

# 3<sup>rd</sup> Zenith Arab Cinema Event

to screen at the British Academy of Film & Television Arts  
on 30 March – 1 April 2007



The British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) is hosting a showcase of the best in contemporary Arab cinema from 30<sup>th</sup> March - 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.

Organised by Zenith Foundation, an organisation dedicated to promoting contemporary Arab arts, and in partnership with Med-Screen, a project funded by the European Union in the framework of Euromed Audiovisual II programme the event will feature the best of recent films from across the Arab world, including Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Algeria and Morocco.

Following on from last year's successful event, the 2<sup>nd</sup> BAFTA Arab cinema weekend will shine a light on the diverse creativity amongst filmmakers in the Arab world. With the region so prevalent in today's media landscape, more often than not through reporting on wars and conflicts, events such as this offer audiences invaluable insight into the creativity and concerns of the region.

The three day event will open with a gala screening of Rachid Bouchareb's Oscar-nominated *Days of Glory*, followed by a Q&A with the director. Elsewhere in the selection one can find vampires in modern day Beirut in Ghassan Salhab's brooding *The Last Man*; a lovelorn assassin in Casablanca in Faouzi Bensaidi's *WWW - What a Wonderful World*; corruption on the streets of Cairo in Marwan Hamed's blockbusting *The Yacoubian Building*; two women railing against fundamentalism in Algeria in Djamilia Sehraoui's *Barakat!*; the devastation of war-torn Baghdad in Mohammed Al Daradji's *Ahlaam*; and a talking chick in Josef Fares' touching Lebanese civil war film *Zozo*.

The event will also pay tribute to the late Egyptian Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006) with a rare screening of the 1962 classic *Chased By The Dogs*, which is based on his novel. This film, by Egyptian director Kamal Al-Sheikh, hails from the golden era of Egyptian cinema and was selected for competition at the Berlin International Film Festival in 1963.

The event marks an important step in Zenith developing a permanent presence for Arab cultures in the mainstream. As Mona Deeley, Director of Zenith Foundation, remarked "the Arab Cinema Events started with a one month retrospective of Arab Cinema at the NFT in 2004. We built on that in the BAFTA Arab Cinema Weekends of last year and this year by allowing London audiences to catch up with recent releases from the region on a yearly basis, helping them truly engage with Arab cinema. The events bring attention to different facets of Arab cultures, expressed through the diversity of their cinematic productions and the divergent interests and

styles of directors. Our selection includes international award-winning films, and represent the diverse styles of filmmaking in the region.”

Zenith is delighted to announce that the event will be held with the support of Med-Screen, a project funded by the European Union in the framework of the Euromed audiovisual II programme.

**BOOKING INFORMATION** tickets are £10 per film or £50 for a full festival pass. Please email [rana@zenithfoundation.com](mailto:rana@zenithfoundation.com) to reserve your tickets in advance.

**OPENING NIGHT PARTY** after the screening of *Days of Glory* from 10pm to midnight in David Lean Room at BAFTA 195 Piccadilly. Tickets for the party are £10 or £20 for party and any film of your choice. Contact [rana@zenithfoundation.com](mailto:rana@zenithfoundation.com) for your advance booking.

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES** for press passes to the BAFTA Arab Cinema Weekend and interview requests please contact [info@zenithfoundation.com](mailto:info@zenithfoundation.com).

For further information please visit [www.zenithfoundation.com](http://www.zenithfoundation.com) and [www.bafta.org](http://www.bafta.org).

Please also join the discussion at [www.daysofglorythefilm.com](http://www.daysofglorythefilm.com).



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This project is supported by the European Union in the framework of the Euromed Audiovisual programme.

## ( Notes to the editor )

- British Academy of Film & Television Arts (BAFTA), 195 Piccadilly, London W1J 9LN Tel: +44 (0)20 7292 5800
- For programme times and bookings please contact [rana@zenithfoundation.com](mailto:rana@zenithfoundation.com) or [info@zenithfoundation.com](mailto:info@zenithfoundation.com). Also please visit [www.zenithfoundation.com](http://www.zenithfoundation.com)
- Rachid Bouchareb's Oscar-nominated **Days of Glory** is a tribute to the sacrifices made by hundreds of thousands of North Africans drafted into the French army to help liberate France from the clutches of the Nazis in World War 2. The film charts the experiences of a handful of Algerians and Moroccans as they make their perilous way through Italy, Provence and the Vosges to Alsace. The cast collectively won the Best Actor prize at Cannes and the film's premiere in France caused a sensation, breaking box office records and compelling French President Jacques Chirac to overturn the shameful ban on pensions being paid to these North African heroes. A must-see film made all the more powerful and timely in the current debate about multi-culturalism, clashes of civilisations and wars on terror.

**Days of Glory** is released in UK on 30 March.

- The Partnership between Med-Screen and the Zenith Foundation:

Within the framework of the Euromed Audiovisual Program of the European Union, the Med-Screen project aims to promote the cinema of the 8 Arab countries of the MEDA region through "Arab Film Weeks" organized in the MEDA region and in Europe.

This year, Med-Screen is proud to collaborate with the Zenith Foundation to present the "3rd Zenith Arab cinema weekend," a selection of recent Arab features, which will be held at BAFTA.

We hope this partnership will allow the public of London to discover new films originating from Mediterranean Arab Countries, in the aim of encouraging their commercial release in the United Kingdom's theaters.



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