

عليّ معزة وإبراهيم

ALI, THE GOAT AND IBRAHIM

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ALI, THE GOAT AND IBRAHIM
BY DIRECTOR **SHERIF ELBENDARY**

WORLD PREMIERE AT
THE DUBAI INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
(DIFF) 2016

WHERE MAGIC AND REALITY MERGE IN THE
HEART OF ONE OF EGYPT'S POOR SUBURBS

Short Synopsis

This is the strange love story of a young man, Ali, living in a rough neighborhood. He travels across Egypt on the recommendation of a psychic along with, Ibrahim notoriously known for hearing voices in his head, which drive him mad. Their journey turns into a voyage of friendship and self-discovery.





Long Synopsis

Ali, a young man living in a poor Cairo neighborhood, is in love with a goat called Nada, whom he believes to be his fiancée. Only Ali's friend Kamata, a bus driver, supports him, while his mother, Nousa, tries her best to separate him from Nada, either by resorting to psychiatrists or voodoo experts and black magic masters. She refuses to believe that a human can possibly fall in love with an animal.

Meanwhile, Ibrahim lives with his grandfather, a deaf oud player. He works in sound recording and suffers from hearing strange voices inside his head. His mother suffered from the same disease, leading her to commit suicide. Consequently, his grandfather inflicted harm upon himself by bursting his eardrums. Despite his musical talent and his outstanding work, his life falls to ruins as he fails to record the voices he hears in his mind, to prove that he's not



crazy, ultimately costing him his job at the studio. However, his relationship with his grandfather is strong as they feel each other's pain and suffering. Ali and Ibrahim cross paths when they both visit a voodoo expert. Ali's mother forced him to go to figure out a solution for his problem, while Ibrahim has gone in a desperate attempt to end the voices that are the cause of his sufferings. After a quick session, they are both told that someone had put a spell on them and they are each given a bag with three stones. They are told that they have to throw each stone in one of the three bodies of water in Egypt; the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the Nile. Desperate for any solution, they embark on a long journey along with the goat, starting from

Alexandria, their meeting point. They become better acquainted with each other's lives and sufferings and explore the secret of the goat and the strange voices.

Kamata encourages his friend to travel in order to escape the threat of the thugs who attempted to rape a prostitute, Sabah, before she was rescued by Ibrahim and Kamata. The thugs had begun roaming the neighborhood looking for revenge. Kamata falls for Sabah and reveals that he wants to marry her despite her past, but on the condition that she stops working as a prostitute. Meanwhile, on the road, the relationship between Ali and Ibrahim strengthens as well, especially after they go through several accidents that reveal their



hidden secrets. Ibrahim slowly begins to accept that Nada embodies the soul of an actual person and not simply a goat.

A turn of events takes place while they are in Sinai. Ibrahim tries to commit suicide as he feels powerless against the voices that have eliminated any hope of him living a normal life. He leaves a farewell note to Ali. He fails at committing suicide, and later they get news of his grandfather's passing. Ali, Ibrahim, and Nada return to their neighborhood for the funeral. As Ali walks around the neighborhood with Nada, he is confronted by the thugs who were looking for him and Kamata. They threaten him that they will kill Nada unless he

pays them a large sum of money, which he doesn't have. Ali asks for Ibrahim's help, who finds a way to use the mysterious voices to drive the thugs away and save Ali and Nada. Amid the chaos, Nada mysteriously disappears as Ali loses consciousness. Simultaneously, everyone connected with Ali has the same dream where Nada appears and reveals her secret. The inhabitants of the neighborhood unite to search for her after they had rejected Nada and Ali's love. Posters with photos of Nada are hung everywhere. The film ends with Ali and Ibrahim throwing the last of the three stones in the Nile.

A Film Depicting Strange Tales

The journey undergone by director SherifElbendary to create his first feature was long and arduous, until it finally became a reality depicted on the big screen. Producer Mohamed Hefzy points out that the film has a long history; as it was written by Ibrahim El Batout and Ahmed Amer- who was also slated to direct the film back then- and they collaborated with producer HossamElwan. A year later, Hefzy was offered to co-produce the film with Elwan, which he pleasantly accepted after reading the screenplay. In the end, the director's position went to Sherif El Ebendary who was excited to take on the project and collaborate with HossamElwan five years after they first met. Sherif says that his experience making his debut feature film was much more challenging than working on a short film, in terms of setting the tone, keeping the audience engaged for the longest period of time possible, maintaining character development and climax of the





story, as well as keeping everything fresh and surprising. On the other hand, the challenge presented in the film was the fact that the goat was present in 70 out of 100 scenes. It is a well-known fact that animals are difficult to handle for filming purposes. Another challenge was that the film included many difficult locations, underwater, mountain tops, cars in Cairo, Sinai, and Alexandria.

