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INDEPENDENT
FILM FESTIVAL

المهرجان اللبناني للأفلام المستقلة



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THE SUN SETS ON BEIRUT

BY DANIELA STEPHAN

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o be an independent filmmaker in Beirut is to be part of a vibrant community of artists who are driven by a fierce determination to tell their stories, no matter the obstacles. It's nonetheless very challenging, especially in terms of funding. Although I think the community is quite aware of that and I've seen a lot of generosity when making a film in terms of locations, food that I have rarely witnessed abroad.

In a city that has faced its share of hardships, including political corruption and economic crises, the film industry has struggled to give opportunities to filmmakers and funding. Yet, there is a resilience and creative energy that permeates the city's artistic community, as filmmakers strive to tell stories that reflect the complexities of Lebanese society. It's in a way refreshing to see how different the films can be. But amidst the challenges, there are opportunities for filmmakers to showcase their work at local and international film festivals, and to make connections with others who share their passion.



Beirut's rich cultural history, with its mix of influences from East and West, provides an endless source of inspiration for storytellers who seek to capture the beauty and contradictions of the human experience. To me personally, my home country is my biggest inspiration and I feed from it.



THE SUN SETS ON BEIRUT

BY DANIELA STEPHAN

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"The Sun Sets On Beirut" was a journey with challenges that I think tested me as a filmmaker.

The explosion of 2020 left people in a constant state of mourning. So firstly for me to be convinced that I still want to make films at that time was already a challenge. I was constantly grappling with the nagging question of whether it was even worth making a film in the aftermath of such a catastrophic event when everything around us was in ruins. Because what is really the purpose of making films for me and the questioning around this was crucial in order to really understand if I wanted to make this film.

As we started the production process, we were confronted with unforeseen uncertainties, specifically with locations that we had planned to film falling out, leaving us to find alternative options on the fly. But I have to say, at the same time, we felt like rebels. Time was suspended and the same time felt really fast. So yes we had many challenges throughout because the conditions in which we were shooting weren't normal or I would say stable conditions. At the same time, overcoming those challenges felt like a revolt for this specific film.

Are there any Easter eggs or hidden messages in the film that viewers might not be aware of upon the first watch?

I don't really like to speak so directly about any easter eggs as it's always interesting for me to hear whether the viewer discovered them or not. What I would say is that there were some hints of a divided Beirut through street art graffiti.

During the explosion, I did lose my cat and felt very guilty about caring so much when many people lost so much more. Although I wouldn't say that the film is a true story in itself. I'm inspired by a lot of people to write my characters and by my cat as well as all the cats roaming in the streets of Beirut but I don't really like the "based on a true story" statement as to me everything is in a way true but also not entirely and that's what usually makes a film universal.



ANEMOIA BY

ZACHARY KAREEM

1. *Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?*

"Anemoia" is my most ambitious project to date, and my best so far. It is a personal journey that I wanted to share with the rest of the world. I chose LIFF for a number of reasons, including its international stature and the fact that my family immigrated from Bsharri in the early 20th century; it is my ancestral homeland. Lebanon, and in particular Beirut, has been a place that has occupied a part of my mind for my entire life. Lebanon has always felt like a dream really, and in many ways, my films are like dreams I can share with strangers, and so it felt very fitting to have our Middle Eastern premiere in Beirut.

2. *What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?*

To be an independent filmmaker in America is very interesting and also very rewarding. On the surface and in many ways, it is great! I will say I think that like many things in our country, conglomerated corporate interests have definitely stifled a certain amount of creativity, and if you want to be successful and make money, you—as always—have to play the game as they've made it and by their rules. Yes, the elusive THEY... scary. But, those are just minor bitchings, and I still feel that America is a bastion of artistic freedom even if we must take to defending it more fervently from time to time.





3. *What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?*

The film was an immense challenge all the way through. I feel that each third of the picture presented a unique set of problems that, regardless of my best preparations, I was unable to predict. But this is really half of the fun in making a film: dealing with the live chaos, trying to organize and channel it into something coherent, entertaining and ultimately meaningful.



4. *What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?*

Art is the intersection of our imagination and reality, and I feel that the best art and the kind that I want to create is the kind that can truly help the world. Expression and understanding are so important to our shared existence—a human being cannot just download information. We would if we could; however, as conscious creatures, we must learn through experience even if the experience is abstract. We must be aware and interpret the information for it to become knowledge. That is the beauty of film, of art in general: that you can merge the two and present a closer approximation of the truth—the experience.



5. *What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?*

I've often thought about meeting my younger self, although I've never really pined for it. But if it were to happen, I'd tell myself to buy bitcoin, baby! Then sell it... like a year ago... haha! But seriously...I'm not sure what I'd say because I like how I turned out and am enjoying the journey. However, there were times when I felt very alone or completely shocked at the callous, mindlessness of the world around me. So, I think I'd tell that younger version of me to keep going, even though I know he will! Encouragement and trite expressions from deep places are always welcome to me. And who knows, maybe in subconscious form, we can communicate with our past selves. If time is like a musical record, then I don't see why not... so I guess the real answer to the question is, I'd go back in time and tell my self to write a movie about nostalgia for a time I've never known... anyway, go see my film Anemoia!



BLUE MOON BY

EMILY RUHL



1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

It's important to me that BLUE MOON is shown all over the world. Especially in places where being queer isn't widely accepted. The film's message is that love is love, regardless of sexual orientation. I want to spread that idea as far as I can, as it is the reason why I made the film.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

Being an independent filmmaker in the US, is both tough and provides a lot of opportunity. I live in Los Angeles, and I'm fortunate enough to be surrounded by many talented artists that inspire me daily.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen?

Everything was a challenge. I had never made anything before. I had no idea what I was doing, but I hired people who did and learned an extraordinary amount from them. Learn by doing. That's my motto.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

I hope to inspire people to love a little more, live a little more and laugh a little more.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

Keep going sweet pea. You're capable of more than you've every imaged.



CLOTHESLINED BY

PATRICK CHEMALI



1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

Long before I became part of the industry, I always sought to attend various festivals and movie events as a fan of the silver screen. Upon its inception, it was obvious that LIFF was one of the few events that brought a breath of fresh air to the scene with its excellent programming and selections, alongside the various activities that take place around the screening events. As an independent filmmaker, I believe being part of LIFF opens up room for creating synergies that are missing in the local scene and allows unfettered access to audiences that are attuned to our type of storytelling.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

Living in Lebanon immediately puts a filmmaker in front of several challenges: The absence of an actual filmmaking industry, the lack of state funding, and the power of big-money in dominating the production scene, only multiply the hurdles in front of indie productions. Challenges aside, being a filmmaker in Lebanon offers a lot of material due the country's constant rollercoaster of events, turmoil, happenings and sporadic joy. Yet it is only through the goodwill of individuals who believe in the art of filmmaking and the vision of the filmmaker, their desire to create good content, and their faith that this industry is about more than making a quick profit, that we are able to push forward with original ideas brought to life by talented people.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen?

As a self-taught filmmaker coming from the world of technology consulting, I was very hesitant to embark on a journey that would see me writing, directing and LIFF Q&A Patrick Chemali producing a short film. However I leaned on my acting experience, where I had worked with amazing talents for over 6 years. I reached out to the individuals who had impressed me with the professionalism and talent and with whom I shared the same passion, work ethics and drive. By trusting each person to fully deliver their task I fell back onto my experience in project management to ensure the film comes to life within the set boundaries for production. Looking back at it, I believe the challenge was that of selecting the right cast and crew within the limitations of the budget of an indie production.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

Films have always been for me an escape from reality into the fantasy of a story that we get to fully immerse ourselves briefly but fully only to emerge once it's over richer by having experienced and shared someone else's ideas and hard work. I would like to approach filmmaking from the same perspective. For me it will always be about creating an adventure and inviting someone to detach themselves from their daily lives while they fully embark on this journey that ends with the final credits. If the stories I tell manage to impact others, or enact meaningful change for the better, then that would be a welcome addition and a wonderful reward in itself.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

Having come close to embarking on filmmaking studies in my early youth but finally not being able to, I would tell my younger self that artistically speaking only you set the limit to your capacity to express yourself using your chosen medium. The road to your destination may not be the one you imagined, nor the one that most people take but all roads lead to Rome...if Rome is where you want to be.





ECHOES BY

JULIEN KOBERSY



1. *Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?*

As a filmmaker I'm always searching for ways to expose my work to the audience and the Lebanese Independent Film Festival has proven to be an essential creative hub both locally and internationally.

2. *What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?*

It's very difficult, challenging and heart breaking. You need to balance between your artistic and commercial work to be able to get by. The most important thing, that I keep reminding myself of along the way, is to not lose focus on what I really want: to make films.



d3. *What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?*

Finding the location was very challenging. We needed two windows facing each other to be able to execute the idea. The building that we finally chose was facing the Beirut port area and has been recently renovated with empty apartments. Up until the night of the shoot, the doors of the apartments were being closed in front of us because they were for rent and if it wasn't for our production managers Fayez Abou Khater and Gio Moubayed we would have lost the chosen location. In addition to the generosity of the CEO of Lumen Mr Ibrahim Khalil Bechara who facilitated the shooting from his own office balcony facing the window and offered us full support. Another issue was the fuel crisis during the period of the shoot, which made us turn to an electrical motorcycle to get all of our production needs.

4. *What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?*
To inspire, to make people feel and wonder.

5. *What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?*
The journey is long and hard, don't give up, keep up the efforts and be curious.



ELLE S'APPELLE BEYROUTH BY

RICHARD SAMMOUR



1.1. *Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?*

Since my short movie was about Beirut and after i got many honorable mentions and prizes in international film festivals i believe that LIFF will take my short film in consideration since i read about the jury members and their careers.

1. *What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?*

Unfortunately my home country didn't give me any chance to study or improve my skills while paris and after a session with the jury of cinema school , they gave me the opportunity to make my bachelor in cinematography.

1. *What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?*

The major challenge was to inject french actors in feelings that we feel as Lebanese people and to explain our struggles and nostalgia about what i called a dead city.

d4. *What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art? I would like to send a message about my personal experience when i left my country and how i saw myself and all the Lebanese people as victims and causes of this tough situation.*

5. *What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal? I would tell myself the truth : dreams are impossible in Beirut.*



FANNY STELLA

1.

What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

It's so difficult to be a filmmaker in France, there are a lot of talents, men and women, so it's not easy to reach your goal.

What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

The financing was the biggest challenge, the rest was the easiest part because I had the best team I could imagine.

What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

I want to show the reality that people see but choose to close their eyes and look away.

What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

I would tell him to work harder than anyone else, because only then does the talent reveal itself.

