



4th Edition of GFF
And the Winner is...

Festival Director
Intishal Al Timimi

Editor in Chief
Mohamed Kandil

Art Director
Ahmed Atef Megahed

Editorial Manager
Nahed Nasr

Editor
Hani Mustafa

Copy Editing and Translation
Amy Quotb

Head of Press Office
Ola El Shafey

Graphic Team
Al Haitham Nagdy
Nermin El Banna

Photographers
Mohamed Hamed
Mostafa Abdelaty

✦ Today

4th Edition Award-Winning Films Under the Spotlight



The GFF 4th edition award-winning films will be screened today as a part of a new tradition to provide the festival's audience with an additional window to enjoy its exceptional film selection. The screenings include the winners in the Feature Narrative Competition, Feature Documentary Competition, and Short Film Competition. This in addition to the winner of the Cinema for Humanity Audience Award.

The festival program consists of the three main competitions: Feature Narrative Competition; Feature Documentary Competition; and Short Film Competition;

in addition to the Official Selection out of Competition and Special Presentations sections.

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.

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.

I Am Afraid to Forget Your Face: A GFF Contender Wins Cannes Palme d'Or

The short film *I Am Afraid to Forget Your Face* by Egyptian film director Sameh Alaa was crowned winner of Palme d'Or at this year's Cannes Film Festival, making it the first Egyptian short film to be awarded the prestigious prize. It was also the first Egyptian film to be selected for the Official Short Film Competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 50 years.

The film is currently participating at El Gouna Film Festival's Short Film Competition, in a line-up of 18 award-winning, world and MENA premiere short film screenings.

The film was selected on the short-list of the Cannes Film Festival's,

competing amongst eleven short films.

The Cannes Film Festival kicked off on Tuesday 27th at the Palais. The three-day event features four films from the 2020 Cannes Official Selection, and hosts Competition short films and the Cinéfondation school films.

I Am Afraid to Forget Your Face follows Adam, who decides to venture a rough road to be reunited with the one he loves, after being separated for 82 days. The coming-of-age story tackles several societal issues and the challenges faced by the young generation.



Quo vadis, Aida?, Days of Cannibalism and Being My Mom Win El Gouna Film Festival's Golden Stars, and 'Cinema for Humanity' Award Goes to 200 Meters by Ameen Nayfeh



El Gouna Film Festival concluded its 4th edition today with a closing ceremony that was held at the **Gouna Convention and Culture Center**, in which it announced the winning films of the festival's prizes, whose material value is about \$224,000. Media presenter and actress Nardin Faraj presented the event, and the exceptional Egyptian actor Khaled El Sawy was honored and awarded the Creative Achievement Award within the ceremony's activities as well. El Sawy spoke about his happiness with this honor, especially that it comes from El Gouna Film Festival, which he considers one of the most important cinematic events in the entire Arab region.

In addition, the **Khaled Bichara Award for Independent Filmmakers in Egypt** went to *Hamlet from the Slums* by Ahmed Fawzi-Saleh. The award will be awarded annually to support young Egyptian filmmakers, has been announced, with an estimated value of \$10,000.

As for the various film competition awards and their winners, they are as follows:

Feature Narrative Competition

El Gouna Golden Star for Narrative Film (Trophy, certificate, and US \$50,000)

Quo vadis, Aida? by Jasmila Žbanić

El Gouna Silver Star for Narrative Film (Trophy, certificate, and US \$25,000)

Bad Tales by Damiano D'innosenzo and Fabio D'innocenzo

El Gouna Bronze Star for Narrative Film (Trophy, certificate, and US \$15,000)

In Between Dying by Hilal Baydarov

El Gouna Star for the Best Arab Narrative Film (Trophy, certificate, and US \$20,000)

The Man Who Sold His Skin by Kaouther Ben Hania

El Gouna Star for the Best Actor (Trophy, certificate)

Ali Suliman, *200 Meters*

El Gouna Star for the Best Actress (Trophy, certificate)

Jasna Djuricic, *Quo vadis, Aida?*

Special Jury Mention

Oasis by Ivan Ilkic's

Feature Documentary Competition

El Gouna Golden Star for Documentary Film (Trophy, certificate, and US \$30,000)

Days of Cannibalism by Teboho Edkins

El Gouna Silver Star for Documentary Film (Trophy, certificate, and US \$15,000)

Softie by Sam Soko

El Gouna Bronze Star for Documentary Film (Trophy, certificate, and US \$7,500)

Truffle Hunters by Michael Dweck and Gregory Kershaw

El Gouna Star for the Best Arab Documentary Film (Trophy, certificate, and US \$10,000)

