

FROM ABDUL TO LEILA





Volte Films & Dérives present



FILM CARREER

El gouna Film Festival (Egypt)	Best Asian Film (Iraq)
Thessaloniki Film Festival (Greece)	Nominated for the Alexander Prize
Tetouan Mediterranean Film Festival (Morocco)	Grand Jury Prize
Annual Aarhus Film Festival (Denmark)	Best Feature Documentary
Arab Film Festival of Rotterdam (Netherland)	Best Documentary

THIS FILM PARTICIPATED TO

Dubai Film Connection
Sarajevo Work in Progress
Medimed Barcelona

WITH THE SUPPORT OF

Die Beauftragte de Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien - BKM, Centre du cinéma et de l'audiovisuel de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg, Arab Fund for Art and Culture - AFAC, Doha Film Institute, Filmkunstering, Goethe Institute of Cairo, French Institute of Tunis, Red Sea Foundation

After an accident that caused her memory loss and having spent the past few years away from home, Leila, reconnects with her political exiled Iraqi father and tries to remember her past and origin.

[Trailer](#)



PRESS REVIEW

FILM VERDICT

Franco-Iraqi director Leila Albayaty explores her own complex cultural roots, family tensions and buried traumatic memories in this emotionally raw musical-documentary.

THESSALONIKI FILM FESTIVAL

Leila's incredible personal story becomes a wonderful documentary about memory, cultural continuity, the ancestral home and the way art functions as an arch.

WHAT WOMEN WANT

Leila confronts her father Abdul with his own past, the war in Iraq, and decides to learn Arabic to put into song the poems he has written for her. The film is directed by the incredible Leila Albayaty, a self-taught writer, director, actor and co-writer.

NEW ARAB

The Arab blood in her veins inherited from her Iraqi father Abdul seems to boil so irrepressibly there is no way she can feel a complete person until she reconciles both these cultural backgrounds in the depths of her inner self.

ARAB FILM FESTIVAL JURY

This year, the competition was fierce, with many compelling and thought-provoking entries. However, one film stood out for its profound storytelling, exceptional cinematography, and the deep, emotional journey it captured. In this film the director proves herself to be a multi-talent and a true artist. The singing, the poetry, the drawings which give the film so much power and authenticity are hers. This documentary offers a powerful narrative that transcends borders and speaks to the universal human experience. The award for Best Documentary Film goes to "From Abdul to Leila." Congratulations to Leila and the entire team behind this remarkable film with a special mention for the inventive editing!



TECHNICAL INFO

2024

Feature film - Documentary/Fiction/Musical

Colour - 92min - 16:9 / 5.1 - DCP - EN and FR subs

Country of production Germany, Belgium,
Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

With Leila Albayaty, Abdul Albayaty
Simone Albayaty, Dalia Naous

Director's assistants Zoé Nutchey, David Deboudt

Associated production Cathy de Haan

Image Jonathan Bricheux, Zoé Nutchey, Leila Albayaty

Editing Barbara Bossuet, Zoé Nutchey, Leila Albayaty

Sound Nicolas Pommier, Leila Albayaty

Sound Editing Gabor Ripli

Mixing Mikaël Barre

Colour Grading Sergi Sanchez

Original music and Drawings Leila Albayaty

Music Leila Albayaty, Amélie Legrand, Romain Rossi, Maurice
Louca, Wassim Mukdad, Hassan Al Hanafi, Baha Wadi,
Louma Albayaty, Kouz Larsen, Mohamed Bazz,
Mari-Laure Bérault

Lyrics Abdul Ilah Albayaty, Leila Albayaty

ABOUT THE FILM

It is a film about a family story. That of Leila Albayaty, Franco-Iraqi. But Iraq is a knife in the throat. She threw herself into Iraq at the age of 18, when the country was under embargo and no planes were landing. She went there, unstoppable, in a rage to discover her father's country.

But what happened there dug a deep hole, a gash. The only thing left to do was to run away. To die. To be hit by a car and since she didn't die in this accident to forget everything, to become an amnesiac.

This film begins when Leila, after a long voluntary exile abroad, after having lived everywhere and nowhere, that is, wherever she wouldn't be forced to speak French or to testify about herself, decides to make the journey again. To go back to her country — this double culture — by accessing it through the Arabic language, through the history of her father, a former member of the Baath party. Her father began to write songs in Arabic about freedom, revolution and women choosing their own destiny.

Leila takes the daring step of singing her own voice-overs. She is like a troubairitz, a contemporary troubadour or an Arab poetess who sings and composes the episodes of her story. And, to our own surprise, we are taken with her on this journey, where she gradually abandons English and French for Arabic, a language she doesn't know, where she runs and bumps into all the things no one had ever wanted to teach her or tell her.

Ultimately, through a very personal, intimate and obstinate use of cinematic language, the director proposes a way of being reborn. To be reborn to oneself, indeed, as one would expect in a film that traces a return to one's roots. But also rebirth from horror. The film is not only a quest for identity, but also a work of post-traumatic healing, through the need to reassemble the parts of oneself, to regain the ability to be alive, to leave fear behind and to reach a form of joy and power that allows one to sing «I am a free woman».

