

وجهة نظر POINT OF VIEW

Carving Out a Place for Ourselves

When Dox Box International Documentary Film Festival was launched in 2008, few people thought it could make it to its third edition in 2010. But here we are! Receiving over 600 film entries from 58 countries, 43 films made it to this year's official program. With 4 international premiers (Shout, Once Upon a Time, Absence of Ms. and Mrs. B and Women's talk), 14 Asian premiers and 19 films screened for the first time in the Arab world, Dox Box has indeed carved out a place for itself in the international documentary film scene. What makes this edition all the more unique is launching "DOX BOX - SOURA", the first award for Syrian documentaries based on an international jury's votes and valued at SYP 100,000 (USD 2200) in addition to our usual DOX BOX Audience Award based on audience's votes for films in the Official Selection valued at 150,000 SYP (3250 USD). DOX BOX 2010 also has three non-competitive side bars "Men and Women", "Working Class Goes to Heaven" and the "Best of Fest" and an intensive program of professional activities including TABADOL, Campus and TAKWEEN.

In Point of View, you will get a glimpse into the festival's professional activities and side bars, read reviews of the films on show, find out more about its directors and the festival's professional guests and get to know the audience's view on the films. In short, everything you need to know about DOX BOX. We hope you will enjoy attending the festival's programs and reading Point of View as much as we enjoyed making it.

Nadia Muhanna
Editor
Point of View

Dox Box in the Press

Clips from the Arab and International press that followed DOX BOX's development during the last three years



For The Very First Time... "Culturally"

Yesterday, and for the very first time, the public said its word... DOX BOX festival closed with no juries, no official government representatives, no speeches and no tribunes... Simplicity and a no-posing attitude characterized the opening and the closing of the event, the same simplicity lead the audience to vote for the films.

Reuters - Feb 22nd, 2008

DOX BOX in Damascus... A high-Class Selection

With its high-standard film selection process and organization and its determination to run annually, DOX BOX has reached a standard that is hard to find in any other Syrian cultural event.

Assafir Newspaper on 14th March 2009

by Rachid Issa

DOX BOX is not only a film festival it is also an event that encompasses the areas of work of independent authors and institutions from the Arabic countries and around the world. The screenings of documentaries in Damascus, debates, meetings with authors and diverse publications testify the developing structure of the young festival.

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3RD MARCH آذار



AKRINE | سورية القديس
AHAMMA | صنع العاصرية

17:00 - 18:00	SHOUT / انسوح	The Netherlands / هولندا	14 m
19:00 - 20:30	ANTOINE / أنطوان	Canada / كندا	82 m
18:30 - 20:00	THE WAR ROOM / غرفة الحرب	USA / الولايات المتحدة	97 m

4TH MARCH آذار



AKRINE | سورية القديس
AHAMMA | صنع العاصرية

16:00 - 18:00	SIX WEEKS / ستة أسابيع	Poland / بولندا	18 m
	THE MOTHER / الأم	Poland / بولندا	11 m
	A WOMAN SOUGHT / مطلوبة امرأة	Poland / بولندا	13 m
	TILL IT HURTS / حتى الوجع	Poland / بولندا	25 m
	WOMEN TALK / كلام حريم	Syria / سورية	23 m
18:15 - 19:30	THE LUCKY ONES / الحظوظون	Poland / بولندا	28 m
	VIDEO MAPPINGS: AIDA, PALESTINE / خرائط فيديو: عايدة فلسطين	France / فرنسا	68 m
19:45 - 21:15	ONCE UPON THIS TIME / كان يا ما كان في هذا الزمان	Tunisia / تونس	85 m
16:30 - 18:00	DON'T LOOK BACK / لا تنظر خلفك	USA / الولايات المتحدة	95 m
18:30 - 19:45	THE POWER OF SPEECH / قوة الكلام	China / الصين	75 m
20:00 - 21:45	THE BATTLE OF CHILK - 1 / معركة تشيلي 1	China / الصين	100 m

5TH MARCH آذار



AKRINE | سورية القديس
AHAMMA | صنع العاصرية

16:00 - 17:30	PINK TAXI / التاكسي الوردي	Germany / ألمانيا	80 m
18:00 - 19:15	NEW SKIN / بشرية جديدة	France / فرنسا	13 m
	MEN OF THE CITY / رجال المدينة	UK / المملكة المتحدة	99 m
19:30 - 21:00	GOLDEN POMEGRANATE SEEDS / فرط رمان الذهب	Pakistan / باكستان	25 m
	BLACK STONE / حجر أسود	Syria / سورية	63 m
16:30 - 18:00	STARTUP.COM / إبدأ موت كوم	USA / الولايات المتحدة	100 m
18:30 - 19:45	# FOG HAD ROOTS / لو كان للضباب جذور	Syria / سورية	52 m
20:00 - 21:30	THE BATTLE OF CHILK - 2 / معركة تشيلي 2	China / الصين	90 m

Finding Alternative Solutions

Lack of funding, limited number of production and distribution companies and study opportunities and on top of all unpredictable censorship criteria; five of the major problems facing filmmakers in Arab countries. DOXBOX sets out this year to find alternative solutions by launching TABADOL, CAMPUS and TAKWEEN, three programs designed to create new opportunities for film professionals in the region.

