

TWENTYONE ENTERTAINMENT
and
BLACK SUGAR PICTURES

Present

N Ö Я А Ъ

A Film By
Tawfik Alzaidi

Starring

Yaqoub Alfarhan
Maria Bahrawi
Abdullah Alsadhan

Running Time: 95 Minutes

SYNOPSIS

Set in a small remote Saudi Arabian village, in the 90s when artistic expression was banned, NORAH is a story about the basic human need to communicate through art, in all its forms.

Nader, a new schoolteacher and an artist in secret, arrives at the village and meets Norah, a young woman who ignites the creativity inside him and inspires him to paint again. At great risk, they develop a delicate connection and a quiet bond. Nader enlightens Norah on the wider world outside of her tiny community and she realises she must leave, to find a place where she can be free to express her artistic self.

CREDITS

NORAH is written, directed and produced by Tawfik Alzaidi, the cast features rising Saudi star Yaqoub Alfarhan (“Rashash”), newcomer Maria Bahrawi and acclaimed actor Abdullah Alsadhan (“Tash ma Tash”). A Black Sugar Pictures Production, presented by TwentyOne Entertainment.

BACKGROUND

“Norah” is the debut feature film from Saudi writer-director Tawfik Alzaidi. The film’s script won a fund award from the Saudi Film Commission’s Daw Film Competition, an initiative launched by Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Culture to support and encourage the next generation of Saudi filmmakers. Norah is the first Saudi Arabian feature film to shoot entirely in the AlUla region, an extraordinary area of natural beauty and heritage.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This film takes place in my country, Saudi Arabia, in the 90s when art in all its shapes, forms and colours was not allowed. Everything has changed now but it was a time that lasted a long 35 years. Many artists and musicians stopped their artistic careers because of the pressure exerted on them. This film is about those special people who managed to keep their creativity alive despite being considered different or outsiders by their society at that time. But those artists inspired the artists of today, the new generation, and their work is now recognized all around the world.

Ever since I was 12 I had a passion for creativity and art. I was always trying to understand why it was forbidden in my society. I became part of the first wave of new Saudi directors to start making short films in 2006. There was no cinema in Saudi and people were always telling me there was no point in trying to make films here. When I was thinking about ideas for my first feature film, I came across some of the stories from artists who had been suppressed in the 80's and 90's. Their stories resonated with me and I felt like I was in the exact same situation.

I believe there is always creativity inside people that needs to have an outlet in the outside world. Creativity, for me, is a tool to communicate between people and I want to show that in this film.

- Tawfik Alzaidi

FILMING LOCATION

Norah was filmed on location in the AlUla region, which has many epic rock formations, as well as extraordinary sandy desert areas that are rich in secrets that have not yet been discovered. The place resembles Norah's story, that gradually unfolds and reflects the characters of the film and their relationship which carries the secret passion for art and beauty.

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHY

TAWFIK ALZAIDI – Writer, Director and Producer

Tawfik Alzaidi is a Saudi director, based in Riyadh. He wrote, directed and produced "Norah", his homegrown debut feature film. Tawfik is considered to be a leading and influential member of the new cinema wave in Saudi Arabia.

Tawfik began directing his own short films in 2006. His first short film "The Fabricated Crime" won best editing in the Jeddah Film Festival in 2007 and his film "The Silence" won the Gulf Short Film Award in the Muscat International Film Festival 2009.

In 2010, he wrote and directed "Exit" which won the Golden Creative award from Syndicate of cinema technicians in Lebanon.

In 2014, he wrote and directed "Four Colors" supported by Two Four 54 in the United Arab Emirates. The film was shown at the Dubai International Film Festival and featured in the Dubai Film Market.

In 2015, he wrote and directed "The Other", funded by the Misk Foundation and won the award for best short film at the Riyadh Film Festival 2016. The film featured prominent Syrian actor Mohamed Al Qass and Saudi actor Meshal Almutairi.

MAIN CAST BIOGRAPHIES

YAQOUB ALFARHAN (“Nader”)

Yagoub Alfarhan is one of the leading new faces in the world of Saudi Arabian cinema, television and theatre. Born in Jeddah, he started his acting career in the theatre in 2006. He went on to win best actor awards in Morocco for his theatre performances in 2008 and 2010. He later joined the new wave of Saudi artists who started a cinema movement prior to the cultural renaissance in Saudi Arabia in 2018. In 2019, he starred in the feature film *SCALES*, which was officially selected in the Venice Film Festival/Critics Week and was Saudi Arabia’s official submission to the Oscars in 2020. In 2021, Yaqoub achieved widespread recognition across the Middle East for his iconic portrayal of an 80’s drug lord in the smash hit thriller mini-series, *RASHASH*.

