

62° SEMAINE  
DE LA CRITIQUE  
CANNES 2023

# INSHALLAH A BOY

Director & Writer AMJAD AL RASHEED

“FENOMENAAL”

- DE GROENE AMSTERDAMMER

“HAWA'S ROL WINT  
ZEKER DE GUNST VAN  
HET PUBLIEK!”

- SCREEN INTERNATIONAL

Mouna Hava - Selena Rababah - Haitham Omari - Yumna Marwan - Salwa Nakkara - Mohammad Al Jizawi - Eslam Al-Awadi - Serene Huteihleh  
WRITERS: AMJAD AL RASHEED - ROLA WASSER - CHELPHINE AZOU - PRODUCED BY ROLA WASSER - ASSEL ABU AYMOH - YOUSSEF ABDELMOHBI - CO-PRODUCERS: NICOLAUS LEFEBRE - RAPHAEL ALEXANDRE - ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS: ALAA KAVKULI - MAHER DUBB - SHARINAZ ELAKKO  
COP. PRODUCED BY: DUCYAMA (FR) - EDITOR: AHMED HAFEZ - PRODUCTION DESIGNER: NASSER ZOUBI - MUSIC BY: JERRY LANE - ANDREW LINDCASTER - COSTUME DESIGNERS: HAJA JABBAR - LARA ABULFALAH - COSTUME DESIGNER: ZEINA SOUFAN - SOUND DESIGNER: MOJIB HAJAWAN - SOUND MIXER: LEE HERRICK

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Distributie Benelux: Arti Film – Hilversum – Nederland.  
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 Arti  
FILM



Een 30 jarige weduwe in Jordanië vecht voor haar erfenisrechten in een patriarchale maatschappij waarin het hebben van een zoon een verschil maakt.

### **Lange synopsis**

Nawal en haar man Ahmad proberen al een tijd een tweede kindje te krijgen. Als Ahmad plotseling in de nacht overlijdt krijgt ze niet echt de tijd om te rouwen want ze raakt verwickeld in een juridische strijd met haar bemoeizuchtige zwager Rifqi. Volgens Jordaanse wetten heeft de familie van de echtgenoot namelijk recht op een deel van de erfenis als een vrouw geen zoon heeft. Ook blijken eigendomsbewijzen niet goed beschreven te zijn. Uit wanhoop om haar huis en haar leven met haar dochtertje te behouden, liegt ze over een zwangerschap onder het mom van een mannelijke erfgenaam om daarmee de rechtsprocedure negen maanden uit te stellen en haar leven te ordenen. Geïnspireerd door ware gebeurtenissen.

### **Korte synopsis**

De 30-jarige Nawal is onlangs weduwe geworden en raakt verwickeld in een juridische strijd met haar bemoeizuchtige zwager Rifqi. In Jordanië heeft de schoonfamilie namelijk recht op een deel van de erfenis als een vrouw geen zoon heeft. Uit wanhoop om haar huis en haar leven met haar dochtertje te behouden, liegt ze over een zwangerschap om de rechtsprocedure uit te stellen. Geïnspireerd door ware gebeurtenissen.

### **Achtergrond**

Volgens de Jordaanse wetten, die worden geleid door de islamitische sharia-jurisprudentie, heeft de familie van de echtgenoot recht op een deel van de erfenis als een weduwe geen zoon heeft.

De film van regisseur Amjad Al Rasheed is geïnspireerd door ervaringen uit het echte leven van een naast familielid. "Zij had een huis gekocht, maar haar echtgenoot stond erop dit op zijn naam te zetten, want het is "schaamtevol" te wonen in het huis van een vrouw. Zij deed dit, ook al hadden ze drie dochters. Toen hij overleed, kwam zijn familie langs en stond haar toe in "zijn" huis te mogen blijven. Met *Inshallah a Boy* levert Al Rasheed een sociaal-realistische kritiek op de structurele onderdrukking van vrouwen en meisjes in de Jordaanse samenleving.

De rol van Nawal wordt gespeeld door de 34-jarige Israëlische actrice Mouna Hawa.

## INTERVIEW MET DE MAKER



### **Can you present *Inshallah a Boy* in a few words?**

*Inshallah a Boy* is a story about survival, empowerment, and hope. With this film, I wanted to denounce the oppression imposed by a patriarchal society, and to encourage the audience to think.

### **Where did this idea for the film come from?**

I grew up in a family that was full of women. When I was a kid, ignoring my curiosity and awareness due to my young age, women around me talked about their problems with their husbands. I witnessed how women are brought up by society and our culture to accept abusive behaviors from men who dictate their beliefs and actions. This made me understand at a young age how they dealt with an oppressive pattern and how this attitude is being normalized.

*Inshallah a Boy* is inspired by the struggle of a close relative of mine who dedicated her life to the service of her family, and lived with a man who made her gradually unrecognizable to herself. When her husband died, according to the current inheritance laws, the inheritance was supposed to be distributed amongst the deceased's closest kin because the couple only had daughters. However, the late husband's siblings waived their share to ensure that she and her daughters stayed in their own house, telling her: «*We allow you to live in your home.*» They were exceptional, but also, they were financially fine. The sentence «*We allow you*» raised many questions in my mind. What if they did not? What options would have been available to her if they had demanded a share of her house as specified by the law?

These questions fueled the film's idea, showing the lack of control many women experience over their fate and how easily their rights are transgressed.