TABADOL

Driven by the isolation of the Arab film market from the international one, DOXBOX created TABADOL, a professional networking platform to develop links between the regional and Arab professionals and the international film industry players. TABADOL is a room for exchanging ideas and experiences and cooperation between established producers, filmmakers, distributors, festival representatives and TV commissioning editors from all over the world.

CAMPUS

With the lack of educational institutes specialized in cinema in the Arab world, learning the craft is no easy task. Therefore, DOXBOX launched DOX BOX Campus, a series of workshops and training sessions by thirteen international mentors and tutors from UK, Denmark, Germany, France, the US and Syria among others. Throughout the Campus twenty eight cinema professionals from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia and Syria will take part in three different disciplines: Writing the Documentary Workshop: for filmmakers with projects in development and previous work experience.

Filmmakers Program: includes training sessions, master-classes and lectures for filmmakers with some experience and also participants of the Workshop.

Producers Program: includes training sessions and lectures for producers with some experience. While the Campus does not offer any technical training, it focuses on the creative and professional aspects of filmmaking. Furthermore, it offers a range of master-classes and access to some of TABADOL's activities including



professional networking activities. The Campus, which runs daily 3rd till 7th of March from 9 am till 3 pm, concludes on the 8th in "New Projects" with presentations of a small group of projects developed in the "Writing the Documentary Workshop".

TAKWEEN

While also educational, TAKWEEN is aimed at young people from the Arab countries with low to no pre-experience in documentary. By introducing the different sides of documentary film making including producing, filmmaking, cinematography, and editing, TAKWEEN is designed to help young people decide whether they want to pursue a career in filmmaking, and more, to make sure what film profession is best for them.

TAKWEEN participants will be invited to attend some of the general and specialized training sessions in the Campus program and will access a number of professional activities within TABADOL program to form a realistic vision of documentary-making, including networking with regional and international professionals by attending a number of social and networking activities.

Q&A with Sabine Lubbe Bakker and Ester Gould, the directors of Shout

The sacks of labneh, olives, salt and sugar that the anxious mother is piling in her child's suitcase are growing at an astonishing rate. "He's travelling to Damascus!" explains the Golani mother with a weary smile; although only a few kilometers away, studying in Damascus is a life time journey for Syrians living in the Israeli occupied Golan.



"Shout" follows two young Golanis as they cross the shouting hill that separates the Golan from Syria for the first time; the hill which got its name from the Golani families that visit it to catch a glimpse of their relatives in Syria and shout to each other their news.

POV sat down with Dutch directors Sabine Lubbe Bakker and Ester Gould to find out more about the film.

1- Why did you choose the Golan as the topic of your first film?

When I first heard stories about the Golan and the Shouting Hill, I was very intrigued. I started doing research and met a lot of young, enthusiastic students living in Damascus: extremely nice people, but it

makes not only the crew, but also the characters live up to the moment. The good thing about video is that more people have the opportunity to make the film they dream of making, the downside is that you tend to stop being critical and think you will work things out in the editing room. A good filmmaker knows very well what he or she wants and shooting on film forced us to make decisions.

As for staging scenes, it's a myth that while making a documentary, everything just happens in front of your eyes, by chance. Every filmmaker organizes scenes to some extent and so did we; in that sense using video would have made no difference. However, every single idea for a scene came from reality, from what we'd seen or heard during research or shooting. For example, we'd heard that Ezat had to scratch all Hebrew labels off his shampoo bottles and decided that that was an interesting way to start a packing scene with him. In that sense, we would have shot on video in the same way. Perhaps the pressure was indeed greater during interviews: we had to make sure we got to the point quickly because there's no time to beat around the bush.

4. Did you face any difficulties in making your film?

Of course, the list is endless! It was a very long process, and many problems rose: technical problems, a lack of funding despite the fact that the situation for documentary filmmakers in Holland is paradise, time pressure... We couldn't be in Damascus all year long, so perhaps the hardest thing was capturing what was happening in our main character's lives during the short periods that we were there. For example: when Ezat and Bayan only just arrived in Damascus, we spent 48 hours desperately seeking them.



