

THE IMAGINARIUM FILMS
BAYT AL SHAWAREB
& GEORGES FILMS
present



62° SEMAINE
DE LA CRITIQUE
CANNES 2023

INSHALLAH A BOY

by Amjad Al Rasheed



THE IMAGINARIUM FILMS, BAYT AL SHAWAREB & GEORGES FILMS
PRESENT



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COMPETITION

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▷ *INTERNATIONAL PRESS*

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Jordan, nowadays. After the sudden death of her husband, Nawal, 30s, has to fight for her part of inheritance in order to save her daughter and home in a society where having a son would be a game changer.

Interview with AMJAD AL RASHEED

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 to 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 setting 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.





Biography **AMJAD AL RASHEED**

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 57th Berlinale, after which he directed short films that garnered nominations and won prizes at various Arab and international film festivals.

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 LANE, ANDREW LANCASTER

A production THE IMAGINARIUM FILMS - RULA NASSER, ASEEL ABU AYYASH
Coproduced by BAYT AL SHAWAREB - YOUSEF ABED ALNABI
GEORGES FILMS - RAPHAËL ALEXANDRE & NICOLAS LEPRÊTRE

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