JB FRYDRYCH

4. I am a huge genre cinema fan and I like to use genres to guide me through what I would like to say: I've used Horror to accentuate my anger regarding domestic abuse, Sci Fi to tackle vengeance about environmental exploitation and most recently, a Musical to emphasize the importance of solidarity and hope in times when the outside world is in conflict. We are constantly being bombarded by depressing news about politics and wars to the extent that we, as Lebanese people, have become numb. So, it is my duty as a filmmaker to touch the heart of at least one Lebanese person and make them feel something, anything.

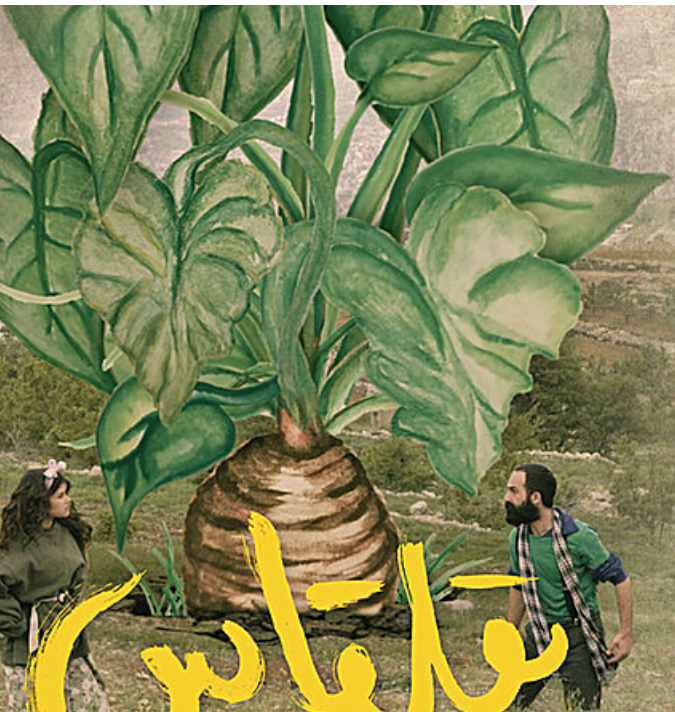
5. I have always been artistic and will always strive to be. If my younger self would have listened to all the bullying and doubts that I've received from so-called peers and colleagues, I would not be the person I am today. I still have a long way to go to reach my full potential as a human and as an artist, however, I would always like to remind myself that I am worthy, I am capable and I am resilient. Trust your instinct and surround yourself with likeminded people who understand, support and push you up towards your goal.



THE GIANT TARO ROOT BY

SAMIR KAWAS

1. For the second year in a row, I've decided to submit my film to The Lebanese Independent Film Festival due to its prestigious selection of films and its friendly organizers. Last year, my film "The Hurl" was part of the short film competition along with a dozen other short films. My team and I got to meet a lot of people from the Lebanese film industry's community and got to share our love for cinema in the heart of Beirut. I am beyond proud that my new film "The Giant Taro Root" will be opening this year's edition, and I hope to wow the audience with it. I can't wait to see the selection of films this year and I hope to continuously get recognition and support from LIFF and its generous organizers.



2. In Lebanon and the multiple crises that accompany living in a country like it, Art and Film are, unfortunately, the last thing that people give importance to. There are a lot of issues that the Lebanese struggle with, most of which include the lack of getting our basic human necessities and needs: electricity, water, healthcare, trustworthy banking etc. Over the past 4+ years, many of us have found ourselves in a funk. In my case, that's exactly where the art of storytelling through film comes in. I like to immerse myself into a world of imagination, create an alternate dimension and tell stories that represent my peers and I in a light and entertaining manner. We should raise our voices, speak the truth and tell our stories. You just need one person who believes in you and sees the charisma and potential you have to offer in order to guide you through filmmaking in a corrupt country like Lebanon. If you look at the right places and ask the right people, you will find your crowd and they will stand by you to make some magic happen. We are resilient as Lebanese people, but I am even more resilient as a Lebanese filmmaker because with everything that we go through as a crowd, I still choose art over war.



3. As many of us know, the economic crisis in Lebanon is worsening by the moment. People are struggling to make ends meet and are barely surviving. Thus, one of the major challenges that we faced to make our second independent short film "The Giant Taro Root", was funding, especially due to the film's nature, a musical number with a song to be produced, dozens of extras and costumes etc. My co-producer Lama and I have had a bit of savings collected over the past year. But, why would we use ALL our savings to make a film? How smart would that decision be? Especially in such uncertain times where such savings could be used in cases of emergency. When I first wrote the lyrics for the film's song and recorded a demo on my phone, we both fell in love with the idea and saw huge potential for it to be something huge, particularly because Musicals aren't a go-to genre when it comes to Lebanese cinema. So, we decided to invest in this project while trying to keep costs at a minimum, and here we are today; opening the 2022 Edition of LIFF with our low-budget Lebanese musical that tackles an important subject in a lightweight and comedic manner.

SAMIR KAWAS

4. I am a huge genre cinema fan and I like to use genres to guide me through what I would like to say: I've used Horror to accentuate my anger regarding domestic abuse, Sci Fi to tackle vengeance about environmental exploitation and most recently, a Musical to emphasize the importance of solidarity and hope in times when the outside world is in conflict. We are constantly being bombarded by depressing news about politics and wars to the extent that we, as Lebanese people, have become numb. So, it is my duty as a filmmaker to touch the heart of at least one Lebanese person and make them feel something, anything.

5. I have always been artistic and will always strive to be. If my younger self would have listened to all the bullying and doubts that I've received from so-called peers and colleagues, I would not be the person I am today. I still have a long way to go to reach my full potential as a human and as an artist, however, I would always like to remind myself that I am worthy, I am capable and I am resilient. Trust your instinct and surround yourself with likeminded people who understand, support and push you up towards your goal.



THE DESTRUCTION PROJECT - PHOTOS BY

JOJIN VAN WINKLE

1.1. *Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?*

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3. I try as much possible to share the story of the revolution of Bougainville, in Papua New Guinea - which is depicted in my film *Ophir* - with audiences as wide as possible, because I deeply feel somehow that the world can learn and be inspired by it in many ways. I am also always curious to see if such a story can travel and be picked in unexpected places. And it certainly was at LIFF! I was so surprised to hear the great news of its selection. If I am not mistaken, it will only be the second time the film has ever been shown in the Middle-East. I have never had the opportunity to ever travel to Lebanon, although seeing Beirut and visiting Lebanon has always been one of my biggest dreams, for many different reasons, some of them quite personal, as well as a long-held genuine interest for its culture and people. Had I known a bit earlier on you bet I would have been there! A few days ago, I had an unexpected encounter with a Lebanese man in Greece, who had 47 marks from various wars on his body. He spoke at length about the situation in Lebanon and how it was for him as a child growing up in war. I will remember this conversation. You could feel the love for his country just looking at his eyes. And unfortunately, I had seen such eyes elsewhere. The blast from the explosion in Beirut also happened only a few hundred meters from his family house. I could recognise many similarities between his own personal story and people and communities I have met along the journey of making my film. So I am deeply honoured that my film will travel to Beirut and perhaps connect with people in some ways.

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5.2. *What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?*

6. That's a very complicated question to answer. I think being an independent filmmaker anywhere in the world is both extremely challenging but also a blessing. Challenging because making your film will most likely make you feel like you need to move mountains to make it happen and hit many walls in the process - and also sometimes misunderstand that just making the film after having moved those mountains and hitting all these walls is just the beginning - as then it needs to be seen and you need to work on it, and this can actually be just as hard as making your film. So let's treasure screenings when they happen! But that said it's also a blessing because you are doing what you love. Nothing can replace that. There is a reason why you picked this particular story, these particular characters, and you are happily moving mountains as well... Also not having the pressure from anyone telling you what to do is an extraordinary privilege. Without knowing it, you may actually be in a position of tremendous power. The power to share through your story perhaps things that the established industry may be less willing to share for various reasons. It's a hard question for me to answer because I would also first need to define where my "home" is as well! Although I am French, I lived my first years in Turkey, but also lived in Australia, the US, married to India - worked for a long time in Papua New Guinea, and now live in the UK. All these countries have very different challenges for making films, let alone be independent. In France we are lucky enough, besides the internal criticisms, to actually be quite privileged in terms of funding and the kind of stories we can tell, in comparison to the vast majority of the world.

7.



THE DESTRUCTION PROJECT -
PHOTOS
BY

JOJIN
VAN
WINKLE

1. *What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen?*

Although I am a filmmaker and screenwriter, for the LIFF I have still images selected for photograph competition. The photographs are part of "The Destruction Project", a multimedia project of photographs and an experimental film spanning several years. One challenge I encountered was how to be both present for my art and my safety. I had to juggle protecting my camera and myself from large chunks of mud hurled at high speeds and being where I wanted to get the shots I wanted. When photographing adjacent to the demolition derby arenas with vehicles moving (seemingly) erratically at high speeds in mud, I had to be both conscious of my surroundings and also deeply aware of the cars, the drivers and the lighting, all the while making sure to not get pelted with dirt as the cars crashed and spun passed the camera lens.

2. *What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?*

We live in a visual culture. Many more people than ever before in human existence have access to cameras (particularly smartphones). People of all ages and backgrounds make and distribute images globally on a daily basis. To be a photographer today is to be aware of this stream of images, and still find ways to cultivate meaningful story through individual vision.

The core of my practice is the process of documenting individuals, places, and objects revealing their stories and uncovering social and psychological implications of everyday existence. My wish is for the viewer to pause and not to "see a moment of time" but to "feeling the moment" through the light, color, textures. I prefer to create theatrical imagery which captures the unexpected beauty visible in loss as well the beauty of renewal.

3. *What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?*

(While behind the camera): Breathe and wait. Patience allows you to slow down and look deeply, even in this fast-paced or chaotic place.

(Reminder): It's not always the camera gear, but how you play with and make use of what you have the time.

(Motivationally): Follow your nose — meaning stay close to your intuition. Say yes.

These inner ruminations are all about connecting to the process of being present, listening to the world with my eyes and strengthening my inner trust that my artistic actions are meaningful.