Time was passing and where on earth were they? The second time we arrived, Ezat's grandfather had died. It was clear that this was an important moment in both Ezat and Bayan's life, as they had only just found a flat together and now things had changed. It was a difficult thing to puzzle out how to explain what had happened, when some key moments had already taken place. It was also crucial that we were so lucky to be able to work with a production team from Syria - without them we could never have made the film in the same way. And, despite the fact that we love them dearly and are grateful for the way they welcomed us in their lives, it was also sometimes difficult to work with our characters, as they weren't



was obvious they were different from most of the Syrians I had encountered. These young Golanis have difficult choices to make and in Damascus they are once again confronted with their strange reality. Having just turned eighteen, they choose to study in their homeland, but it has great consequences: they have to leave their loved ones behind. And this happens again when they finally have to leave after graduation. Yet, the Golanis remain optimistic, and interested in the world around them. Most stories we see and hear in Europe about the Middle East tend to be very sad, portraying battered victims and evil enemies. This results in the region seeming incomprehensible for the European public in large, who are tired of the conflict and have begun to turn their heads away from what they consider to be a hopeless situation. In our documentary, we wanted to tell a different story, one that is more recognizable for people all over the world. Young people from the Golan are just as ambitious and full of dreams as young people all over the world. In a sense they are victims, but our main characters have a lust for life, even though they must live with the daily consequences of the political power play.

2. There was an intimacy between you and the films main characters, how did you achieve this?

That's a difficult question to answer: how does one explain social contact? We had to find some kind of balance between friendship - fooling around, having some fun - and a working relationship. In the end all we did was simply try to be honest and open, sometimes explaining why a scene was important for us. We showed them who we are and so did they. Ezat and Bayan are natural talents: open to the idea of being filmed and remarkably relaxed with the crew, but they weren't craving for media attention. That tends to be a good combination.

3. You used a film camera in shooting your film which limits your filming time because it's much more expensive than video cameras. To what extent did that force you to have staged scenes in the film? And how many rushes did you shoot?

In total we shot 99 rolls of 16 mm film. That's about 990 minutes of rushes, so more than 16 hours in total.

Shooting on film demands a different way of working than with video. For sure, it has disadvantages - you might miss that one precious moment - but the advantages were greater. You have to be extremely focused when you're shooting, very aware of what you want to get from every scene. It forced us to think about every shot, and although that took days, weeks, months of talking (being two co-directors who had to agree on everything) it protects you from simply filming everything and ending up with almost nothing. The adrenaline rush of a 10-minute film roll rolling through the camera



always so keen on our presence. We spent hours convincing them to let us shoot certain scenes.

On the other hand, funny things happen, like for instance the scene shot on the water basin. It is very high, almost 10 meters. Sabine can be fearless in many ways but also very scared of heights. It was one of the first scenes and she wanted to keep her cool towards the main characters. But when we had to climb up these narrow stairs, and crawl on top of the basin, it wasn't cool at all.

5. "Shout" will be premiered in Syria, how do you think it will be received here?

We are very excited that our one and only premiere is in Damascus, it's an honour for us and the best place to show the film for the first time! We hope people will like it... We think it's interesting to show it here because some subtle details in the film might not be picked up by a Dutch audience but will be understood here. The Syrian public is aware - at least to some extent - of the situation in the Golan and it's sad to say, but a lot of Dutch people have no clue and don't even know where it is. So for sure it will be a different screening experience. Above all, we hope to get some attention for the ironic situation of Golani students living in Damascus, for a short but crucial period in their lives. On one hand, they are offered a "lifetime opportunity" but for various reasons, it's not a happy-go-lucky adventure at all.

6. Where else will "Shout" be screened?

On the 28th of March, the Dutch premiere will take place at the Movies That Matter Festival in the Hague. Later on, the film will be shown on Dutch television and the Arab satellite channel MBC has shown interest in the film. We are applying for festivals around the world and hoping to travel a lot with the film.

By Nadia Muhanna

The War Room by D A Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus

Curious to know how a man gets into the white house? Then "The War Room" is just the film for you. Set during the United States' 1992 presidential elections, American directors D A Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus follow Democrat Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton's campaigners' daily battles with the press, TV channels and most importantly, Clinton's opponents: Incumbent Republican President George H. W. Bush and independent Texas businessman Ross Perot.

You can witness the campaigners' meetings, strategies and explode with the political tension they experienced. By using the "fly on the wall" method, the director's camera posits itself in an interesting angle within this politically loaded event. Even though the film crew chose to document the Clinton Campaign's side of this election, the camera does not take sides within the process of filming nor interferes as a third party. In fact, "The War Room" is not about Clinton as much as it's about the people responsible of putting him into office.

At any rate, the film is definitely a priceless archive of one of the turning points in America's history, if not the world's as well. It adds



images to abstract news headlines on the one hand, and demonstrates the dynamics of power relations that affects the world set in one room. No wonder then that Hegedus described the making of "The War Room" as "filming history".

By Razan Ghazzawi

DOX BOX News

- Netherlands' Ester Gould and Sabine Lubbe Baker's Opening film "Shout" kicks off DOX BOX's third edition.
- 5 directors will give a Q&A session following their films screenings today: Netherlands' Ester Gould and Sabine Lubbe Baker (Shout), Canadian-Argentinean director Laura Bari (Antoine) and America's D. A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus (The War Room).
- The Campus starts its activities with a session and workshop by Danish film consultant Tue Steen Muller and Peter Abdel about Doc genre and another session about New Doc projects by German documentarists Mikael Opstrup and Joan Morselt.