



Hajwalah

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Running time 20:40 min
Genre Social Documentary
Year 2015
Language Arabic with English subtitles
Country of Origin Saudi Arabia
Format 1920x1080, 29.97fps, 1.66:1, Sound 5.1



AFAC آفاق

SYNOPSIS

Hajwalah explores the joyriding (or tafheet) practice through Rakan's passion for what he considers a "motorsport" that should be legalized. Fearful of losing his system-monitoring night job, Rakan quits joyriding and instead, he imagines and virtually relives the hajwalah world through gaming. In parallel to Rakan's story, Hajwalah explores the city from a woman's lens through filmic essay capturing her attempt to claim a sense of virtual place in the rapidly growing desert metropolis. The structural and economic violence in the city is captured from the car window and regulation of social interactions and relations are reflected in the filmmaking process.





Not you guys, "official" media.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



The truth is, I had initially planned on making a documentary about graffiti in the Saudi kingdom titled, "Our Walls," which was to explore three different and specific graffiti practices that reveal the different worlds lived by the respective graffiti writers. During my research of one of these practices, the hajwalah writers of that subculture, I stumbled across an ethnography titled, "Joyriding in Riyadh: oil, urbanism, and road revolt" by Pascal Menoret. I decided to focus on the hajwalah writers, and very soon after that, I decided to focus on just hajwalah (joyriding). I shifted my focus because I thought that joyriding in the kingdom is a more urgent story to tell, especially since it had been around for decades and yet had a single state-sociological narrative of it in the mainstream media. Driven by curiosity, I also wanted to challenge myself and get uncomfortable. Can I possibly tell a story about a joyrider, to whom my accessibility is very limited?

Rakan himself does not write graffiti, but I was led to his world through the hajwalah graffiti. In a sense, this project is still about "our walls" in the Saudi kingdom. The structural violence and regulation of our social relations in the Saudi kingdom is gradually revealed. I intentionally reinforce this message when one of the cameramen is heard asking Rakan, "there's another question Rana wanted to ask..." and it goes on about our separation from one another. I also intentionally leave Rakan's answer referring to social media to reinforce another message about our virtual worlds and relationships. When asked about "public space," Rakan refers to the internet. I end that scene to encourage questioning the notion of public space.

As a Riyadh-native hoping to drive in my city one day, nothing seems more important than connecting my plight with my visible and yet marginalized male counterparts who drive in the outer-city. I became attracted to the joyriding subculture and wanted to understand it. From far away I saw that joyriders contest space in public spaces with a quest for individual identity and fame. They become "joyriders," a collective group identity creating a public spectacle of performance, admiration and competition. I wanted to make this film in order to take a closer look. My lens is introduced with the first shot of the cityscape at night, from rooftop, then it continues -- through the dashboard or side window. The side-window lens is surely symbolic in this film. In terms of mobility, development, and a passenger view/experience of the city.

In my film, I am not trying to build tension, despite how suitable the joyriding footage is to create such an effect. I want to encourage introspection. What is the city? Who is Rakan? What is public space? How are our social relations regulated?

A central theme in my work has been the juxtaposition between the power of expression and the expression of power. I want this film to be a powerful expression of something we see and hear everyday and yet we don't fully understand... just like the writing on the wall.

CREW



DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, EDITOR, CAMERA

Rana Jarbou

Saudi-born Rana Jarbou has been researching and documenting graffiti and street art across 12 Arab countries since 2007, in search for a counter-narrative for the Arab identity and to give voice to society's silent cries. She's published essays about graffiti, underground cultural scenes and urban change for various online outlets. She participated in numerous regional arts & culture conferences and exhibitions and more recently in Santa Cruz and Marseille. In Fall of 2013, she started the Social Documentation masters program at UCSC. Her ongoing project One Thousand and One Walls tells stories through walls across the Arab world.



PRODUCER, CAMERA

Mohammed Alhamoud

Mohammed Alhamoud is a filmmaker and producer based in the San Francisco Bay Area and Saudi Arabia. Leaving behind a career in law, he co-founded Talashi Films in Riyadh in 2008. His two shorts Schizophrenia (2007) and Shadow (2009) have been screened at the Dubai international film festival and other international venues. After obtaining his MFA in Film from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco he founded Hamoud Bay Productions, specializing in international co-production, mainly in US & GCC region.