BAYT EL OMOR BY

TONY EL GHAZAL



1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

Bayt El Omor tells a story that every Lebanese can relate to, the clash between tradition & revolution. Since this is a Lebanese film with such a relevant message, what better place to screen it other than the heart of Lebanon, Beirut. The Lebanese Independent Film Festival is known to be a platform that supports emerging filmmakers in their pursuit of the craft, and since this was my first fiction film, it was an absolute pleasure to premiere it for the first time in Lebanon at LIFF. LIFF's mission of promoting an independent film culture, especially in Lebanon is a vital one to empower the next generation of filmmakers & storytellers.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

Being a Lebanese filmmaker who spends most of his time outside of Lebanon has actually strengthened my connection to Lebanon. Most of the scripts I write or films I direct have some sort of link to Lebanon or the idea of identity. Something as small as building a set that looks & feels as if it's in Lebanon when it's actually in a completely different country, becomes an extremely normal thing to do. All this is because I have a responsibility to find extremely specific & nuanced stories about my home country and tell them in a way that's relatable to anyone around the world.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen?

Since most of the production was outside of Lebanon, we had to ensure that it would be convincing enough for the viewers to believe that they are watching events that take place entirely in a rural Lebanese home; when in reality, we shot mostly in a two story villa in Qatar. The art team worked tirelessly to bring the set to life and age it so it seems like the "home of a lifetime" it promises to be. From the smallest details such as the crochet on the TV, to the fixed color palette of the sets, all had to be realistic, but of course within the budget for a student film. Thankfully, with the collaboration of all the departments, the right camera angles, the feel of the lighting, the ambient sound, and the cinematic performances, we were to pull it off.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

Every film I make has to have a message of some sort, it could be a commentary on society, a realization, or even just a theme I have a passion for. Through the art of filmmaking, I want to be able to put viewers in the shoes of others and immerse them into an unfamiliarly familiar world. Today, we live in a world (and country) that continues to find ways to divide itself. The role comes to us as filmmakers & storytellers to bridge people with stories that allow them to empathize with each other. In Bayt El Omor, a traditional mother clashes with her revolutionary son. We see why the mother wants to stay in her home forever, and we see why the son is completely against it. But no film is complete until there is a resolution: when they both realize, there is only one constant in life: change. In such a way, I hope to be able to impact people's ability to empathize with one another.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

I would tell my younger self to really look for the stories that shaped who you are. So many times we get great ideas for scripts or films that seem Oscar-worthy at the first moment, but then lose interest after a few days. It's really the stories, memories, and thoughts that challenge our thinking and keep us up at night which are the ones worth telling. When these ideas then translate to an engaging series of events that can be told visually, that's how you know you have a movie worth pursuing.





OUR BACK LANE BY

MARC TAWIL

1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

Part of my roots, from my paternal grandmother, are Lebanese. It was therefore natural for me to participate in this festival. I was born in Montreal in Canada and my son too. He's one of the main characters in my documentary.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

In Canada, we have a wide variety of programs to help independent filmmakers, especially for french productions in Quebec. For this particular film, until the last stage of postproduction, I didn't have any help of public instances. Fortunately, I have friends to help me with equipment loan and also I'm a multitasker and can operate a camera and sound while I'm directing kids! Because of COVID, I had to do quite a lot myself when shooting this documentary. It's not always this way. With previous projects, the situation was different and was supported by different donors. I'm very grateful that we have access to funds to finance our documentaries.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

Shooting in solo was not an easy task. In the think of the pandemic, I could not hire any crew to join me. As I started the project doing sound and image, I ended up doing it this way all the way through. This is how trust with the kids I was shooting became stronger overtime. I didn't want to break the fact that I felt invisible for them sometimes which allowed me to catch some magical and intimate moments.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

Get people to think that everything from our past experiences, whether there are good, bad, or difficult it shapes who we are. And everything we do here and now will influence who we will be. These themes are recurrent in my filmography. Through the truth that I'm filming, I want the viewer to dig in its own experience and feel strong emotions.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

Life will reserve you surprises, you might not get where you expected to, but enjoy those new experiences and be open to opportunities. According to my interests when I was young, I was meant for a career in engineering, computers or electronics. Optional classes in University woke up my artistic fibre and I switched to cinematographic studies. From that big move, I never felt so much in the right place.





WADI JAHANAM BY

ZOE FILLOUX



1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

I finished my film, Wadi jhannam, in 2020, and I never get the chance to screen it in Lebanon. It was shown several time in France, often in front of a public not directly concerned by Lebanon's problematics. It was very interesting, but I also look forward to have the point of view of a Lebanese audience. Participate in the Lebanese Independent Film Festival is a great occasion to that. I am also enthusiastic about festivals encouraging independent filmmakers.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

As a French independent filmmaker, I feel very supported by collective initiations. In Marseille where I live, my practice is able to exist thanks to places supporting young filmmakers like the Polygone Étoilé, a collective cinema created by filmmakers, or initiatives like the "club des cinematrices", a mensual meeting with women filmmakers where we show and talk about our ongoing projects.

Of course being an independent filmmaker in France is not economically easy, but i also love my payed projects which are often filmmaking workshops with children or adolescents.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

I made this film while I was in my last year of art school so it was a quite comfortable situation in terms of material and time disponibility.

It was a chance to have a lot of time for editing (during the first lockdown) also because the shots I brought back were not at all the movie I expected, due to what happened in Lebanon during the shooting, in September 2019.

But as I had never done that and didn't have a producer, I think a big challenge was to make the film exist once I thought the job was finished.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

I can't answer in general but for this film, Wadi Jhannam, and the one I am working on, Dona, I believe I'm trying to create encounters between the characters I film and the audience. It is a way to be confronted to a different point of view on the era and the world we live in.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

Hum I still feel young and I'm not sure I reached any goal... But maybe I would say follow you intuitions? And don't turn off the camera too soon?





SCENES FROM HOME BY

CYNTHIA SAWMA



1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

It's a great privilege for us to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival, a festival that gives the right exposure to indie Films , it's a really great initiative. It also brings together filmmakers from different backgrounds, from professionals to amateurs to film students. This festival gives the opportunity to show off their work to wider audiences, and this is an inspiration for us filmmakers to keep on making films.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

Today, the Lebanese film industry is extremely distraught and paralyzed by the seismic and crippling crisis that has struck Lebanon's economy this past year. Although the country is in dire need of fresh movies and perspectives, it is nearly impossible for new projects to see the light of day.

Working in the movie industry has been more than a struggle for us, women filmmakers, considering there is little to no space for us to express ourselves without being censored. In a way, Telling stories is a matter of survival. There will always be plenty of stories to tell in Lebanon, and there's a room for everyone, each in his own voice and vision.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

In General, the whole process was a nice journey, but the pandemic made everything slower, we couldn't travel to Jordan to continue our research, so it was kind of complicated to work with the group virtually. We were very lucky to have a great team in Amman who did the job well, meeting the protagonists and doing what I couldn't do. I would have loved to spend more time with them and get to know them better.

d4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

There are hundreds of amazing things that art can do. We may not notice its value to our lives, but everything around us is art and sometimes art can also be a way for us to see the bigger picture. By looking at it, art is a universal language that can bring people together. Through art, we can build bridges to reach them and empower global communities and depict sensitive social issues.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

I would say Never give up on your goals, fight for your true vision and always surround yourself with people who inspire you. To Each one his/her own vision, Never forget that.



JAKA STRNAD

1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

I was interested in Lebanon, because my father visited the country when he was young and later also some of my friends and I was told nice things about the country. Also my diploma film was accepted in a short film festival in Lebanon. So Lebanon was somewhere on my radar of interesting places for me and I am very happy to be a part of the Lebanese Independent Film Festival. So sorry that I won't be able to come, but thanks for having me and I wish you best of luck also for the future!

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

It depends on each filmmaker, but in general Slovenia is not a country where as a filmmaker you could rely on substantial budgets or regular work. Besides that, we have relative creative freedom without real pressure from politics or capital and in the recent years it is becoming an interesting cinematography with many interesting filmmakers.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

Time. It takes so long to make a film – I wrote the script in 2016. I really don't have patience with that. It takes some much time, it goes so slow, plus for some reason, I heard people saying about me that I work slowly - which is so not true. Otherwise all good, but I just wish I could shoot films more on the regular basis.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

Film is really a very interesting media and through films we can communicate parts of our living in very specific way. So these two things are probably the most important for me – exploring the media and communicating, meaning enabling communication among people. Seeing things in new perspectives, opening our eyes, connecting people, thinking and feeling the important things of our lives.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

It is a very good question, so good, that I don't know what to answer. It is funny but, regarding my artistic development, I sort of feel that everything went in a natural way, somehow how it should go, I wouldn't change much, except making films earlier and making more money of course. Otherwise I don't know, maybe one of the advices to my younger self would be, since it is not a very healthy job - due to the physical and psychological stress, to take care about the health more.



**GRYDSCAEN: SCOUT EVE -
"FATAL ERROR" BY**

NATSUYA UESUGI



4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

I wish to be a "Voice of the Unseen" to raise visibility and bring my message of hope, love and peace to the world and especially to Lebanon and the Middle East with its complex diverse history, rich culture and artistic heritage. I feel a certain affinity to the region and always have as my parent use to say growing up as a "Child of the World" attending elementary school with other children whose parents worked at the United Nations. That experience granted me visibility to many different cultures in my youth shaping my world view as an adult to one of generosity and respect.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

In middle school, I always wanted to be a manga artist and create an animated series of the art I drew in class when I was supposed to be writing homework. Now, years later, I would tell myself to "never give up" because you really can do "anything you set your mind to" as my father would say as I was growing up. As he taught me, it is through perseverance, hard work, to never quit, that now I am living proof that you can absolutely make your dreams come true!

1.1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

2.
3. I was interested in the Lebanese culture and strong artistic voice as I have friends from the region and wanted to bring the message in my indie anime short web series "grydscaen: scout eve" to a new audience.

4.
5.2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

6.
7. I find as an emerging independent filmmaker that the environment is very exciting and challenging at the same time because there are so many voices but few with the message I have to bring to the table. I love having the opportunity to introduce my short films to new global audiences and to bring my "grydscaen" message of "hope through adversity" to a world to show that light is winning over darkness as we create a new world of love that will bring an end to global conflict.

8.
9.3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen?

10.
11. Since my indie anime short films are self-funded, I find the main challenge is accessibility related to budgets. So far, I have not been hindered and this has not been a huge challenge as an emerging filmmaker. However, I can grasp as I become more established on the film festival scene that this may become a larger issue in future.

12.



