form of denial, something we don't even think

about which isolates the men who had to experience it. Sometimes, we even tend to consider that it is less important because it involves a man. I don't think it's a sign of courage on my part, but rather a need to respond to an intimate necessity. Besides, the male perspective fascinated me all the more; it must have come from my habit as an actress, to be in the character's shoes... and here, it's a man and a father.

How was your journey of script development to reach such an interesting structure?

It was a long process and getting it right in the script was the key issue of all the rewrites. Nonetheless, from the very first version of the script, I knew that I wanted the struggles of Imed's character to emerge little by little through small accumulations of information and emotions. I dare say through small Impressionist strokes. Even once the script was completed, it was necessary to keep this objective in mind during the shoot, and more importantly, the editing, to find the right balance of information to give.

Your film also, in a way, tackles the gender-based roles in most of our Arab families. How did you achieve such a balance between the multiple themes?

It was important for me to create a balance between the main theme and the sub-themes that run through the film, which are no less important to me. For example, the issue of «misunderstanding» within a family--between people who love each other--because love can sometimes be manifested badly and hurt our loved ones, is a central theme in the film. It is also a subject that I addressed in my previous short film. My fixation is the desire for things to organically happen in the narrative; for the subjects to be part of the dramaturgy of the film, otherwise it becomes didactic and the film becomes too explanatory and no longer interesting. I tried to stay focused on telling Imed's story and help the viewer share a moment of his life to better understand and sympathize with him.

You chose cheerful colors and bright lighting in the majority of the scenes, which made the film less melodramatic, despite the melancholic topic. What made you decide on that?

Cinematographer Hazem Berrabah and I imagined that the world around Imed would be colored and lit up, in tune with Imed's moods. Moreover, right from the writing of the screenplay, I tried to divide Imed's world in a nearly systematic way according to the different relationships. The realism of the cinematography made me keep on digging, feeding our exchanges with the whole team.

How far along are you with your first feature-length narrative project, Les immortel(le)s, and would you like to tell us more about it?

I am currently at the beginning of the writing process, which is certainly going to be quite long in regards to the ambition of the project. It is a comedy, and I personally think that it is the most difficult genre to write, as it requires great rigor and an impeccable sense of rhythm. As a good Mediterranean, I am extremely superstitious and I don't like



to talk about projects too early on, but I can already say that it's a bit of a crazy project that excites me as much as it scares me.

Do you think it's harder for a female filmmaker in the Middle East to make movies?

I think it's harder to be a woman in this world in general. Making films is just one more fight, one more challenge. But yes, the journey to freely lead a fulfilled life that's true to one's self is certainly more challenging for a woman in the Middle East. Mind you, I'm aware that I benefit from several layers of privileges which made my life easier compared to other Arab women who share the same dreams and ambitions as me. So, yes, in short, the answer is definitely 'yes'.



“Performing as an actress is like air to me; my way of escaping from the world while looking straight at it.”



“It's harder to be a woman in this world in general. Making films is just one more fight, one more challenge.”



Samir Guesmi, director of Ibrahim It is Reconciliation Between a Father and a Son

Nahed Nasr

How do you feel about having the MENA premiere of Ibrahim at GFF?

It is indeed a huge honour for me to be part of such a distinguished festival, all the more because, through this film, I pay a tribute to my father, an Arab man. It is a matter of great satisfaction that my debut film has been honoured by a festival in Egypt. While we're on the matter, I would like to tell the audience of GFF that I am a French man of Algerian origin, and would have really liked to meet you all. I'm sad that I couldn't be there with you, as I'm working on a film as an actor, and it is complicated to get away. I know that Egypt is adorned with a rich heritage of cinema, music and literature. As I say this, I'm thinking of Naguib Mahfouz who has accompanied me, via his writings, right through my younger days and until now. Frankly, I say it once again, I am deeply moved that my film will be screened and seen in Egypt.

Ibrahim's world is very similar to that of your first short as a director, C'est Dimanche! (2008). Both share the topic of immigrants, as well as the father-son theme. You also named both protagonists Ibrahim. Did you consider C'est Dimanche! a stepping stone towards Ibrahim?

The difficulty of communicating, of expressing yourself and existing, which is at the heart of C'est Dimanche! is a subject I carry within myself, and one that I wanted to continue exploring. How can two people, as close as a father and son, be so foreign to each other? What we see of the other is often what he hides or keeps quiet. It seems that the more someone tries to conceal their emotions, the more visible they become. Ibrahim sheds light on these hidden--yet

obvious--emotions. What my characters lack are not speeches, but a gentle caress. I wanted to get straight to the point towards the end, and solve the enigma of the absent mother. As I progressed in my writing, I understood that Ahmed and Ibrahim were leading the challenge of this project: to say as little as possible and lead a narrative whose aim is a tender gesture and two



“The great thing about writing a film is that the characters and situations guide you to the right place if you listen!”

words exchanged. The great thing about writing a film is that the characters and situations guide you; If you listen to your characters, they lead you to the right place!

And what about the film title?