Their Algeria by Lina Soualem

Short Film Competition

El Gouna Golden Star for Short Film (Trophy, certificate, and US \$15,000)

Being My Mom by Jasmine Trinca

El Gouna Silver Star for Short Film (Trophy, certificate, and US \$7,500)

Blue Frontier by Ivan Milosavljević

El Gouna Bronze Star for Short Film (Trophy, certificate, and US \$4,000)

Sër Bi by Moly Kane

El Gouna Star for the Best Arab Short Film (Trophy, certificate, and US \$5,000)

I Am Afraid to Forget Your Face by Sameh Alaa

Cinema for Humanity Audience Award

The Festival's Audience Award for a film exemplifying humanitarian themes (Trophy, certificate, and US \$20,000)

200 Meters by Ameen Nayfeh

NETPAC Award for Best Asian Film

In Between Dying by Hilal Baydarov

FIPRESCI Award

200 Meters by Ameen Nayfeh

Recipient of the 4th GFF Career Achievement Award 5 Milestones in Khaled El Sawy's Career

Hani Mustafa

Khaled El Sawy is a multi-talented actor. He started his artistic career at the university theatre during studying at the Faculty of Law, Cairo University, where he was fascinated by the various theatrical tricks. After graduation, he joined the Higher Institute of Cinema to study filmmaking, and graduated in 1993. His career witnessed 5 major milestones that contributed to the distinguished Khaled El Sawy we know today.

In 1998, Syrian filmmaker Anwar Kawadri cast El Sawy for the main role in Gamal Abd El Naser. The role of the late Egyptian leader was the first challenge to El Sawy's career as a film actor. The film was a mega production, assembling crucial parts of modern Egyptian and Arab history. Gamal Abd El Naser sheds light on the life of the late president, from the planning of the 1952 revolution until his death in September 1970. Although this role was a main character in a feature-length narrative, El Sawy continued to play supporting roles in many other films for a few years.

In 2006, El Sawy accepted a rather unique role in Marwan Hamed's *The Yacoubian Building*. The film was based on a novel with the same title by Alaa Al-Aswani, which tackles some of the corruption in the Egyptian society during Hosni Mubarak's reign, through following the lives of the residents of an old building in downtown Cairo. The film was a major challenge for El Sawy, where he played the character of Hatem Rashid, famous journalist, intellect and editor-in-chief of a French language newspaper. And above all... he was homosexual. Although it is very easy to slip into the common clichés when portraying such a complicated personality, El Sawy managed to dig deeply and courageously into the psychological aspects and features of the character. This was especially evident in scenes where his character dealt with his employees—reporters of the newspaper—and with his partner, the police officer. El Sawy's performance was greatly acclaimed and celebrated by film critics.

In 2007, Sherif Arafa directed *Al Jazeera*, starring Ahmed El Sakka and co-starred by El Sawy. The film was inspired by the life of famous drug dealer in upper Egypt, Ezzat Hanafy. El Sawy played the very controversial role of Rushdi, a police officer in the village where the drug dealer lives. As the police officer seems to conceal some kind of corruption—leading to granting the dealer even more power and influence—the story evolves, revealing much grander details involving leaders in the Ministry of Interior.

In 2009, El Sawy co-wrote—and co-starred in—*The Serial Killer* by director Saad Hendawi. The film tells the story of a murderer, played by Hani Salama, with El Sawy's role portraying a Lebanese

“It is very easy to slip into the common clichés when portraying such a complicated personality, but he managed to dig deeply and courageously into the psychological aspects of the character.”

criminal and arms dealer; the protagonist's competitor when he lived in Lebanon during the civil war. El Sawy skillfully played the character with flying stars, inspite of the challenging dialogue in a different dialect.

Another major step in El Sawy's career was represented by Marwan Hamed's fantasy thriller *The Blue Elephant* (2014). The film was based on a best-selling novel by Ahmed Mourad. El Sawy's peculiar character, Sherif El Kordi, was a psychiatrist who had murdered his wife. Initially diagnosed as a severely schizophrenic patient, the story later suggests that he was haunted by a vicious jinn named Nael. The importance of that role lay within El Sawy's expert performance and powerful impression as he seamlessly switched between the two characters.



Hani Mustafa



“The importance of that role lay within El Sawy's expert performance and powerful impression as he skillfully switched between the two characters.”