MARIA BAHRAWI (“Norah”)

Maria Bahrawi, a 17-year-old Saudi newcomer, makes her debut in *NORAH*, in the titular role. The film’s director, Tawfik Alzaidi, cast the then 16-year old Maria two weeks before shooting starting. Born in Jeddah, Maria is an inspiration for the new generation of women in Saudi Arabia. She will graduate from her high school in Saudi Arabia in May 2024.

ABDULLAH ALSADHAN (“Abu Salem”)

Abdullah Alsadhan is a highly acclaimed Saudi actor. He started acting at a young age in several plays and then later in television evening shows and television series. The most famous of which is *TASH MA TASH*, which he starred in for two decades. *NORAH* is Abdullah’s first feature film performance. Abdullah received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Red Sea International Film Festival in December 2023. He holds a Baccalaureate degree and several training qualifications from the University of Arizona, USA.

MAIN CREW BIOGRAPHIES

SHAUN HARLEY LEE – Director of Photography

Shaun is best known for his work on the African Western feature “Five Fingers for Marseilles”, the television comedy “MAXXX” and the action thriller “Silverton Siege”, “MAXXX” starring OT Fagbenle (“Black Widow”, “The Handmaid’s Tale”) and Christopher Meloni (“Law & Order”, “Wet Hot American Summer”) and screened on both Channel 4 (UK) and Hulu (US). “Five Fingers for Marseilles”, directed by Michael Matthews (“Love and Monsters”), premiered at TIFF and screened at the BFI London Film Festival amongst many others. “Silverton Siege” was commissioned by Netflix International Original Films and was the third highest viewed film on the platform for 2 weeks running in April 2021.

His commercial work includes spots for brands such as Adidas, Ford, MTV, Samsung and YouTube. His work has been featured in Indiewire and has earned him both nominations and awards at a variety of film festivals.

OMAR FADEL - Composer

Omar Fadel is a US-based composer for film, television and video games. Omar’s work can be heard in numerous films, television shows and video games, namely the Emmy award-winning film, “Belly of the Beast”, the hugely successful Dungeons and Dragons-themed show, “Critical Role”, the Netflix film, “Naga”, the widely acclaimed film, “Yomeddine”, and the global game franchise, “Assassin’s Creed IV: Black Flag”.

RAND ABDEL NOUR - Production Designer

Rand Abdul Nour is a versatile creator, specializing in production design. Rand ventured into the realm of film and media productions as a scenic painter and sculptor, driven by her conceptual approach to art and her deep passion for visual storytelling. Today, she works as an active consultant and contributor in the art departments of numerous local and international films such as “Dune: Part Two”, “The Alleys”, Netflix’s “AlRawabi School for Girls”, “Moonknight” and “John Wick”. She works primarily as a production designer, art director, set decorator, or scenic painter. Her work extends to TV series, music videos, short films, and commercials.

MOUNIR SOUSSI - Editor

Mounir Soussi is a Tunisian film editor with a proven track record in the entertainment industry working on a diverse project portfolio spanning both cinema and television. Over the years, he has worked alongside prominent production giants, budding startups, and individual creatives, engaging with directors and producers of various nationalities. His recent work includes “Les Sept Remparts de la Citadelle” (directed by Ahmed Rachedi) and “Kingdoms of Fire” (directed by Peter Webber).

PHAEDRA DAHDALEH – Costume Designer

Phaedra Dahdaleh is a Jordanian Costume Designer with more than 17 years of experience in the costume department. Phaedra has designed costumes on many Jordanian, international and local Saudi films including “Norah”, “The Lamb” and most recently “Shabab el Bomb”. Phaedra is also the owner of Phaedra's House of Costume in Amman, Jordan, a regional one-stop-shop for all things costumes.

SHARIF AL-MAJALI – Producer/Line Producer

Sharif Al-Majali began his journey after earning his bachelor's degree in theater arts, later transitioning to the world of cinema through intensive courses at the University of Southern California (USC). He worked as a location manager for international films, earning numerous awards at various festivals, notably for the film "The Hurt Locker," which won six Oscars.

He worked with the Royal Film Commission of Jordan as a liaison officer for production services, responsible for coordinating between the commission, production companies, and all relevant governmental entities

In 2020, he moved to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where he produced the Saudi film "Norah" and participated in the production of the international film "Kandahar." He also produced other films that will soon be released in theaters. Currently, he is intensifying his efforts in producing Arabic content and managing international projects.