

Press Kit

Hassala Films presents
AL NOSSOUR AL SAGHERA

Little Eagles

A film by Mohamed Rashad
77 min – Egypt/Lebanon – 16 :9 – 5.1 Dolby

Official Selection:
Documentary Competition, Dubai international Film Festival 2016

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Logline:

Anyone can hold others accountable for mistakes they have made to hurt themselves or the world at large, and blame them for their defeat or their weakness. But have we prepared ourselves for the moment when each one of us would discover his/her own failures?

Synopsis:

Mohamed, the son of a modest worker, lives in Alexandria and dreams of moving to Cairo to become a filmmaker. It becomes clear that the relationship between son and father, whom Mohamed lives alone with after the death of his mother and the marriage of his sisters, is tepid to the extent that he feels no guilt when he leaves his father all by himself and goes to Cairo. There, he gets to know Salma and Bassam, in whom he feels he finds what he lacked in himself; namely self-confidence. After learning that both were born to seventies leftist parents who opposed an unjust state regime, he begins to search his father's history in order to find something interesting to recount to them. His father's life spent in nothing but work to earn his living and raise his offspring is compared to Saïd's and Mahmoud's lives, the fathers of Salma and Bassam, respectively.

Mohamed the filmmaker is led by this comparison to some answers, but, more importantly, to new questions linking the past and to the present that he and his generation are now living.

Director's Statement:

"Police arrested the father of one of those whom I want to make a film about in the morning of the 25th of January 2011. I know that, that day, my own father did not even know that there was going to be an event. He spent his day as he normally does; went to work and

returned home. He had no idea that his son would participate. I don't blame him. I am merely comparing."

Those were the first words that I had written of the film that I wanted to make. It is true that precisely this character whose father was arrested did not eventually become part of the film after its completion. Neither she nor her father made the final cut, but this sentence was the first key to my entry into the film's world. I realised from the first moment that I could not think of the characters of my film without my father imposing himself on the whole picture. Thus, the film has never been, not for one moment, only about them but about my father in comparison with theirs. Therefore, it is about me as well.

Those whom I have mentioned that I wanted to make the film about are the pioneers of the Little Eagles Association which is an organisation that formed in the eighties of the last century. Its main office was in Cairo and those who frequented it were the children of the members of the seventies left. Naturally, the activities of this organisation aimed at instilling leftist principles in them. When these children grew up, they went through the most important experience that the Egyptians went through for decades, which is the 25th of January revolution. Due to their leftist upbringing and being the offspring of political militants, these young people were the ones mobilising and activating this great event, during which time I was taking my first step towards attempting to understand the meaning of the word "revolution". At that time, I even shied away from uttering this word. Perhaps because it was an alien and unaccustomed word, it was not in my vocabulary, while being one of the words included in theirs by their upbringing. From that moment on I became surrounded with a lot of the Little Eagle youth. I found myself holding a comparison between them and myself, between the way they had been raised and the way I had been raised, between their leftist militant parents and my unassuming worker of a father.

I kept thinking of my father who has never participated in any political event. I felt that it was his intention to always distance himself from them. My thoughts went further back in time, remembering that I have never seen my father doing anything in his entire life except work, for which he leaves early and from which he returns late, only to have dinner and go to bed.

I began to discern that the governing regime is the creation of the opposing leftist course because the injustice of this regime made them demand social justice in an uprising. This selfsame injustice created the character of my father who always has contented and still does content himself with the little that the state offers and does not perceive the injustice that befalls him, does not ask for more, and does not complain.

With this idea began the journey of the film, but like in any film that deals with reality and real characters, I started to view matters in a different light while filming. I began to realise what had eluded me at the start of the journey, which is the element of choice; that each one involved chose the trajectory of his life and no one should hold the other accountable for his/her choices. You only have to choose for yourself.

Context:

Sixties and seventies leftist movements

The leftist movement in Egypt was reactivated in the sixties after the June 1967 defeat when Egyptians discovered that the dreams that Abdelnasser had given precedence to were nothing but a grand illusion. University students and factory workers protested, demanding a genuine democracy and participation of the public in governing the nation. Hence, the beginning of a new leftist movement among the Egyptians took shape. In 1968, to be precise, Abdelnasser's regime confronted demonstrations led by students and workers at that time.

After the death of Abdelnasser, Mohamed Anwar El-Sadat came to power. There was a public appeal for him to declare war on Israel to gain back the land and retrieve our dignity and dreams. In 1971 and 1972, the students' movement that had formed in the universities since 1968 accompanied by a large number of the public, most of all the workers, went out to demand the declaration of war.

Even after the war ended, the leftist movement continued to oppose El-Sadat's policies that tended to follow and be subordinate to the United States, imposing a more capitalist approach that substituted the socialist system, the public sector neglected in favour of the private one, until the culmination of their struggle with El Sadat, which came in 1977 with the reconciliation with Israel that the left deemed the biggest treachery in the Arab world. That is also when the leftist movement was able to mobilise the Egyptian public as a whole in an uprising against the rise in prices at that time. This uprising was called "the bread uprising".