AL NA;AWA BY

RANIM ABDELKHALEK



1. When I got to the end of my 4th semester and had to present a project for my documentary course, I was unmotivated, uninspired, very down and had no clue what story I wanted to tell. Did I want to talk about how my country is falling into pieces? Did I want to express my anger against the injustices and the corruption happening? Did I want to talk about my trauma after the explosion? I had no ideas, I was tired of revolting, struggling to balance between my part time job and my university, trying to heal from the trauma we all collectively lived with. So, at last, I decided to show exactly that, to tell that exact story, and to talk about these exact feelings. However, I decided to tell it through Ibrahim, someone who has a completely different life but tells the same story with the same feelings that you and I went through. However, with my senior film "Al Na'awa", it was the complete opposite, I knew exactly the story I wanted to tell. Here the struggle wasn't mental and emotional, it was financial. I made this film against all odds, against electricity cuts, against lack of gas, against our economy clashing. But I had a beautiful team who all believed in my story and wanted to do their best to tell it, and thanks to them we were collectively able to pull through the obstacles and make the film happen.
2. Ever since I got into filmmaking, I've been slowly molding my style in image and discovering my language in film. I can now say that all my work, whether photographs, films, documentaries or video essays, revolve around transmitting a specific feeling to the viewer. Stories can be interpreted in different ways by different people but what unites the viewers is the same feeling they all receive. I hope I can always live up to transmitting the exact feelings I want my viewers to feel through my visual art.
3. I would tell young Ranim, thank you for keeping a journal and for writing everything you lived through down. Your writings helped me a lot in understanding things in the present time and inspired a lot of my stories. However, there will come a time where you will stop writing for a while because you will find yourself living in a world where everything around you is collapsing. You will be drained and tired, but at some point, you will find that your strength in fighting against this world is by writing. One day, you will get back to it and turn your writings into images, visuals and sounds that a lot of people will feel and love. And after that, you will never be able to stop.

city.

1. My first short film "Red Threads" was nominated in the LIFF last year, and it was the first film festival that I attended in person. I had such an amazing experience that I decided to come back this year with 2 short films, my senior narrative "Al Na'awa" and my short documentary "A Strange Structure". I felt that in addition to giving Lebanese aspiring filmmakers exposure, LIFF also unites the Lebanese film community. You meet new people, you hear fresh ideas, you watch new films, you learn new stories and get to know new languages in storytelling. In addition to having no submission fee for Lebanese filmmakers, the atmosphere at the event is very humbling and comforting. This brings me to say that we need more events like LIFF, because events like this not only support the individual artist and unite a whole community, but also support the art-form of Lebanese independent filmmaking and pushes it to keep evolving regardless of the difficult circumstances our industry faces in Lebanon.

1. It's not easy being an independent filmmaker, let alone a young independent female filmmaker in Lebanon. The industry in our country is not so well supported; so, you really have to depend on your own expenses, resources, and lots of favors. It is sad to see so many talented filmmakers struggling to translate their stories into films just because they don't have the sufficient resources. There's a certain sacrifice we give in order to be filmmakers in this country, whether it's our physical health, our financial stability or even our mental and emotional state. But within this struggle, there's a bittersweet feeling when you watch your film on a big screen and think to yourself "I can't believe I made this against all odds". In addition, being a female filmmaker is also a challenge itself, since we are expected from our community to work in prestigious jobs or not work at all. But luckily, there's nothing I love more than a challenge, and even though what I do is not considered prestigious by my society, I sure do enjoy every second of creating a film.



UNDERWATER BY

ROBERT MINASSIAN



Lebanese Independent Film Festival is an opportunity to broaden exposure for me as an independent filmmaker. It is a great way to unite the Lebanese film community, to network, and to enjoy the experience of people from my culture watching my film. I think that wherever I go and whatever I do, I will always go back to my roots. It is the place that I spent my childhood in that inspires my work as an artist. Being an independent filmmaker in my home country gives me a sense of freedom to express myself. For me, emotions and hazard are the core of my art. In every production we face problems. I try to go with the flow, and to use the problem as a way to benefit my story. For instance, when I directed my first film, *Underwater*, I lost a location on the day of the shoot which was the graveyard. I decided to shoot in any garden we found to create an image that looks like a graveyard. The essence of film for me it is its magic. We use different techniques to create what we really want. I always say: "Never compromise! Adapt!", and that is the motif I follow every time I am directing a film because problems will appear out of nowhere. Although my films are inspired by my personal experiences and real emotions, and at the same time they tackle societal problems. I do not intend to change people's mindset, but I try to express my feelings towards a subject hoping it will light something in the heart of the viewer. Everything happens for a reason! I am thankful for the hazard that made me pursue this career. After three years of my first film, I tell my younger self: "Always follow your feelings and trust nature!"



HELL BY

SANDRA TABET

1. *Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?*

To me, this film is different from all the others I made in the sense that I see it and feel it like an ode to “my people”, an acknowledgment of what happened to us when our reality collapsed. Filming it was a way for me to pour these overflowing emotions of sadness and disorientation into a medium that would document this period. Nothing means more to me than to see it projected in Beirut, the place that is the heart of the film.

2. *What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?*

Depending on how one looks at it, it's as much difficult as it is inspiring. I think we have a lot of stories to tell and many important things to stay but funding films is always very difficult in Lebanon. I believe these are the two sides of the same coin, we have to find the right balance.

3. *What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?*

I made this film with zero budget. I roamed the street with the DOP, and we just started shooting. It was important for us to be respectful to people on the street, so we used bulky equipment and made sure people knew what we were doing. But I think the most difficult thing was to actually see how every single person we met had this dazed, lost look.

4. *What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?*

If I am able to touch people and maybe make them re-think or at least question their opinions about any subject matter, then I would be very happy.

5. *What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?*

Don't look for perfection, many beautiful things happen in imperfect moments.





LEILA BY

PAMELA SAADE



Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

When I started the journey of filmmaking, my teacher was one of the founders of LIFF, I have always admired what that festival stood for in the Lebanese industry and what it aspired to do. I volunteered to be a viewer in the first edition and I learned so much back then just by watching. So when it came to premiering my film in Lebanon I knew exactly what festival I wanted, the one that led me to make my film in the first place.

What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

Being a young filmmaker in Lebanon is hard, and that becomes harder when you are independent. I think being an independent filmmaker in Lebanon is very hard, but also it shapes us to become more intuitive, more creative and more resourceful once we leave. Which in itself is a sad thing to say, we live in a country that shapes us to leave.

What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen?

I filmed "LEILA" in the midst of an economic collapse and curfew stricken pandemic, those alone made shooting a bit hard. Having a large crew was also a big challenge especially for a first time director. But I think cinematically my major challenge was sticking to my desire to shoot on the egg building in Beirut, it was so very challenging, to direct, to light up, and for my actress and cinematographer to dance on top of a ruined building with no edges whatsoever shaped like an egg, while I laid on the floor in the monitor and focus puller. And I could have never done that without the insane crew I had the honor to work with.

What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

I wish for my art to disturb, annoy, and reach my audience. I would love for my art to break barriers, and rebel against a capitalist way of viewing cinema as nothing but easy to access fast food for the soul. I would like my art to leave a communitarian after taste, a craftsmanship after taste, to make sure people watching are aware that not only is there a filmmaker and actors behind this film, but also editors, colorists, producers, gaffers and all the village it takes to build a movie.

What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

I don't think I have yet reached my artistic goal, and I don't want to ever reach it. But I would love to remind my younger self to be bold, more than she thinks she already is, to be loud, be proud, to experiment, and to let herself be carried by her love of stories and the 1000 ways to tell them.





COALESCENT BY

RYAN KAY



Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

A filmmaker like me, who would like to watch his film with different crowds, see the reactions of different spectators, and travel the world, wouldn't miss the chance of doing it locally.

After Los Angeles, London, and Madrid, I'm really happy that the Lebanese International Film Festival is the last festival we're participating in with "Coalescent" and I'm looking forward to bigger projects to be featured both locally and internationally.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

Lebanon has been struggling for quite some time, and being an independent filmmaker here shows you how less accessible things have become.

The mission's still the same: make the film happen. And restrictions like timing and budget should make thoughts and ideas flourish in your head instead of blocking you.

I wouldn't think about big budgets as the easy way out, because no matter the number, you should use it effectively and wisely.

When I'm on set, I know what I want and I know how to communicate it.

Timing is the game.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

The hardest challenge I faced to make my film happen taught me a very valuable lesson.

I decided to work with a medium-sized crew of more than thirty people on my senior film. Not the best idea, but it worked.

As a director, keep the monitor for the assistant director most of the time and go live the scene with your actors and your director of photography. They need you there with them.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

I write a film when I get the urge and the need to tell a story that no one else will.

I do want to entertain the spectators, but I want to make it worth their time, money, and intellect.

I want to play a game with them, make them think, cry, and laugh.

I want them to discover new places, get to know new characters, and give them something they'll never forget.





KILLER JAZZ BY

LYNN SFIER



1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

I worked on my film during harsh times; the Beirut explosion, and Covid, and I was able to make it, with zero budget. So, I wanted to have a chance to show my film in front of a Lebanese audience; an audience that knows how hard it is to be a filmmaker in Lebanon. I want to see the people's reactions since the movie is not a typical one, but more of a stylized experimental mysterious short film, which will make the audience feel like they are experiencing it, through the images and sounds, with the characters.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

To be an independent filmmaker in Lebanon is definitely not easy, it requires much sacrifice and effort, but at the same time, it inspires me. The country and the mixed feelings I get from living here inspire me to write and let my feelings out, which sometimes lead to a short film.

Being an independent filmmaker in my own country is a constant fight between financial need and artistic freedom, yet I was able to make all of my short films on a shoestring budget. I believe that with my enthusiasm and passion, I can always find a way to make it work, even when the situation appears hopeless. But, yes, it takes a lot of confidence to keep trying in vain, then trying again with optimism and desire for the next endeavor.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen?

Covid, the Beirut Explosion, and inflation. We were emotionally and physically tired. But we knew it was worth it. We knew that making art would always be the answer. After I finished it, I felt satisfied, and I was proud of myself and the whole team. We made it, during the harshest times.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

The impact I wish to make through film is to make people experience extreme feelings that they normally wouldn't experience in real life. Or maybe (in Lebanon they do). But you can notice that all my short films, (and even one short documentary I made) have this eerie feeling. And that eerie sensation through film helps you to experience things that you don't normally tend to sense. Or maybe you feel them but they are hidden in your soul and no one has ever noticed. And maybe you can't even express them through words, but through film, yes! You can express those strange emotions, and I know that it gives a certain type of satisfaction to people, to watch something a little strange, out of their comfort zone, and to feel some strange sensations that have been hidden or repressed.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

I'd advise her to be patient. I would tell her to keep working even when nothing appears to be happening. I would tell her that one day, all of her hard effort would be rewarded, and she will be proud of herself for persevering.

I would remind myself that it's acceptable to fail sometimes, but that should not prevent me from following my objectives. I would convince myself that being an artist is more than a hobby or a side job; it is an identity that needs to be respected.