On the 8th day of GFF: A Panel Discussion with Philip Hamilton, Director of *Ocean Souls*

Nada Saad

On the 8th day of GFF, a panel discussion was held, revolving around *Ocean Souls*, with the attendance of the emotive documentary's director and producer, Philip Hamilton. Among the attendees were Founder of El Gouna, Samih Sawiris; and Biologist and Marine Conservation specialist, Angela Ziltener. The discussion was moderated by Intishal Al Timimi, director of El Gouna Film Festival.

“It took us two years of production. Normally, it would have taken 5 to 10 years, but with the help of 107 filmmakers, we succeeded in significantly shortening that period,” Hamilton began. He added that he toured around the world to shoot the film, in countries including New Zealand, Indonesia, Egypt, India and Argentina.

“Since I was a child, I loved the oceans and wanted to understand marine life more. That's why I came to Egypt ten years ago; to discover the underwater world, incidentally falling in love with it,” stated Angela Ziltener. She continued, “Transforming

scientific papers into a documentary was a challenge, but the outcome was great. The film turned out very easy for everyone to understand.”

Concluding the panel, Samih Sawiris, Founder of El Gouna, said, “We need to love our planet more, and to take care of it for the coming generations.” He also affirmed that Egypt is a great country with amazing locations for shooting, expressing hopes that the permit processes can become easier for international filmmakers, so the beloved Egypt can become a more attractive destination for the international film industry.

It is also worthy of note that El Gouna was the first destination in Africa and the Arab Region to receive the Global Green Award in August 2014. Sponsored by the United Nations Environment Program, this award is handed to cities displaying substantial measures and efforts in progress within the field of environmental sustainability.



**A CONVERSATION WITH
DIRECTOR PETER WEBBER**

MODERATED BY: KALEEM AFTAB

PETER WEBBER

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



Sami Tlili, director of Obvious Offside: There is a Reason Why the Date is Vague in My Film

Nahed Nasr

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

We are delighted to present the film at GFF, which is one of the most influential festivals in the region. I have great respect for the work done by the GFF team, and it's an incredible opportunity for the film, since it grants it massive visibility.

In Obvious Offside, as was the case with On the Crossbar (2019), football is one of the powerful tools you utilize to tell big stories. Is it your way to engage a wider audience by playing on their obsession with football?

Honestly, when I have a movie idea, I don't concern myself too much with the audience, or the critics. Football is an integral part of our lives; it is very influential as a social phenomenon, and I've always been fascinated by the power it exercises over people. Football has a bewitching authority; it can easily transform the most rational person into a fanatic. Football matches, especially those involving a country's national team, are the occasions where clichés of national communion and fraternity come to life. It also moves people of all social classes, which intrigues me. I want to address political and social issues and emotional contradictions. I'm a big football fan, but that does not stop me from

using my critical eye... and I must admit that it's a kind of self-derision.

Why did you choose Obvious Offside as your first short fiction, after two successful feature-length documentary films?

I've always had great passion for documentaries, and after the end of the dictatorship, the need to make documentaries came naturally. While different, *On the Crossbar* (2019) and *Cursed be the Phosphate* (2012) were conceived together. I've had the idea for *Obvious Offside* for a while, but wanted to wait until after the release of *On the Crossbar* to make it. It was primordial for me not to interrupt the cycle. At the same time, however, I do not consider myself as a documentarian, but a filmmaker. It all depends on the nature of the project and if it is better to tell this story through fiction or a documentary. I am always trying to experiment, to push myself in a different direction, which allows me to discover more of myself.

Although the situation in your film is somewhat universal, it has something to do with the Tunisian society at a certain moment. I would like to know more about the specific moment you captured in your film?

The idea of the film came from an incident that happened to me during the

dictatorship, except that unlike the film character, I'm a big football fan. It is also about the difficulty of being different and the arbitrary rule, and I can't claim that those things had changed since that time. That is why, there is no indication of the year in the movie. This story could have happened these days; it could have also happened in another country altogether. It is true that this story could be universal, but it is made with Tunisian ingredients—in my opinion, the cultural anchor is very important.

You have such an amazing cast with the three actors in the main roles giving it their all. With your documentary filmmaking background, how challenging was it to deal with actors?

On this project, I had the chance to work with excellent actors from three different generations. With regards to the police duo, the most important aspect for me was the synergy between them. During the camera test, I understood—from the very beginning—that I had found my duo. They spontaneously lent themselves to the game, it was really funny. As for Majd Mastoura—if I'm being honest, he was already on my mind when I was writing the script. Mastoura really does hate football, so it was as though the role was written especially for him. And I believe that my documentary

filmmaking background helped me in this regard, because I was looking for natural performances; spontaneity and realness. I gave the actors some leeway, allowing them to propose, improvise and do their own thing.