### **How did the writing process go?**

I first did a couple of short films that participated and won awards in Arab and international film festivals. These short films helped me explore different storytelling approaches and enabled me to discover my voice and how I want to tell a story.

My writing process usually starts with the idea generated from one question; «*What if?*» What if this character is in this situation? What will happen? How will they act? Etc... This leads to more questions that help me form the idea and the story. Through storytelling, I want to question things and make the audience go through this experience of questioning, to prompt them to start a dialogue and to try to find the answers. I believe that, as human beings, we need to be inquisitive, especially at this moment in time. At first, I approached my producer, Rula Nasser, with the idea of *Inshallah a Boy*. She suggested I adopted a more realistic tone for the story, and it felt like it all clicked. We started working on the first draft together, constantly researching and capturing situations and dialogues from real life, to paint an accurate portrait of our society. Then, with the help of Delphine Agut, we

shaped the scenario into a coherent structure that served the story. It helped us to really strengthen Nawal's journey.

### **Tell us about your producers.**

I started out with Rula Nasser and Aseel Abu Ayyash from The Imaginarium Films (Jordan). Then, they were joined by Yousef Abed Alnabi from Bayt Al shawareb (also in Jordan), and by Raphaël Alexandre and Nicolas Leprêtre from Georges Films (France). Each producer had a specific role to play. Producers are meant to guide a film's ship in the right direction, and I was lucky enough to have great captains, with Rula Nasser being my lighthouse.

### **How did you choose your actors?**

I like to take my time with casting, so we organized many auditions. My producers were kind enough to give me free rein in that respect. Obviously, the choice of the actors for each character depends on their previous work, talent, the range of emotions they can generate. But most importantly, I try to understand them as human beings. I organized casual meetings with the actors, which allowed me to observe their anatomy, their reactions, their movements, etc. These observations helped me a lot to find the right blocking and framing for each character. Our discussions also allowed me get in-depth knowledge of their personal lives and to understand their points of view on different topics. We would agree or disagree, depending on the subjects. This way, I had the keys for each character, it was easier for me to communicate my expectations to the actors and to help them find the right emotions and beats at the right moment. It took me two years to have all the main characters.

### **Where and when did you shoot? What were your choices in terms of direction?**

We shot last year between February and March in Amman, Jordan. I built the narrative in three main spaces - Nawal's house, in a conservative low-income community; Lauren's house, in vibrant and wealthy West Amman; and finally, the space «in-between», the public area where Nawal is directly confronted with societal pressures in her daily journeys from one space to the other. I treated these locations as jails, to reflect women's real societal situations. And while Nawal tries to conquer these spaces, she chooses to learn how to drive a car, a small space where she feels liberated from all society's chains.

I was looking for realistic and authentic sets that reflect the true Jordanian urban life and culture, trying to keep everything the same with these sets and use elements that were already there in the location itself for dressing, except Nawal's house, which was dressed from zero. With that in mind, I decided to only show the character's necessities on

sets, to reflect their fundamental reality. This includes the food they eat, the roads they take, and the vehicles they use that are beyond repair.

I wanted to show Amman as it is, without romanticizing it, and to celebrate the immense beauty of its urban clutter.



### **Any particular difficulties on the set?**

Difficulties are part of the creative process, so I would rather call them challenges that need innovative solutions. I can't recall any specific challenges on the set of *Inshallah a Boy*; shooting with this dedicated cast and crew was enjoyable.

### **What do you expect from this selection at the Critic's Week?**

I am very enthusiastic and honored about this selection. It is the best se ing for the world premiere of *Inshallah a Boy*. It is my debut feature film and the first Jordanian film in the history of Cannes, so it is a big deal! It is a film made with love and passion by each crew and cast member, and we are all thrilled about this huge step for the Jordanian industry.

### **BIOGRAFIE**

Amjad Al Rasheed, a Jordanian director and writer born in 1985, has an MFA in Cinematic Arts with a concentration on Directing and Editing. In 2016 he was selected by «Screen International» as one of five «Arab Stars of Tomorrow» highlighting the up-and- coming young talents of the region.

He attended the Talent Campus during the 57<sup>th</sup> Berlinale, a er which he directed short films that garnered nominations and won prizes at various Arab and international film festivals

### **CAST**

Nawal	MOUNA HAWA
Rifqi	HAITHAM OMARI
Lauren	YUMNA MARWAN
Souad	SALWA NAKKARA
Ahmad	MOHAMMAD AL JIZAWI
Hassan	ESLAM AL-AWADI
Nora	SELEENA RABABAH

Direction	AMJAD AL RASHEED
Script	AMJAD AL RASHEED, RULA NASSER, DELPHINE AGUT
Image	KANAMÉ ONOYAMA (AFC)
Editing	AHMED HAFEZ
Sound	NOUR HALAWANI
Costumes	ZEINA SOUFAN
Set Design	NASSER ZOUBI
Hairstyle and Makeup	FARAH JADAANE
Music	JERRY LAN, ANDREW LANCASTER

A production: THE IMAGINARIUM FILMS (RULA NASSER, ASEEL ABU )

Coproduced by: BAYT AL SHAWAREB (YOUSEF ABED ALNABI), GEORGES FILMS (RAPHAËL ALEXANDRE & NICOLAS LEPRÊTRE)

JORDAN - FRANCE - SAUDI ARABIA - QATAR - 2023 - 1H53 - 1.85 - DCP - 5.1 - COLOR