ROSES IN THE NIGHT BY

ПЕНЧО КУНЧЕВ



1. *Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?*

I found out about this festival on FilmFreeway. According to the information I found there, it seemed to me that it was a very prestigious film forum, which is why I decided to participate in it. Showing my film there could also be its premiere in the beautiful Middle East.

2. *What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?*

It's nice to be an independent filmmaker because you have the freedom to do what you want, without the restrictions imposed by some co-producer or film studio. Of course, it is a bit difficult to make a living with such kind of profession, which is why many of the colleagues in my country also practice other occupations such as university professors, animators in commercial studios, graphic designers, members of scientific institutes...-

3. *What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen?*

One of the biggest challenges was to translate the beautiful poetry of Pierre Louys (1870-1925) into the language of animation without the use of a behind-the-scenes voice. I think that when we work with a poetic text, we must be able to present it to the audience so that they can feel the spirit of the work in the best possible way through our drawings and without the help of the crutch of the spoken word. Although our script is based on the poetic text, in this case we are creating a completely new work of art, an audiovisual work, built only of picture and sound. The inclusion of a literary text would mean the author's inability to convey this text only with images and musical accompaniment.

4. *What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?*

I have always wanted to use the means of animation to create poetic works. I think that in today's digitalized and anxious world, poetry is increasingly absent from people's daily lives and this has a negative impact on our societies. It is known that art cannot change the world. However, it would be nice if the author manages with his film to give the viewer a few minutes of happiness and sublime feelings, taking him for a while to a better world, where the eternal beauty reigns - "the beauty that will save the world" as said once the great Dostoevsky.

5. *What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?*

To never abandon my dreams and aspirations. Otherwise, life would lose its meaning.





IDENTITY: THE ANDREW NEMR STORY BY

ANDREW NEMR



1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

Identity is a film about how we become and how we come to know who we are. Using my personal journey, the film explores how deeply our family histories, social relationships and contexts, and dreams and pursuits come to shape us. My parents were both born and raised in Beirut. While I have only visited once, I grew up immersed in a home that was shaped by my parent's love of Lebanon. So, it isn't surprising that Lebanon holds a special place in my life. The country's personality has shaped me even though I have had little time there. My film even highlights this connection. Having the opportunity for this film to be shown in Lebanon, is a unique kind of homecoming for me. I am grateful for the opportunity to share my story in a place so connected with who I have become.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

This was the first film I have been a part of. Being the subject of a documentary film is an interesting position to find oneself and something I am still getting used to. Generally speaking, making art that speaks to the deeper parts of life, in ways that are both accessible and explicit can be a hard journey. Hard, and worthwhile. I don't think it has to be painful, but it may always be difficult. The possibility for change that comes from films and other art being brought to life and inspiring others has the power to offend the regularity of life which we are all accustomed to. It can take a long time and a lot of work, to find the right people, opportunities, and rhythm of life to make the creating this kind of art just the normal work of the day. Thankfully, in my own life, I have had the opportunity to take that time, and put in the work.

d3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen?

Interestingly, the greatest challenge my team had in making this film, was in finding the story. There was plenty of footage, plenty of options, and lots of different ways the film could go. It took a long time and revisions to find something that worked, both in terms of length and scope, and in terms of flow and story. I'm really thankful for the thoughtfulness of the production team – all the producers, my director Jonathan Cipiti, and of course the editors who spent countless hours with the raw material. They generously committed to making a film that was reflective of my experience of life, condensing more than 40 years into 23 minutes. That is something very special.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

My greatest hope in the art I make is that they may support moments of transformation in the lives of others. In transformative experiences – from the planting of a seed, to the support of an idea, to the encouragement to make a move – there are many moments in which art can play a role. I want to make work that interacts with those moments. This is why I try to share something about what is happening internally with me in every piece. I hope that in sharing from my heart, it may open up someone else's heart. That in that opening the possibility for change may become real. That a vision for a different kind of life might abound. That with every step towards personal change that happens, the possibility that the larger world might change becomes more real.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

I would tell my younger self to take deep breaths, and remember to go slowly. That achieving one goal doesn't seem to make achieving other goals easier – and there will always be something else. I would tell my younger self to keep in mind the more important things of life and people (including yourself), even as you pursue the lesser, yet also important things of career and art making.





CONVERSATION WITH AN ACTRESS BY

STEVE KHATTAR

1. Why did you choose to participate in *The Lebanese Independent Film Festival*?

This is not my first time participating in LIFF. I participated back in 2019 with my short film *A photo a Hotel and Her* and I witnessed up close the professionalism of the team of LIFF and the exposure an independent filmmaker can achieve from this festival. And I would like to mention that LIFF is one of the few if not the ONLY film festival that doesn't charge for Lebanese submissions and these small gestures reflect the intentions for supporting independent filmmakers.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

Being an independent artist in Lebanon is not easy, a never-ending climb, but the view at the end is worth it. It's a double-edged sword. It gives you the freedom to express your thoughts, yet at the same time, it comes with a lot of financial difficulties. For me, this is a motivation to work harder and have a changing voice in our region.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen?

"Conversations with an actress" was called before "My last days in Beirut". It was the story of an actress living her last days in Beirut before traveling to Canada. A short film to document her journey. I started shooting in July 2020. And I noticed that Carina, an actress, can't let go and be her true self in front of the camera. In August 2020 Beirut blast happened. We stopped everything. She traveled to Canada. "My last days in Beirut" ended. Just after that, an idea hit me, and the story shifted from "My Last Days in Beirut" to "Conversations with an Actress." I started filming and documenting our conversations, voice messages, and videos to tell the story of a broken actress over a year and a half without Carina's knowledge so I can preserve the authenticity of her emotions.

d4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

As a middle eastern storyteller living in Beirut, a place full of untold stories and taboos, I search for that kind of narrative to explore on the big screen. I draw from my own experiences and events happening around me to inspire my creative work. I try as much as possible to have a changing voice in the Arab world, defying all the norms and breaking barriers.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

I say to myself one thing: Relax you will make it.





BAD LOVE TIGERS BY

KEVIN SCHEWE

1. *Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival? “My goal for Bad Love Tigers Screenplay is for it to become a major motion picture global franchise to reach the far corners of the whole world. The feel-good theme is hope for a diverse audience of all peoples and teenagers lead the way! LIFF fit this requirement perfectly”!!*

2. *What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country? “It is very challenging to try to come from nowhere and a background of medicine to make it in the world of film and cinema. I am applying my work ethic to try and make this dream come true.”*

3. *What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ? “By far, the major challenge is getting noticed in an industry where you need to know someone who knows SOMEONE. Along the way, you need a big break, and that is what I pray for.”*

4. *What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art? “I am a cancer doctor by day and I focus on giving my patients hope. I want to bring hope and joy to the whole world through the Bad Love Book and Movie Series.”*

5. *What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal? “Change is the only constant in the modern world. Always embrace change — it is not your foe, it is your friend and your future.”*



ELSEWHERE HOTEL BY

CHARBEL CHOUCHANY

1. I mainly chose LIFF, firstly because I was a participant in the 2019 program. I had an overall memorable experience with the festival when my senior short film *Here, somewhere* got selected. LIFF is the kind of event that is unique here in Lebanon. I would say because you'd be ultimately engaged, you can actually feel like you're part of the festival. Throughout the process one can really meet a variety of people and get some relative exposure, from Q and As, to social media, and the festival itself. Secondly, the selection process is always a delight with the quality of films screened at this event, including all types of genres from audacious experimental videos to typical narrative films.

2. Well, being an independent filmmaker is something that is not easy at all. It solely depends on every individual. In my case, not having a distributor/producer is somewhat of a setback. On the other hand, I can say that I'm lucky to have the right crew members (Cinematographer, AD, Sound etc) that all happen to be my friends since my University days, and have been part of my films since day one. Gradually, we have managed to evolve as time went by, and every collaborator believed in my own vision as a Director. So this is practically the main motivator combined with our consistent passion towards cinema, to help one keep on bringing new films to the Lebanese market.

3. The most notable challenge was the on-set experience. Basically, the only looming gap as a no-budget indie filmmaker is to finalize the whole film in a short period of time due the rent, the location and the cast. This is generally problematic for me, because I am one of those directors that have a lot of shots on their shooting script and happen to improvise on set not just with framing but with the actors and the dialogues. So this is generally tiring for the whole team and consumes a lot of time, knowing also that I had 24hrs to complete the whole shoot. Luckily, however, I had a great team behind me that understood my methods as Director on set and were capable of actually assisting me introduce my vision and the whole shoot had only two main locations, so this facilitated slightly the procedure.

4. Having made 10+ shorts, made me discover that the general impact I would like to have on people is to have them witness my own way of recounting a narrative based on my own perception towards life that I try to evoke within my movies. I'm always ecstatic to have the spectators indulge in the "uncanny" or in other words the unusual or the strange, with things that can actually happen and that can be very much real in some way or another.

5. What to tell my younger self? there's nothing specific. I can just say that don't listen to people who only want to tear you down. Accept constructive criticism. Always accept to try something new, experiment with different styles till you find your own. Even if you don't become rich and famous, you did what you loved and that is what filmmaking is about.



IM NOT LAKIT BY

MARIE SUARE



3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen?

The most difficult thing about the shooting of the film "The Anger" was to start the shooting. In Spring, 2020, the COVID-19 epidemic began and I began the casting and preparation... online. Then, when we started filming in Beirut on August, 2020, there was an explosion in the port of Beirut. After the demonstrations, protest rallies began. I could not even imagine that my debut film would be a real test for me and for my film crew. But despite the harsh conditions, no one left and did not stop filming - thanks to the courage and faith in the best of my Lebanese team, we shot the film to the end. There were layers of complexity on "I'm Not Lakit" movie. It was hard to work with the main character, Saleh. He is so wounded and closed that I had to take about twenty interviews with him to build his words into a story. Also, during the filming the orphanage Home of Hope did not want to let us inside. Saleh grew up and escaped from them. But because the efforts of the film crew, we were managed to get there.