Julie Gilbert, screenwriter and playwright.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Through this work, I wish to share my journey of rediscovering my Arab origins, reconnecting with my family, and exploring my Iraqi roots. I grew up in France, and during my teenage years, my father, Abdul, was always talking to me about Iraq, the country he had to flee. A former member of the Baath Party before Saddam Hussein came to power, he opposed him and was exiled for many years before finding refuge in France at the age of 35, where he met my French mother. At the age of 18, I left alone for Iraq, but I had an accident, lost part of my memory, and became estranged from my family, friends and France. Twenty years later, I decided to make this film and learn Arabic. Through music, I bring to life the poems of my exiled father, traveling from France to Egypt via Berlin, where I communicate with Syrian refugees about their trauma and explore the scars of the Gulf War. The film was built up gradually, filmed and written over several periods, with a small team. I sincerely hope that audiences will be moved by this intimate exploration that transcends borders, linking Europe and the Middle East.

Leila Albayaty

BIOGRAPHY



Leila Albayaty is a multidisciplinary artist: director, composer, singer, scriptwriter, camerawoman, visual artist and performer. Of Iraqi origin, she is French and works in various countries, including Belgium, France, Germany and Egypt. She is self-taught, writing, directing, performing and composing music for her films.

She directed a short film **VU** (2009), which received a **special mention at the BERLINALE 2009** and was selected in festivals like Molodist, Films de femmes of Créteil, . Her first feature film, **BERLIN TELEGRAM**, was selected in thirty international festivals, Mar Del Platta, Dubaï, Indieslisboa... It received the **TV5 award for Best Francophone Film** at Geneva Tous écrans as well as **Best Cinematography** at Achtung Berlin. Her latest film, **FACE B**, a 40' docu-drama which had its World Premiere at the **BERLINALE 2015**, has been selected in several festivals. **ARSENAL** distributes **BERLIN TELEGRAM** and **FACE B** which were released in theaters.

FILMOGRAPHY



VU, 25' (2009)
Short fiction

Berlinale (Germany) Special Jury Mention
IndieLisboa (Portugal)
Molodist (Ukraine)
Palich (Serbia)

[Click here for the trailer](#)
[Press](#)

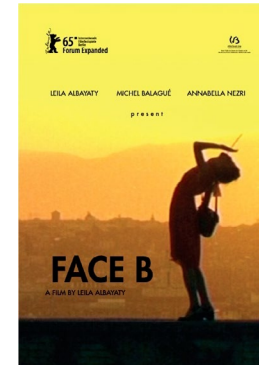


BERLIN TELEGRAM, 80' (2012)
Feature film

Festival of Dubaï in Arabic competition (Dubaï)
Opening in the Goethe Institut in Cairo (Egypt)
Gulf Film festival (Dubaï)
Arabic Film Festival in Rotterdam (Holland)
Festival de films d'auteurs de Rabat (Morocco)
World Premiere in Mons (Belgium)
Indielisbao (Portugal)
Women Films (Chainai-Inde)
Tübingen (Allemagne)
Cinémania (Quebec)
Mar del Plata (Argentina)
Festival le 7ème Continent (Paris)
Achtung Berlin (Germany)
Festival Alfilm (Berlin)
Festival de Rabat (Maroc)

Prix TV5 : Meilleur film francophone
Tous Ecrans, Genève : Prix Meilleure Cinématographie
Achtung Berlin
Distributed by Arsenal

[Click here for the trailer](#)
[Press](#)



FACE B, 40' (2015)
Medium length docudrama

Berlinale Forum expanded 2015 (Germany)
Mexico Distrital (Mexico)
Berlin Art Film Festival (Germany)
Créteil Women's Film Festival (France).

Distributed by Arsenal

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[Press](#)

TRACKLISTING

MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

Leila has always preferred singing to talking. She sings the songs written for the film, reworked in a musical performance accompanied by extracts shot during the years of research. She opened the Arab Film Festival of Rotterdam with this performance.

Lyrics : Abdul Ilah Albayaty and Leila Albayaty.

Composed and arranged by Leila Albayaty, Amélie Legrand, Kouzylarsen, Hassan Al Hanafy, Romain Rossi, Mohamed Baaz.

Additional songs by Marie Laure Bérault, Maurice Louca, Wassim Mukdad.