The screenplay was rewritten 17 times, according to director SherifElbendary, who explained his decision by saying, "I believe in the idea of the author's cinema, or the director contributing to the writing process, or at least expressing himself in some way through the writing, if the screenplay was not already written by him, because in the end it's his project. I don't believe that I'm one of those directors who accept the job of directing a screenplay as it is, but I have to give my own impression of it, so that I can be enthusiastic to work on it."



Admiring the idea behind the film was the main element that characterized most of those who worked on the film project, according to DOP Amr Farouk, who said that when he read the screenplay, all the aesthetics of the film became clear to him, especially the numerous landscapes featured in the film. He also enjoyed working on the film because it depended a lot on nature and so he relied on natural lighting either in the interior or exterior scenes. The biggest challenge he faced as a DOP on this film was maintaining the harmony between image and lighting and the scenes that rely on industrial lighting to give the impression that it is natural daylight.

As for Stylist Reem El Adl, she was keen on merging reality with fantasy in the film by drawing out realistic characters like Sabah. She commented, "The thing I love most about my job is the realistic aspect. When I drew the character of Sabah, I was interested in portraying her as a realistic character and not the stereotypical character that is frequently portrayed in the movies wearing a lot of bracelets or the Nancy Ajram's well-known galabeyya. Even Ali and Ibrahim's characters dress similarly to young people from poor neighborhoods in Egypt and not simply a T-shirt with an open shirt on top like in the movies. I paid close attention to each character's details." She also stressed her faith in

director SherifElbendary, since it was his excellent work that encouraged her to agree to take part in a project with such a quirky idea.

The film has a medium budget and is produced by companies and organizations from five different countries: Egypt, Qatar, France, UAE, and Germany. It was difficult for the film to obtain funding due to its unfamiliar plot. According to producer Mohamed Hefzy, the project was considered a risk, despite being a commercial film. However, the film's success in festivals gave its director and crew the confidence that they are heading in the right direction. Thanks to its unique plot, great screenplay, and enthusiastic crew, the film won three awards at the Final Cut in Venice workshop, which was held as part of the 2015 Venice Film Festival. The film also won a 10,000 euro grant provided by the Centre National du Cinéma et de l'ImageAnimée (CNC) in Paris to be spent during the post-production stage in



France, another 10,000 euros provided by Knight Works (France) for visual effects, and the same amount of money from Titra TVS in Paris for color correction, DCP, as well as the English and French translations. The film was also selected from among 13 international films, for a grant to complete its final stages provided by the Aide aux Cinémas du Monde 2015 (Aid to the World Cinema Fund), which was established by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the French Institute (Institute Français) to help filmmakers from around the world produce the final stages of their films.

SANAD Fund also provided the film with post-production aid, in addition to grants from the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) (2009), the Doha Film Institute (2013) which selected the film from among 211 submitted projects, the Dubai Film Market Forum, and Enjaaz Film Fund, as the festival will also host the film's world premiere on December 1st, 2016.

Filming lasted for five weeks, half of which were in Cairo, and the other half in Sinai and Alexandria. However, those five weeks were not consecutive,



since shooting began in March, but had to be cut short due to the actors' obligations with Ramadan serials, which forced them to delay filming until after Eid El Fitr.

Most of the cast consists of young actors, since the film industry has been focused on them as of late and because it is quite natural for a young director to want to work with young people like himself.

The Three Magic Stones

Ali and Ibrahim's Stone

This is the cornerstone of the entire plot, which presents the epic suffering of Ali and Ibrahim, through a magical tale where reality and fantasy intermingle as they embark on a journey to throw the three stones in Egypt's three bodies of water.