1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

Two of my films are participating at the Lebanese Independent Film Festival. My debut in feature films "The Anger" and the documentary "I'm not Lakit." I shot both films in Lebanon. About people, situations, stories. For me it's very important to show this movies for Lebanese audiences and get feedback. Therefore, participation in this festival is important for me and I'm very glad that both films were chosen.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

Since now I live in two countries, I know about the problems of independent cinema in Russia and in Lebanon. In my homeland, Russia, it is possible to be an independent filmmaker, but it is difficult. First of all, because of the difficulty of obtaining funding. Usually auteur films finance by private sources, independent foundations - now there are practically none. The way out is co-production with different countries. But even that is no longer possible. So the only thing is to wait. There is no film financing structure in Lebanon, not at the state level, not from the independent funding sources. The money that can be received from a private investor in Lebanon usually is only enough for a short film. Therefore, it remains to be hoped that your short film will turn out to be talented and will be noticed at festivals by producers from other countries. In Lebanon, it is difficult to be a director and shoot without the support of other countries, so the way out is co-production, but you need a strong producer.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

It is very important for me that my films influence people. This is the purpose of the cinema. If a people left the cinema and nothing has changed inside, then this is a bad movie. Recently, I was sick, but my friend dragged me to the cinema to watch Fellini's movie "8 1/2", I watched for 2.5 hours, spellbound and I felt myself much better - this is the power of art. The soul is another matter - it is much more difficult to cure the soul, but if doing something gradually, little by little, step by step then in the end something can be changed. I advise all politicians, big businessmen to definitely include going to the cinema in their agenda, in their schedule. Perhaps after that, independent, auteur cinema will be taken much more seriously and supported. Indeed, there is much more power in art than in weapons. And this must always be remembered.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

I still tell myself something important every day, I haven't reached my goal yet - even though I've had many film festivals in my career, including Cannes. But I haven't reached my goal yet. Everything is ahead. Some stage has been passed - more than a hundred films have been shot as a producer, and four as a director. Now I know for sure that I will continue to work as a director and screenwriter. And for my purpose, I need a very good producer. That's what I'm looking for.

ARMIN HASEMANN

1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

A Moment of Bliss is a film that shows Lebanon's true nature from a different perspective than what the news portrays. It aims to reflect the beauty and uniqueness of the country through real-life stories. So it is only natural that it participates in the Lebanese Independent Film Festival.

1. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

A significant downside to that is the difficulty of finding funding and the total absence of government programs to support the Lebanese film industry. On the other hand, Lebanon is full of talented individuals looking for opportunities to start their careers in the industry and prove their capabilities, so one can always set up a highly effective crew with minimum budgets.

1. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen?

We started working on the film in 2018. Since then, we have survived the Lebanese economic crisis, the pandemic, and the Beirut explosion. So it was tough on every possible level. But to pinpoint a specific obstacle, talents constantly emigrating presented a big challenge for us as we had to change crew members almost after every one of the events that struck Lebanon in recent years.

1. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

Although they seem to be shrinking by the day, I wish to highlight the positive aspects of Lebanon and living in Lebanon. I want to raise the level of hope concerning the future of this country and its social structure.

1. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

There is abundance in Lebanon, even if everything around us constantly challenges this thought. So keep trying and never give up



PERFECT STORM BY

MORAG BROWNLIE

1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

I have 3 reasons for entering the Lebanon independent film festival. I have always been fascinated by Lebanon and its ancient history and place in the world . I love your programming.

I was impressed by a beautiful film I saw in Paris by Pamela Nassour "Ila Haythou". There are too few evocative and beautiful films made - or that I have had exposure too so far. Film makers are encouraged always to "up the stakes", in order to keep the audience on their toes and engaged. Sometimes I think this leads to people protecting themselves emotionally and feeling less. Thank you for inclusion in your festival !

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

It is creatively rewarding, you can respond to situations, inspirations and potential collaborations faster. We have incredible film-artists, locations and crew in New Zealand that are passionate about film and are highly trained and are great to work with when they have time. I look forward to making more and also getting some more funding.

I have self produced and directed x3 short films and some large budget show visuals . I look forward to having a producer and or co-producer help me in future . I respect the amount of work that that role entails !

d3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

Money - especially for post production, including the costs of DCP and the 5.1 sound mix if accepted to screen in cinemas. This relies on generosity and time from post-production houses .

I have other films I would like to make but currently they would rely on the team working for free.

I am focused on grant applications currently to raise money, and will see what film next gets Green lit !

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

Through my art I aim to inspire and express beauty and connection . To find a way that people feel Beauty not just look at it . With this film "Perfect Storm" the aim was to bring hope, and to provide a place to connect to your own experience of isolation during the last couple of years.

Also to see if the audience members also connected with nature, themselves or others in a different way than normal.

Through my art I aim to see the world and nature through a more subtle and spiritual lense.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

I would tell my younger self to "Get more sleep". Find help so you can achieve that. I would also remind my younger self – "You know who you are, and what you are capable of...

Don't let lifes trials and tribulations dilute what you came here to do, or make you tone yourself down too much. Let your lives experiences feed you, and increase your capacity for developing interesting characters, scenairos and naturally compassion .

On a mudane note "Keep having production or creative meetings in person like you used to. Don't rely on email."



THE OLIVE BRANCH BY

DANY BOUSHEBBEL

1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

Although all my other film and TV screenplays are set in the US, both my film feature and TV pilot scripts that were submitted to the Lebanese Independent Film Festival are set in Lebanon and eventually will be filmed there. Both have been winning many awards in the past year and a half. I now wanted to gauge how the Lebanese would react to them. My feature script pushes the envelope as 80% of it based on real events and inspired by that I went through during the war in Lebanon as a little kid as well as a young adult. Being so far away from home for more than 20 years, I think it's time to put a magnifying glass on stories that have touched us in one way or another and share them with the world as we see it and not as the media chooses to put them out there. Plus, 'The Olive Branch' is a tribute to my only sibling George who passed away from covid in 2021 as well as my late dad who passed in the early 90's, as well as Sheikh Bashir Gemayel. This script has a special place in my heart on many levels. For the scripts to fare well at LIFF, it makes me feel that they are not only universally appealing and accepted, but also true to their origin as seen by the Lebanese.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

It is probably one of the most grueling situations you can put yourself in. Filmmaking is an art and stems out of passion. Passion doesn't necessarily pay your bills as much as it enriches your soul. In which case, the latter is more important if you ask me. However, you need a strong support system to pursue your passion until you come to a point where that passion can make you a living. I am first and foremost known as an actor in Hollywood over the past 16 years. The need to create and write was out of necessity in between my acting gigs. It was the need to tell stories that haven't been told yet and to create roles outside the stereotype that I was getting a shot at in Hollywood as well as create riveting and fun roles for myself and other actors to shine in as we showcase our talent instead of waiting around for someone to give us that long-awaited breakthrough in Hollywood. I believe in talent and have a vision. Having been forging my own path parallel to my Hollywood career, I'd like to circle back to Lebanon and come full circle in life as I build a bridge between our Lebanon and Hollywood. Now, with several streamers becoming platforms for releases, I feel that the world continually needs original content, voices, and stories from all over the world. In my case, as a Lebanese American, I am proud to integrate Lebanon into this hot mix and strengthen the appeal of my country of origin.

THE OLIVE BRANCH BY

DANY BOUSHEBBL

3. *What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen?*

The one main challenge that remains to make any film is funding usually as well as connecting with the right investors & producers that are willing to see what you see, believe in your vision, and go that extra mile with you to tell your story and bring it to life. Winning awards all over the world surely helps shed light on the project itself, however, doesn't guarantee that it will get made. It's always a labor of love despite the budget involved in making it happen. So many movies and TV series get made in a machine-like process but not necessarily have much appeal simply because funds were made available to them. No one can really predict the success or lack thereof of any project until it's put out there into the world. So, if we are betting, let's bet on ourselves!

In general, all my screenplays have a universal & commercial element to them with a common relatable denominator that can be grasped by any human in the world regardless of their ethnicity, religion, or background.

4. *What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?*

I lived in Lebanon a very long time ago during the war and always sought an artistic escape of some sort. In the wake of covid and other macro political and economic hardships, I feel people now more than ever need an escape from their realities even if it were for an hour and a half or a season in the case of a TV series. I also wish to paint a clearer & rosier picture of bitter realities and situations around the world. In the case of my 2 projects selected in this festival, I would like to shed light on Lebanon while showcasing the truth and not just what people see and hear in the media nor in your typical Hollywood flick and the stereotypical portrayal of Lebanon discarding the beauties along with the turmoil and nuances in our society. As a Lebanese-born who spent many years of his life in Lebanon before moving to the US and becoming an American citizen, I feel obligated to bring my authentic voice as a true Lebanese to share with the world.

5. *What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?*

I would tell him to fear not what you don't know and go full throttle with your dream even if it feels like unknown territory as it will all work out eventually. Losing yourself in a world of mystery and realizing your worth is better than being in familiar territory and not knowing your worth, while being a victim of circumstance. Dreams come with a price tag, tenacity, and perseverance and are worth every ounce of energy as long as it keeps your spirit young and alive as well as your soul enamored with life's discoverable unknowns. In the end, all will come to light.



OVER 18 BY

ANWAR NADREEN

Anwar Nadreen

1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

1- One of the important festivals in Lebanon, and one of the best that allows independent filmmakers to showcase their talents in a very sophisticated and objective manner. This is one of the most important points that should be present in every festival, so I decided to attend it and make my film a part of this year.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

2- Despite the circumstances that all countries of the world are going through in general, and Lebanon in particular, being a filmmaker in Lebanon is a very difficult thing from a financial or moral point of view. But ambition and passion remain in this field the only thing that keeps you steadfast until you reach your goal

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen?

3- There were consequences and challenges that we faced in more than 18 years, but the most important of them was the narrowness of the room in which the filming took place, its small size and its short height.. But despite that challenge, the team and I were able to overcome it with our passion and belief in working as all.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

4- Since my childhood, I have been imagining behind the scenes, how films are made, and how long each film takes to be made.. But I hope that my vision and what my eyes see through the camera and the seventh art will reach the world.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

5- Well behaved, if you had not acted as you did, I would not be in this state now.. A dream awaits you that must be achieved and you are certain that you will achieve it with your determination and determination.



DUBLINED BY

ISHAM ABOULKACIM



1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

I choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival because of its main subject : the asylum seekers. Indeed, this topic strongly concerns most of the Middle Eastern Countries.

I wanted to raise awareness about the way that European Union deals with this question.

Also, to grant a visibility to the LGBT+ people in countries that restrain their rights was a strong desire to me.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

To be an independent filmmaker in France is the definition of freedom to me ! I feel very blessed to be able to make movies about whatever subject i want without any restrictions.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

The major challenge I faced to make my film happen was actually making a movie for the first time.

I was carried by passion and not my knowledge about film making wich was just nonexistent. I learned by doing this film.