Currently, he is making his first feature documentary about ASWAT ensemble, the Bay Area's premier Arab music choir.
Website: <https://vimeo.com/hamoud>



ASSISTANT PRODUCER

Abdulmohsen Almutairi

Talashi Films co-founder Abdulmohsen Almutairi is a director and film critic, who has directed and produced over 20 short, feature, and documentary films, including the award-winning Sunrise/Sunset. He is currently an assistant editor in University of the Arts in Philadelphia, where he is also obtaining a BFA in Film. With his experience on the field in Saudi Arabia, as well as his access to subjects, Abdulmohsen played a significant role as an Associate Producer for this film.



CAMERA

Nawaf Almuhana

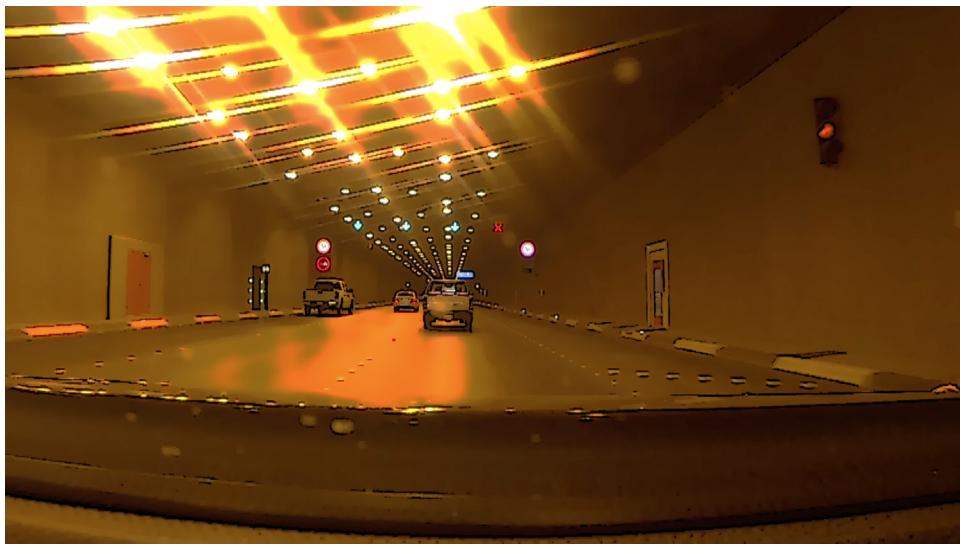
Talashi films co-founder Nawaf Almuhana is a cameraman, fixer, and film an TV producer. He has produced and shot over 15 short and documentary films and TV shows. He is also an actor starring in several TV shows and short films. He currently works as a freelance producer/cameraman/fixer in Saudi Arabia. Al-Mahana will bring his expertise in cinematography in shooting this film, particularly in areas inaccessible to the filmmaker (such as areas where hajwalah drifting and motorsport activities take place).



CAMERA

Sultan Almutairi

Sultan is a script supervisor for a number of short films and TV programs including the first Saudi feature Wadjda (2012). He worked as a producer for Ya Hala America and a senior producer on "Rotana TV Network." He directed and produced two DocuReality TV shows (Dorm life-Workforce) about the Saudi students in the U.S. for "Aali TV Network." In 2014 he founded "Saudi innovators Creative Production House" with the aim to support and produce cinema quality short films. Recently he directed and produced the short film "The Question 2014."



CREDITS

CREW

Director Rana Jarbou
Assistant producer Abdulmohsen Almutairi
Editor Rana Jarbou

Director of Photography & Camera 1 Rana Jarbou
Camera 2 Nawaf Almuhamna
Camera 3 Mohammed Alhamoud
Camera 4 Sultan Almutairi

Chauffeur Eric Tayag

Sound Design Kadet Kuhne
Animation Tal Kamran
Translation Elham Ibrahim

Documentary protagonist Rakan

PRINCIPAL ADVISERS

Creative adviser John Jota Ieaños
Substantive adviser Miriam Greenberg

SPECIAL THANKS

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