I looked for a title other than Ibrahim, which was my working title, and it just never came to me. This name possesses something ancestral and original... I also think it's beautiful. Achilles has the right sound as well; these are old and resonant names. Besides, there are similarities between the mythological Achilles with his vulnerable heel, and the one in the film, who looks like a leader but really is vulnerable.

Since 1988, you have starred in over 90 films and television shows. Why did you decide to venture into the directing world?

It was a series of circumstances. The writing of C'est Dimanche! was based on notes which I turned into a story. I had my writing read and was encouraged to shoot my short. I thought I was done with this story, then I had a revelation: I discovered a part of myself that I hadn't known. Because when you're an actor you don't decide much. Suddenly, it was as if another part of me--which had been asleep until then--had woken up and set out to tell this story. The short film took me around the world. I was urged to pursue this path by the people I met. While I was shooting Park Benches (2009) by Bruno Podalydès, the producer Pascal Caucheteux saw C'est Dimanche!... and then a few years passed, and I came back to him with Ibrahim. His exacting standards dictated that I only shoot once the script had really come to fruition, and this rule remained at play until the final version.

Your film depends on very short dialogues and a lot of silence. Why was that?

As an actor, I've sometimes had to put up with so-called "necessary dialogue" to help with understanding the story. But in fact, it often seemed unnecessary and very difficult to perform credibly. I'd rather assume that the fewer the words, the more people will listen. I also think it's not necessary to say or explain everything... I relied on micro details of everyday life: Ahmed's tattoo evokes his past as a thug; an ashtray piled with cigarette butts indicates a sleepless night; a crumpled up piece of paper in a bin represents Ahmed relinquishing his project. Gestures and objects can illuminate our understanding of the story, and free us from the need for any commentary. Besides, I grew up with a father of few words, yet learned as much--if not more than most--through observing and listening rather than talking. This film is an attempt at reconciliation between a father and his son; a quiet declaration of love.

Although they are not in the main roles, the female characters' existence in your film is influential, even when they are absent. What was the thought here?

In essence, Ibrahim is a story of absence. There's the absence of teeth, money... but the original absence is that of the woman: Ahmed's partner, Ibrahim's mother. Both of them suffer from this absence, this third person, who in a family also serves as a valve, a bond, and provides warmth. The mother exists through a relic: the t-shirt Ibrahim refuses to let go of. When, at the beginning of the film, Ahmed asks him to stop wearing this t-shirt, we understand that both think about her constantly, that they have to deal with this absence, this ghost.

It is Abdel Bendaher's second appearance on the big screen, although Luàna Bajrami has just won the César Award of the Most Promising Actress for her role in Portrait of a Lady on Fire. How challenging was the casting of Ibrahim?

Oh, how lucky I was to have met Abdel Bendaher! I was growing desperate, six weeks away from shooting, and I still didn't have my guy! Then I went casting at the Porte de Montreuil Stadium where they played Sunday afternoon matches, and coincidentally met Bendaher. He was leaving the stadium with a couple of friends, and the one who spoke the least. He was suspicious and hid behind his buddies. Immediately, he caught my eye, and I knew that he was the one, so I gave him my number. I took this meeting as a gift. The fact that we met so late allowed us to sniff each other out for a long time and that served the film, because we started with shooting the sequences between Ibrahim and his father in the apartment. He's got an incredible ear. An actor who knows how to listen has done 90 percent of his work. In this case, yes, Ibrahim is a character who is constantly receptive, he reacts to everything around him. I wanted things to go through him and become readable on his face. When I acted with him, I could feel that he was really listening. He didn't have any actorly habits. He was simple. At first, he was tense on set because of his inexperience,



and the fact that all eyes were on him. His own gaze, new and astonished by what was happening to him, really helped nourish the character. Then, as the shoot went on, he started to gain confidence and feel more at ease, and that's when I felt like I was losing my Ibrahim. So I re-stimulated him and pushed him constantly so he would start doubting, because he's magnificent when he doubts. Ibrahim never knows what's going to happen, what to say or what not to say. He had to stay in this state and it's true that I never let go of him from that point of view. The stakes were high for me: he was in every scene and almost every shot during the five weeks of shooting. And he emerged on the other side with stellar, flying colours.

What about Luàna Bajrami as the actress opposite Abdel Bendaher?

Luàna is grace personified--what intelligence! When she turns her gaze to you, she scrutinizes and penetrates you. To me, when hers and Ibrahim's characters looked at each other, it was a meeting of souls. With her big eyes and stunning face, she is both discreet and so present--I was immediately seduced! Just like with Bendaher, I knew I wanted to film them even before I could judge their qualities as actors.

You amazingly played the father in Ibrahim. Why did you decide to act in your own film?

It was an advantage, even if I hadn't planned it at first. But I quickly realised that it would allow me to grasp Ahmed better. Ibrahim is cornered by his father, he moves forward with no possible escape. Bendaher felt hounded when I acted with him, since I purposely increased my authority to bring this state to the surface. Me playing Ahmed allowed him to come to the fore. The father is in the shadows, and it seemed easier for me to hold this place rather than direct another actor. I also refused to use a combo on set to avoid having to look at myself, which allowed me to totally focus on Bendaher and his performance.



“I grew up with a father of few words, yet learned as much--if not more than most--through observing and listening rather than talking.”