I also had the chance to have an incredible skillful team who made this experience so rewarding.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

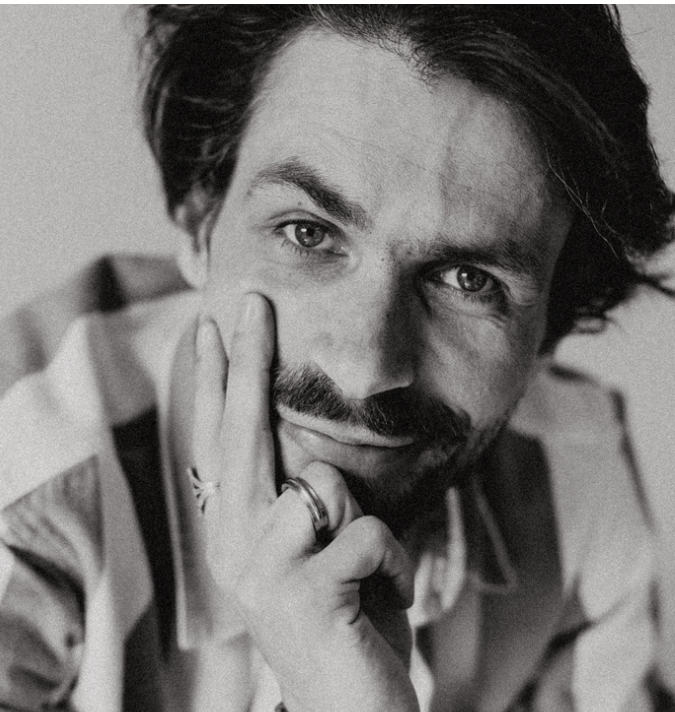
Through my art I would like to stand for acceptance about our diversity as human being : gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, social background,...

We have so much to learn from each other ! Difference should be seen as a way of self-improvement and not as a threat.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

Today, I would say to my younger self : "Go wherever your fulfillment is. Listen to others but not too much. Be confident and patient, life is full of beautiful surprises for those who attempt. So go and get these."





SPOON BY

AURTHIER CHAYS



1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

I've always felt close to Liban, without knowing exactly why... Maybe because of my previous relationships, or because of what natives told me about this country. Sharing my animated film in a arabic country, the first in my festival process, was a big opportunity.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

In France, Cinema is well helped by government and public / private organizations, and we don't have any censorship or else, so being independent is a part of, I guess, every filmmaker in this country. It's a mantra in France.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

As it was my first animated film (I'm coming from live-action films), I had to learn while doing it ! The main challenge was being able to finish it in a short period of time, without spending too much of my money, as it's self-produce. And being able to give emotion with my limited knowledge of the medium.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

I approche any project only if the subject ring a bell in me. I don't think a lot about impact. Because I think that if you do something with your heart, on a sooty you truly believe in, it will have an impact on people. At least an emotional one. And that's the main objective in cinema.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

Be patient ! And work hard ! I was sometimes in a hurry, sure that my next movie will be a masterpiece... I've learned the hard way that you need to practice, doing and doing again, and learn from it. There are a lot a of very talented people around, so try to be better, and more resilient than those creators. And then, maybe one day you will make it.





DOLLAR GENERALS BY

CLAIRE DOWNS & BRENDEN GALLAGHER

1. *Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival? We have always admired the country of Lebanon and its resilient, joyous people. We have always dreamed of visiting the city of Beirut, a historical and cultural gem. While this is not possible for us this year, we hope to use our festival acceptance to learn more about a country and culture that is often not at the forefront of the American mind. We hope to visit Lebanon someday in the future.*

2. *What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country? America is both a good and a bad place to be an artist. While freedom of expression is enshrined in our constitution and many wonderful artists and technicians flock to work in Hollywood, America is also a land of great income inequality and oligarchal control by the wealthy. Filmmaking here is expensive, and with a few corporations dominating the arts and no national arts funding of any significance, making something truly transgressive and interesting can be a challenge. In expensive cities like New York and Los Angeles, rising rents have made the artist's lifestyle increasingly difficult. But, being an artist is never an easy way of life, no matter where you live, and our deep love for the Hollywood artistic community transcends our frustration with the American political and economic system*

3. *What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen? The biggest challenge of this film and of many films was finding locations. No actual dollar stores were interested in allowing us to shoot in their spaces, so we ultimately rented a "movie ranch" (standing sets established north of Los Angeles, originally to shoot westerns). This location had a standing convenience store set, a gas station, and a house. Middleton Movie Ranch in Acton, California, proved to be the best possible location for the film, and we are forever grateful to their wonderful staff.*

4. *What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art? Life is pretty difficult, and good entertainment has the challenging task of taking viewers on an adventure that makes them forget about their troubles while also giving them themes and moments that will stick with them for years to come. Our art addresses the glaring wealth disparity in America created by dog-eat-dog capitalism. By confronting the issues facing America head-on, we hope our viewers will find humor and fun in our narratives.*

5. *What would you tell your younger self before you reached your artistic goal? Making a living as an artist means considering both art and commerce. It's important to watch the market and try to speculate on the changing landscape of the art world. Entertainment preferences for audiences change year by year: some years, people gravitate toward eight-hour limited series; some years, they're into half-hour comedies with a laugh track. But, it is also important to remain true to yourself and your artistic vision. Never get stuck in a rut of deciding you only want to put your art in one specific form, genre, or style. Tell stories in as many ways and means as possible. It's a marathon, not a sprint.*

THE CHRISTIANS - EARTH'S
CRY HEAVEN'S SMILE (120) BY

TONY GIOUTSOS

1. *Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival? My movie script is largely centered on the middle east and in particular Egypt. Many characters are middle eastern, hence Lebanon made sense.*

2. *What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country? I am not a filmmaker, I just wrote a script :)*

3. *What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ? Funding*

4. *What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art? Christian converts*

5. *What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal? Write this script about 7-8 years ago, chances are better I would have found the funding.*



HARRY THE HAMSTER BY

LEWIS REEVES



1- I would say the festivals reputation is what brought us here. In my opinion the festival holds a huge roster of diverse films from everything and anything and we really wanted to be apart of that and see how many new faces our film could reach from Margate, UK.

2- independent film is always hard and there's no way around it but I'd say the in the uk there's a huge amount of opportunities for the people who work hard and are looking for them. If you have your ear to the ground there's always a way to get your idea made. It's just how bad you want it.

3- Well for a film that has VFX and animation and children... I'm actually going to say finance unsurprisingly. It's so hard to get people to want work on your film as it is and even more harder when there's a very small budget. I find being honest and passionate is what made this project happen. If you want people to follow you you have to show that you're in 100% and passionate as that's what makes us all jump in and want to get involved so I always make sure I listen and that I'm passionate. Even when I haven't got a clue, I keep positive and carry on. Then I'll have a break down later haha.

4- I just hope people enjoy it, maybe some people look to push a message or make an impact with their work. For me I just follow my gut and hope that in turn people will connect and enjoy my work.

5- Enjoy the moment, celebrate it then move on to the next adventure!





BEIRUT THE AFTERMATH BY

FADIA AHMAD



d3. I had to face many challenges to be able to bring this film to life. We were all broken in every sense of the word. Be it emotionally, psychologically, physically and materially. It was hard to gather myself and to take the decision in making this film. But it was my duty towards my country and my people. I promised myself to make our voices reach the world and make our silent screams be heard. I was very lucky to gather a wonderful and exceptional team that were very involved because they related to the film in every sense and way. They gave their all as well. The pandemic of Corona didn't help either but nothing stopped us. At times the pain was unbearable, it's like my soul was gone. But through the pain sometimes, art can be created in its most beautiful way. Then bit by bit, "Beirut, The Aftermath" came to life.

Fadia Ahmad

1. Being part of the Lebanese independent film festival is an evidence for me. As much as I am humbled and grateful for all the International recognition, being recognized by my own country and people is very important to both my heart and my mind as an artist. We share the same story, the same chaos, the same joy and the same pain.

2. Being an independent filmmaker in Lebanon is very hard and challenging. Even though I am here to scream and share the story of each and everyone of us through my film, it's not a main priority today. We all know that, this being said, what the entire nation is going through doesn't make "us" a priority. Priorities lay on basic human needs today. Another one is regaining our dignity.

As a filmmaker and an artist, I made it my mission to never give up and try my best to overcome all the struggles. I wanted to make sure that our story stays in our archives and in our history as a reminder, which some are trying to erase.

4. Through my art, through my artistic journey, I tend to want to leave a trace, to keep the "memory" of our story alive; a collective memory that would never fade. We learn in school the history of the world. The history of our country stopped in 1942; after that we do not have anything in our history books, since it's not agreed on. One of my missions as an artist is to keep a trace of our history, our heritage, be it as a filmmaker or as a contemporary art photographer. I love to tackle humanitarian issues and bring awareness to all kinds of injustice worldwide. Also, one of the main messages I wish to transmit is very raw and authentic emotions. A story in a microcosm that anyone would relate to at a macrocosm scale. Make the unseen, seen. Make the unheard, heard.

5. The impossible is always possible. Believe it, work for it, sacrifice day and night for it and then achieve it. Trust in yourself. Trust in the universe. It's ok to fail, it's part of your growth. Patience is a virtue. Come what may.



THAWRA SOUL BY

PHILIPPE ARACTANJI

1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

It is a rising festival and must be encouraged.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

Very hard comparing to other countries where I worked.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

Money, money and money.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

Make people remember, feel, and think !

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

It's my younger self who tells me what to do in order to reach my artistic goal and not the opposite.

If you need further info or have any concerns . Let us know anytime , Philippe is cced to this email as well. As for the high stills , I did send a full dossier to Pamela, let me know if you need more .



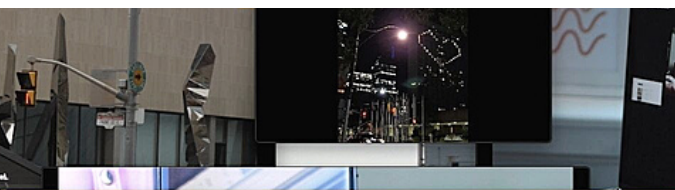
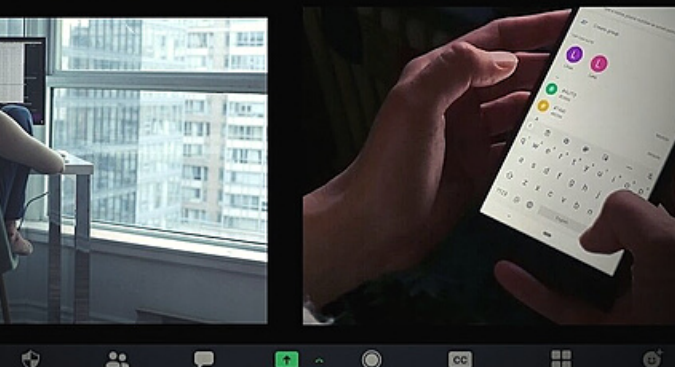


THE SHADOW PANDEMIC BY

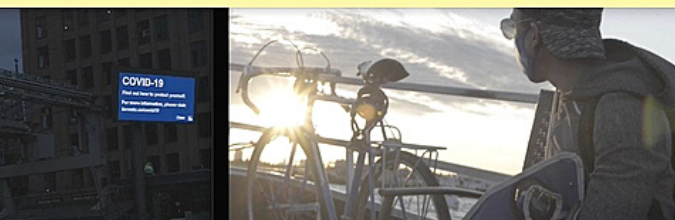
LARA HARB



THE SHADOW PANDEMIC



is a film about loneliness.