How long did it take for you to develop the screenplay into such a compact and intense script?

I wrote the script some years ago, but I was not satisfied with the results, and made some unsuccessful attempts. During the production phase of *On the Crossbar*, I repeatedly revisited the script, and having the time was useful, because it allowed the project to mature. I also collaborated with the excellent screenwriter Samia Amami as a consultant, and she did a magnificent job.

Is sarcasm naturally a part of your style of expression, or did you utilize it because comedy generally promises to be more engaging?

That is all me! I believe that life is far too absurd to be taken seriously, so sarcasm and cynicism are my privileged ways of expressing my thoughts. I admit that, at first, I had many doubts and did not dare incorporate it in my films. But I'm grateful to the excellent producers Dora Bouchoucha and Lina Chaabane with whom I collaborated for my documentaries. They encouraged a great deal just to be myself and experiment.

In most of the scenes, including those in the café, you leave this realistic mark that makes every scene close to the mind and heart. Was this your documentary experience helping you out with fiction?

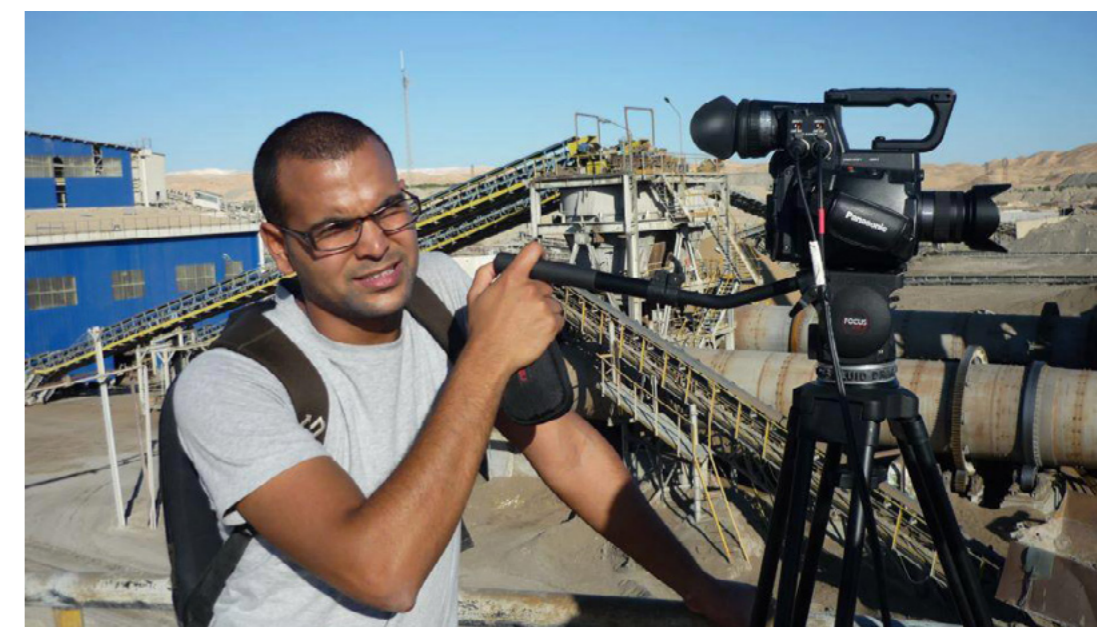
Like I mentioned, I do believe that—subconsciously—my documentary background continues to inspire me. During the filming of *On the Crossbar*, we shot in a lot of cafés. It was a very funny experience, but helped us during the filming of *Obvious Offside*. It was also mostly the same crew, with DOP Hatem Nechi and sound engineer Aymen Laabidi. Besides, whenever I watch a football game at the stadium or in a café, I spend most of the time observing people's reactions and interactions.

Although most of the scenes take place on empty streets, you were able to shift between long and medium shots to fill the scene with life. Would you tell us more about your vision in this regard?

It was a curfew atmosphere, which is always the case when the national team plays a crucial game; nobody on the streets! I wanted to record this opposition between private and public areas, as though time were temporarily suspended and the country's fate depended on the result of the match.

Does the driver (hopefully) get his papers back?

I don't think so, because he remains mysterious. We don't really know who this person is, and whether or not he is guilty or innocent. All we know is that he was arrested by accident, and released by chance!



Will your next step be a feature-length narrative? And will you return to documentary films sometime in the future?

I think I will take a break from documentaries; making them is an extremely exhausting experience. I do have some fiction projects in mind, but I'm still undecided on which to start.

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Majd Mastoura was already in my mind when I was writing the script; he hates football, so it was as though the role was written for him.”



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