Ali is a young man who goes into shock after losing the girl he loves. He begins to recover when he finds a goat and announces that it is his girlfriend Nada, treating it like a normal person. His mother and the inhabitants of the neighborhood find it hard to deal with his craziness, and the young children start calling him Ali the Goat as he is continually seen walking around with the goat, buying it gifts. On the other hand, his mother tries to end his madness but he refuses to budge, relying on the support of his friend Kamata. He insists that he is not crazy, but he believes that his girlfriend's soul has been reincarnated into the

goat, and he will accept it in all its forms as long as it remains with him. Actor Ahmed Magdy portrays the character of Ibrahim, who suffers from hearing voices inside his head, was excited to play the part because he admired the idea and also liked director SherifElbendary's previous work that he wished to collaborate with him. Magdy believes that the film exists outside of the realm of time, so he was keen on acquainting himself with Elbendary's vision of how to approach the character and whether Ibrahim is a romantic or a rough person, as well as other aspects of his character.



About Ali Sobhy

He began acting at a young age and won the first prize for acting at several school plays. Later on, he established the Hala Group for street theater and trained in the art of mime and street theater skills, contemporary dance, acrobats, and improvisation. He began acting in the classical field and won several awards. In 2010, along with a group of artists, he established the first modern acrobat circus group in Egypt named Oota Hamra. Currently, he works as a professional actor and has taken part in AkherAyam Al Madina, which won the Caligari Award at 2016 Berlinale.

About Ahmed Magdy

A talented young actor who attended the El Nahda Jesuit- Cairo Film School. He took part in many films and TV series, including the award-winning film The Gate of Departure (2015) and several TV series, such as Al Dae'ya, Tareeki, and Al Ahd. Recently, he took part in Mawlana, one of the biggest Egyptian film productions in 2016, which is adapted from the best-selling novel by journalist Ibrahim Eissa, which was shortlisted for the Arabic Booker (International Prize for Arabic fiction-IPAF).

Nousa and Nada's Stone

Perhaps the most surprising character was Nousa, because she is not completely fictional. According to Salwa Mohamed Aly, she is partly realistic and she revealed that director SherifElbendary knows someone just like Nousa in real life and has a photo of her. He also asked her to imitate the character, which is even more difficult, especially considering Salwa was required to work within the framework of the director's vision; which meant she had to repeat several scenes because her portrayal was different from Sherif's vision. What is funny is that Salwa had a goat named after her as a child, so it was easy for her to handle Nada, which she considered smart and talented despite the difficulties that the production team had with the goat.

All of the film's cast and crew agree that Nada's scenes were the toughest to film. The fact that the main character in the film is a goat gave the shooting process a different outline specified by director SherifElbendary, with a certain form and unique colors. Director SherifElbendary says, "The most difficult casting choice was Nada, as it



lasted for 4 – 3 months while we saw over two thousand goats from all over Egypt, before selecting a goat from Kafr El Sheikh.” That was the goat fulfilled the necessary requirements: being agreeable and lovable, unique looks with no horns, young (almost three months old) so it can be carried around, and most importantly to be easy to find a replacement throughout the filming process which might take too long, but this contradicts its uniqueness, which made it a difficult casting choice.

About Salwa Mohamed Aly

Salwa Mohamed Aly is an actress who's well-known for playing the role of the aunt. She is a familiar face among film and TV audiences. She was cast in numerous movies and TV series, most notably; Factory Girl, Asham, Zat, and Women's Prison.





Kamata and Sabah's Stone

Kamata is a bus driver and he is the loyal and supportive friend of Ali the Goat. He disregards the idea that Ali is crazy for loving a goat and always supports him in difficult situations. Actor Osama Abu El Ata describes Kamata's relationship with Ali as a father-son relationship, and not simply a friendship. Ali represents a special human condition and Kamata is very understanding of that condition, so he acts as Ali's protector in an environment that does not accept his relationship with Nada. He supports Ali despite the fact that no one seems to understand him, because Kamata is a very laid-back and understanding person; a fact

which also helps him get over Sabah's past and not judge her for it.

Despite playing a minor character (Sabah the prostitute), Noor plays a very important role in the film's plot, especially since she portrays a condition that is generally hard to accept by someone who is a bus driver, due to her past. However, Kamata is involved in the fantastical elements of the story and so he falls in love with Sabah. Therefore, he accepts her past and a relationship develops between them where he treats her as someone without a disreputable past. He accepts her the same way he accepts his friend's love for Nada.



About Osama Abo El Atta

Osama Abu El Ata worked as an assistant director and actor with several directors, such as Osama Fawzi, AmrArafa, WaelEhsan, Maged El Hawary, and Nadine Khan. He was also cast in GaalatnyMogreman, Bon Soiree, El-sefara fi El-Omara, and Family Secrets, in addition to the TV series Zat. He also directed the program AlbakAbyad.

