

Camel-racing epic Hajjan to be released during this year's Al Qamar Film Festival

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Abu Bakr Shawky's new film HAJJAN will kick off at this year's Al Qamar Film Festival on Friday, 30 August in Edison Filmhub. The mythical and grandiose Saudi Arabian adventure film centred around the journey of a young boy and his camel evokes Spielberg and Saudi Arabia's dedication to becoming the Hollywood of the Middle East.

A Bedouin folktale for the silver screen

Directed by Egyptian-Austrian filmmaker Abu Bakr Shawky (YOMEDDINE), HAJJAN had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival and has become a crowd favourite at film festivals all over the world. The film is both a coming-of-age adventure epic set in the vast deserts of Saudi Arabia, as well as an intriguing insight into the world of camel racing and the myths and folklore surrounding it. The story follows a Bedouin boy, Matar (Omar Alatawi), who, along with his faithful camel companion Hofira, embarks on a long journey through the arid dunes to unravel the suspicious death of his brother. To accomplish this dangerous task, he must become a "hajjan" - a camel jockey.

Crossing uncharted territories

Shawky breaks new ground with HAJJAN, bringing the spirit of the Hollywood adventure film and Western deep into the deserts of the Middle East. The film was shot on real camel-racing tracks with local Bedouin people and camels trained professionally for the film, in the farthest corners of some of the most ancient deserts on the planet, including Neom and Tabouk, in the northwest of Saudi Arabia, and Wadi Rum in Jordan - some of the locations so remote that they have never before been recorded on film, making HAJJAN a spellbinding and memorable outing - its visuals matched only by its evocative score by Amin Bouhafa, which is as sprawling and epic as the desert itself.

About Director Abu Bakr Shawky

Egyptian-Austrian filmmaker, A.B. Shawky studied Political Science and Filmmaking in Cairo. After graduating, he enrolled at the NYU Tisch School of the Arts Grad Film Programme. His thesis film for NYU was his debut feature YOMEDDINE. The film premiered at Cannes Film Festival in 2018 and received the Francois Chalais Award, and was Egypt's official submission for THE COLONY, THINGS I HEARD ON WEDNESDAYS and MARTYR'S FRIDAY have screened at festivals around the world. His production company Desert Highway Pictures, which he founded in 2014, aims to bring stories of the underdog to the big screen. Shawky was listed by Forbes Magazine among the top five Arab directors on the global stage and has been named by Variety Magazine as the MENA Talent of the Year.



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