El-Sadat fought, arrested the left, and detained them in his prisons. He opened the doors for Islamic movements that tried to replace the left in universities and among the public. Indeed, it succeeded in so doing. When El-Sadat died in 1981 and Hosny Mubarak came to power, the left was much weaker than ever before that it did not require much effort to set it aside in the political arena. By the eighties and early nineties, the seventies left had turned into an isolated and disappointed generation. Each began to look for individual solutions in his own life. In this climate, their offspring who had come into the world grew up after the disappointment and defeat of the parents.

The Little Eagles Association

This is an association established by Ali Badrakhan in the mid-eighties of the last century and it was a branch of the main headquarters in Sweden managed by a socialist party.

Because Badrakhan was in contact with the sixties and seventies left, the association was full of their offspring, who were still children in the mid-eighties. The idea behind the association was for the children to interact, whether girls or boys, to engage in activities, to read books, and to camp, through which they would learn the meaning of liberty. They were encouraged to hold seminars themselves to discuss the problems of children throughout the world and the concept of freedom that should be realised. Accordingly, the values of freedom and social justice, which are originally the principles of the left, would become ingrained in them. Hence, these children came out of this experience leftist youth.

Consequently, the children who joined the Little Eagles grew up amid many contradictions. Their parents witnessed their own disappointment and defeat and gave up the life of politics but could not relinquish all their social and political principles, transferring them to their offspring in raising them at home or through the Little Eagles association. Thus, these children grew up with disparate feelings, those of appreciation for their parents' history of militancy and dearly wishing to fit in in the life of politics on the one hand, and those of constant blame of the parents for having failed and fear of repeating or experiencing the same failure on the other.

Biographies :

Mohamed Rashad

Mohamed Rashad is a director and cofounder at Hassala Films, he was born in Egypt and studied cinema at a workshop organized by the Jesuit Cultural Center and SIMAT Foundation. He worked as an assistant director on many independent films. Wrote and Directed two short films, "From Afar "and" Maxim".

In 2016 he finished his first feature documentary "Little Eagles "as a director, and for the first time to work as a as a producer, his feature documentary "The craft", directed by Ramez Youssef is in its post production stage.

Now he is working on the development of his first feature fiction.

Hala Lotfy

Hala Lotfy is a director, producer, and the founder of Hassala Films collective. She studied filmmaking at the Cairo Film Institute and graduated with honors in 1999. Her documentary *Feeling Cold* (2005) received a number of awards to include: Special Jury Prize at the National Film Festival in Egypt, the best composition in Biong Yang IFF and the Golden Hawke at the Rotterdam Arab Film Festival. She directed seven documentaries in the TV series "*Arabs of Latin America*" (2006) for Al Jazeera documentary channel. In 2011 she was chosen by the star actress Charlotte Rampling to receive the Katrin Cartlidge Foundation Award, given to new cinematic voice reflecting integrity of spirit in independent film. Her feature length debut "*Coming Forth by Day*" was premiered in Abu Dhabi Film Festival 2012, its European premiere was in the FORUM- Berlinale 2013, won many awards including the FIPRESCI, and Best Director from the Arab World at the, and was screened in more than 50 film festivals around the world. The film joined the "Greatest 100 Arab Films" list made by Dubai IFF after less than one year of its production.

Hassala

Hassala Films is an independent production house that was formed by a group of independent artists who share the same ideas about working in low budget forms. Hassala Films produces first feature films (fiction and documentary) for talented young filmmakers who seek for a challenge in what they want to say and take the maximum risk regarding their artistic tools. In the Egyptian mainstream film market, you need to work for ten years as an assistant director before anyone can recognize you as a director. It gives no choices but to be a follower, to make a commercial product rather than a personal piece of work. Hassala works to save the time wasted and stereotyping young talents from the repeated images and ideas during the time they spend in polishing commercials that have no impact on society and care for nothing but profit.

For three years we were working on the feature fiction *Coming Forth by Day*, directed and produced by Hala Lotfy which many international awards such as FIPRESCI prize and Best Director from the Arab World in ADFF 2012 and was screened in Berlinale FORUM. We used a low budget and we depended on alternative ways of production.

We set up Hassala Films to support young artists achieve their dream projects by offering them free information, cameras, edit suits and efficient independent crew members who can work in deferment. Now Hassala is involved in the production of 10 first feature documentaries. Yet these projects are owned by their teams and not by Hassala.

In October 2011, Hassala received a fund from Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafy that was set up for supporting emerging cultural institutions in the Arab world. In June 2012 Hassala became a member of the Euromed Distributers Network and participated in the Euromed Audiovisual Program III. Since 2013, it is also partner in the newly established Arab Film Market.

CONTACT

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Crew:

Written and directed by: Mohamed Rashad

Produced by: Hala Lotfy

Director of photofraohy: Mohamed Elhadidi

Cinematographers: Ayman Elnokaly - Mohamed Rashad

Editor: Simon Elhabre

Sound design: Sara Kaddouri

Final sound mix: Dmitriy Makhonin & Sara Kaddouri

Music: Tony Overwater

Sound recordist: Ahmed Rashdan - Sara Kaddouri - Abdelrahman Mahmoud