0

1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

I chose to submit my film, *The Shadow Pandemic*, to The Lebanese Independent Film Festival because I wanted to celebrate my Lebanese heritage. The festival's goal of enhancing cultural growth fits perfectly with my film: it's about loneliness, and how we can use art and creativity as a healing tool for our society.

It's extremely important to have a network of people who are championing indie filmmakers. It's very difficult to get your film out there and get it seen, so anything that can be done to help promote it is very much appreciated. Festivals like the Lebanese Independent Film Festival are able to help us do this.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

I'm lucky to be an independent filmmaker in Canada. Film is widely celebrated in Canada with many film festivals and resources for artists. It can be tricky to get your film out there, but I think that's a challenge anywhere you go!

There's always room for improvement when it comes to the film industry, but we're lucky that we have a lot of support from our government and other organizations that want to help filmmakers get their work out there. I think it's important for everyone in the community—not just filmmakers—to support each other so we can all grow together.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

I made my film during the COVID-19 lockdowns in Canada. I knew I wanted to focus on social isolation and loneliness during the pandemic, but being in the middle of it all, it was hard to look at it from a different perspective.

I wanted to make a short film that was easy to watch, uplifting and positive. The pandemic is full of negative stories, but there are also positives. I think the world needs balance right now and everyone has their own perception of what is happening. We have to find the good in these trying times or we will drive ourselves nuts with worry. The last thing I wanted was a depressing film about loneliness and isolation.

LARA HARB

The format of the film was tricky to work with as well. The desktop documentary format is a genre of documentary that uses screen recording software to capture the filmmaker's computer screen. The film takes the viewer on a journey through a desktop while and analyze the topic of loneliness. The hardest part for me was learning how to edit the film so that it mimicked my desktop screen—even though I had never done anything like this before, I was determined to do it myself instead of hiring someone else to help with editing. However, the one thing I love about desktop documentaries is that they are very accessible for new filmmakers. This genre has been gaining a lot of popularity over the last few years and there are many resources available online explaining how you can make one yourself. There are so many different ways to tell stories on screen!

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

The message I want to convey with my film The Shadow Pandemic is that loneliness is real and we all experience it, but we don't have to feel stuck in it. A lot of experts say that we are in a loneliness epidemic, and that it's affecting us physically and mentally.

We can talk about loneliness openly, without shame; and also challenge ourselves to reach out to others who might be feeling alone. With the documentary, I wanted to tell a story that would help people feel less isolated; and if someone is experiencing loneliness, give them hope that they can make a change in their life and find connection.

With so much happening in the world at the moment; I think it's easy to forget that what unites all humans is our humanity - our emotions, our desires and dreams. We all feel joy when we're with loved ones, happiness at when doing our favourite activities or sadness when someone close dies. That's why I want to explore more topics about what connects us together as people rather than what separates us - because ultimately it's all about how we treat other.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

When I was younger, I was so focused on following the path that society said was right. But what I've learned is that it's important to look past tradition and what society wants us to do and instead focus on what works and what doesn't for you as an individual. There's no linear way to success—you have to make your own path!

THE ADVENTURES OF A MOTHER AND HER DAUGHTERS BY

JAMES CHEHAB

SEPTEMBER 1ST, 2ND & 3RD 2022
STATION BEIRUT

THE ADVENTURES OF A
MOTHER AND HER
DAUGHTERS ON THEIR QUEST
FOR THE MEANING OF LIFE
AND OTHER IMPORTANT
THINGS.

OFFICIAL SELECTION
**Lebanese
Independent
Film Festival**
LIFF 2022

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1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

The LIFF felt free and not formatted to fit one kind of films or one type of speech, and this is very encouraging in a world where film makers are pushed to discuss specific subjects to suit specific agendas. They just looked and felt similar to the independent spirit of my film, trying to exist despite the few available resources, as making films and sharing them is a must and not a luxury.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

Some days you feel like you are on top of the world, creating pure art, and are free, with no one to impose on you a way of doing things. On other days it feels like crap, like not many people are interested in what you have to say.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

At first, I envisioned my film as an independent feature, but since I was doing my masters, I thought it would be a more fruitful experience to venture into this adventure surrounded by people who cared about me, and whom I trust. Then, lockdown started, the economy was collapsing, our capital was destroyed... You know... the usual... Yet, we made it through despite everything. I'm not sure how, but here we are now. Somehow one always finds a way when there is a need to create, especially with a passionate and dedicated team and tutors by your side.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

When you consciously start thinking about the impact you wish to make, your art usually becomes disingenuous and borders on propaganda. I have no choice but to let my audience be impacted the way they see fit. That being said, my art is an elaboration of what I feel. I do enjoy these moments when my audience and I understand each other and we stare together with a feeling of anguish at the abyss of absurdity in life, it's a lot of fun.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

You have to trust yourself, and believe that you know what is right even if you are not really sure you do. Go with the flow of your work, and listen to the world as it guides your decisions. Even a director follows directions from the elements around him. Oh, and have patience, a lot of patience, a Buddhist monk level of patience.



MIMO BY

ANTHONY BASSIL



1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

I chose to participate in your film festival this year because it was an opportunity for me to present my short documentary to vast audiences.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

To be an independent filmmaker in Lebanon is quite hard because of the many crises we faced, and we continue to face. However, I choose to use these challenges as a catalyst for my work, and consider them opportunities for me to create art.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

The major challenges that I faced while making my film were the coronavirus outbreak and the economic crisis in Lebanon.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art? Through my art, I would like for the viewers to put themselves in the shoes of my characters, face the same problems that they faced, yet try to have common sense and find solutions.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal? I tell my younger self don't give up, you will be grateful for what you have, and proud with the satisfying results that are coming your way. Keep on challenging yourself, the society and all the problems that may come your way, and you will make it!



CLOSE CALL

WRITTEN, PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY
AMER EL-BAYOUMI

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
MATT TSYMBAL



CLOSE CALL BY

AMER EL BAYOUMI

1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

1. Beirut is very dear to me, as I have been visiting since childhood. It is a unique city full of creativity and beauty. It is also a resilient, yet warm place. It is my pleasure to share my film at the LIFF.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

It is challenging, but fulfilling, particularly in the context of working hard to dispel ugly stereotypes of Arabs in mainstream works, both as a filmmaker and an actor, and to tell my own stories as an independent Egyptian-American voice rather than trying to fit into a pre-destined narrative.

1.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

Working with very strong-minded (but talented and helpful) family members.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

Telling stories that break the mold, and that are thought provoking, both from an artistic and social perspective.

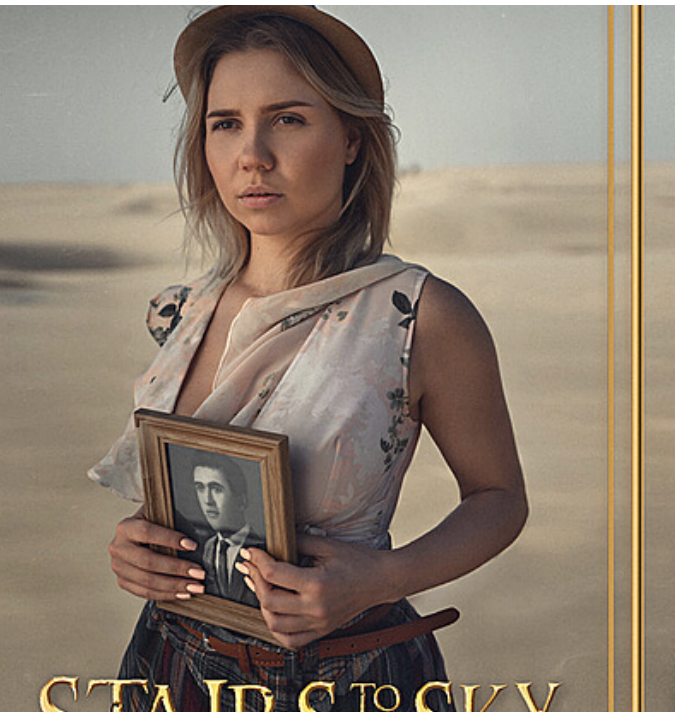
5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

Don't ever give up. The uniqueness of your stories is an advantage.



STAIRS TO THE SKY

ABBSS ABBASS



1. *Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?*

I wanted to have the chance to show our talents to our national and international communities through this reputable festival, and to blend more into my homeland community.

2. *What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?*

Being an independent filmmaker in my country is limitless to the creativity I can make, the support of my people around me, especially the talented similar minds that drives the professionalism of the work and make it more entertaining!

3. *What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?*

Filming this short movie was challenging to me because I shot it in UAE, and being newly there without any of my crew members is challenging since my connections are still limited. Also, what made it more challenging is that I had to schedule remote meetings with my writer so that we can both be very careful for the final results.

4- What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art? Everyone of us has a back story that will leave an impact on anyone, it can make us stronger, enlighten our vision into reality, and it can be motivational! Moreover, we can learn from each others' life experiences that we see in each of our short movies.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

I would tell my younger self to be more hard-working and patient, move out of the comfort zone and most importantly to overcome my fears and go for every opportunity I may face. Not to forget to always think outside the box!





PURGATORIO BY

HAKAN ÜNÄL



1. Why did you choose to participate in The Lebanese Independent Film Festival?

I chose the Lebanese Independent Film Festival because it puts more emphasis on independent international work and is a festival with its own reputation.

2. What's it like to be an independent filmmaker in your home country?

Being an independent director in my country is a very difficult situation. Because the work you do with your identity as an author is often not evaluated or taken into account. I think being independent is an autonomous and very valuable factor in cinema, but the privatizations in cinema unfortunately narrow this field considerably.

3. What's the major challenge you faced to make your film happen ?

One of the biggest challenges I faced while making a movie was how to get a scene from multiple different angles in the shortest time possible.

4. What kind of impact do you wish to make through your art?

First of all, to reach a visual language in which a film can tell its story completely, with all its mise en scene. Because film is an art that can be reached visually.

5. What would you tell your younger self, before you reached your artistic goal?

I would say to my younger self that you did well for the struggle I put up so much.

PURGATORIO