[Vrai Faux](#) [01.31]
Flame [02.38]
Mon père m'a appelée [02.20]
Je vais en France [01.49]
[Yallah Sahebni](#) [02.15]
18 ans [01.48]
L'écharpe [01.38]
The road to the right [01.49]
J'en ai marre de mon père [01.36]
Repeat to fade [01.55]
Amnesia [02.04]
Limatha [01.24]
Wahdi [02.36]
Oumi [01.34]
Geographia [01.55]
[Folana](#) [01.32]
Sahebni [02.22]
Folana Pizz [01.55]
Moutakhaliba [02.45]
Baha [02.46]
Ana Hura Intro [01.44]
[Ana Hura](#) [05.15]



SONG



أنا حر
دمي من بغداد
أنا قطعة من الجمرة
أسأل أجدادي
أنا ثورة
أنا أغني لبلدي
أنا أغني لبلدي

أنا حر
أنا لا أقبل سيد
أنا قطعة من الجمرة
من يبني ويبتكر
أنا ثورة
غدا سيكون جديدا

أنا حر
أنا قطعة من الجمرة
أنا ثورة
أنا ثمين

I'm free
My blood is from Baghdad
I am a piece of ember
ask my ancestors
i am a revolution
I sing for my country
I sing for my country

I'm free
I do not accept a master
I am a piece of ember
Who builds and innovates
i am a revolution
Tomorrow will be new

I'm free
I am a piece of ember
i am a revolution
i am precious

Je suis libre
Mon sang est de Baghdad
Ale suis un morceau de braise
Demande à mes ancêtres
Je suis une révolution
Je chante pour mon pays
Je chante pour mon pays

Je suis libre
Je n'accepte pas un maître
Je suis un morceau de braise
Qui construit et innove
Je suis une révolution
Demain sera nouveau

Je suis libre
Je suis un morceau de braise
Je suis une révolution
Je suis précieuse

ANA HURA JE SUIS LIBRE

Ana Hura
Dam ei Baghdadi
Ana Jamra
Is el Ajdadi
Ana Thowra
Breni Li Bledi
Breni Li Bledi

Ana Hura
Ma akhbel say id
Ana Jamra
Bibni wa bchaid
Ana Thowra
Boukra ha djdid

Ana Hura
Ana Jamra
Ana Thowra
Ana Dorra

[Click here to listen](#)

Lyrics by Abdul Albayaty

Composed by Leila Albayaty

Voice: Leila Albayaty

Piano: Hekmat AlkassarSythetisor

Bass, drums: Mohammed Bazz

Arranged and produced by Mohammed Baaz

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SONGS

VRAI FAUX

Qu'est-ce qui est vrai ? Qu'est qui est faux ?

Je ne sais pas ce qui est vrai ce qui est faux.
Quand on me raconte une histoire de mon passé
Je ne savais pas si c'était moi qui m'en rappelais

Je suis arrivée dans cette ville par hasard

J'ai toujours préféré chanter que parler

[Click here to listen](#)

Composed by Leila Albayaty

Lyrics, piano, voice, sound effects: Leila Albayaty

Recording: Leila's Studio

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What is true? What is false?

I don't know what is true and what is false.
When someone tells me a story from my past
I didn't know if it was me remembering it

I came to this town by chance

I always preferred to sing than to speak

FOLANA

Ismi folana	Mon nom est personne
KalriH Amchi	Je marche comme le vent
Ayouni Irakia	Mes yeux sont irakiens
Arabia, arabia	Arabes, arabes
Ismi folana	Mon nom est personne
LalHoussni 3'ichi	Je vis comme la tristesse
Houzni mnin Mossoul	Ma tristesse de Mossoul
Rouhi Irakia	Mon âme est irakienne
Bi Khalbin Abiaz	Avec un coeur blanc
Fi Zemenin Assouad	Dans des temps noirs
BaHthem An Malja »	A la recherche d'un refuge

My name is nobody
I walk like the wind
My eyes are Iraqi
Arabic Arabic
My name is nobody
I live like sadness
My sadness comes from Mosul
My soul is Iraqi
With a white heart
In a black time
In search of shelter

اسمي فلانة
كالريح أمشي
وعيني عراقية
عربية عربية
اسمي فلانة
كالحزن عايش
حزني من الموصل
روحي عراقية
بقلب أبيض
في زمن أسود
بحثا عن ملجأ

[Click here to listen](#)

Lyrics by Leila and Abdul Albayaty

Voice: Leila Albayaty

Produced, recorded and arranged by Hassan Alhanafy

Recording: Ripple Studio Egypt

©2022 Hassan Alhanafy



PRODUCTION COMPANIES CONTACTS

Dérives

Since 1977, Dérives develops, produces, and distributes original documentaries by French-speaking Belgian filmmakers, mainly first features and short films. The association also coordinates various kinds of aid like annual grants, project submissions and assistance with services or equipment. At a time when the standardization of documentary films is increasingly common, we favor works that examine our world, both close and distant, with attention and insistence.

Julie Freres • info@derives.be • +32 4 342 49 39 • www.derives.be

Volte Films

VOLTE Film is a young film production company founded by Michel Balagué and based in Marseille. Its goal is to produce and co-produce author films and engaged, eclectic, and non-conventional creative documentaries. VOLTE Film supports the creation of films with strong cinematic characteristics and collaborates with emerging directors. It enables talented directors to visualize unique and bold stories. In continuous exchange with our various partners - financiers, distributors, broadcasters, and co-producers - we define the best approach for each film to be made under the best conditions and to reach a wide audience in France and around the world.

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