About Nahed El Sebaei

A young actress from a distinguished family in the film industry. She is the granddaughter of the late superstar FaridShawqi and the late outstanding actress Huda

Sultan, and the daughter of director Medhat El Sebaei and producer NahedFaridShawqi.

She took part in many films, including Men NazretEin (2004), Basra (2008), EhkyyaShahrazad (2009) with director YousriNasrallah, and Cairo 2010) 678) opposite Nelly Karim and Bushra, which earned her the Jury Award and the Best Actress Award nomination at the Asia-Pacific Film Festival in Australia. She also starred in 18 Days (2011) and guest starred in X-Large (2011) opposite Ahmed Helmy. Later on YousriNasrallah selected her to participate in After the Battle (2012) which was screened at the Cannes Film festival where it also competed for the Golden Palm award.

About Sherif El bendary

Born in Cairo in 1978, SherifElbendary graduated from Faculty of Applied Arts in 2011. He worked as a textile engineer, before he studied film-directing at the Egyptian Higher Institute of Cinema (HCI) in 2002. He graduated in 2007, and was appointed as a lecturer in the Film-directing department in 2008. Elbendary made his breakthrough into filmmaking through a number of short films and documentaries; most notably his first short film in 2006, *Sabah El Fol* (Rise and Shine), starring HendSabry and produced by the National Center for Cinema, which won several awards and was officially selected in numerous local and international film festivals. Sherif Elbendary's second short film *At Day's End* (2008) was inspired by salient writer Ibrahim Aslan's novella, which was also his graduation project, featuring the well-known Art Director Salah Marie. In 2011, Sherif Elbendary directed his documentary film *FilTarik Le West El Balad*, along with his short film *Curfew*, a chapter that was part of the collective feature *18 Days*, which was an official selection at



Cannes Film Festival 2011.

In 2014, Elbendary won The Film Prize of the Robert Bosch Stiftung at Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale) to aid his short film Dry, Hot Summers, which was achieved in 2015 and was screened at several International and local film festivals. He directed his first feature film Ali, the Goat and Ibrahim in 2015, which is jointly produced by Arab world and European countries. Two Rooms and a Living Room is Sherif Elbendary's next awaited project, a short film based on the story under the same name by the recently passed away great writer Ibrahim Aslan. For his extraordinary efforts, he was selected to be a jury member at numerous local and international film festivals namely, the Beirut International Film Festival for Students competition in 2012, Casablanca International Student Film Festival in 2013 and Ismailia International Festival for Documentary and Short Films in 2013, besides he is a member of the Supreme Council of Culture under the Egyptian Ministry of Culture.



About Mohamed Hefzy

Mohamed Hefzy is an Egyptian screenwriter and producer who has produced and co-produced over 20 feature films in Egypt, the US, the UK, and the Arab world. In 2013, Screen International named him as the only Arab among the 30 future leaders in film production. His productions, to date, include drama, comedy, thriller, documentary, and art house features, and have participated widely in film festivals and won numerous international awards. Hefzy has served as jury member and artistic director of Egyptian and Arab film festivals, and has represented independent filmmakers at the Egyptian Chamber of Cinema since 2013.



Ali the Goat and Ibrahim

Duration: 90 minutes

Cast

Ali Sobhy

Ahmed Magdy

Nahed El Sebai

Salwa Mohamed Aly

Osama Abu El Ata

Guest Stars

Sabry Fawwaz

Asser Yassin

Gamil Barsoum

Produced by:

Mohamed Hefzy (Film Clinic) – Egypt
Hossam Elouan (Transit Films) – Egypt

Co-produced by:

Guillaume de Seille (Arizona Productions) – France

Line Producer: Michel Makram

Story by: Ibrahim El Batout

Screenplay: Ahmed Amer

DOP: Amr Farouk

Editor: Emad Maher

Music Score: Ahmed Elsayy

Sound Designer: Sebastian Tesch

Sound Mixer: Ansgar Frerich

Costume Designer: Reem El Adl

Production Designer: Ahmed Fayez

Directed By: Sherif El bendary

Distribution (in the Arab world):

Film Clinic-Indie Distribution (FCID) and MAD Solutions

Funding:

Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée (CNC) – France

Knight Works – France

Titra TVS – France

SANAD Film Fund – UAE

Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC)

Doha Film Institute – Qatar

Dubai Film Market Forum – UAE

Enjaaz Film Fund – UAE