

KINO LORBER

Presents



COSTA BRAVA, LEBANON

A FILM BY MOUNIA AKL



Lebanon, France, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Qatar | 2021 | 107 mins | Color |
Arabic with English subtitles

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AWARDS

Audience Award - BFI London Film Festival,
NETPAC Award - Toronto International Film Festival
Critic's Award and Best Music Award at Cinemed (Montpellier)
Jury Prize at Sevilla Film Festival (Spain)
Fipresci Award and Green Star Award at Gouna Film Festival (Egypt)

OFFICIAL SELECTIONS

Venice International Film Festival; Toronto International Film Festival;
Chicago International Film Festival; San Francisco International Film
Festival; Seattle IFF; Thessaloniki IFF; Cinemed - Festival Cinéma
Méditerranéen Montpellier; El Gouna Film Festival; Sevilla Film Festival

SYNOPSIS

The free-spirited Badri family have escaped the toxic pollution and social unrest of Beirut by seeking refuge in the utopic mountain home they have built. But unexpectedly, a garbage landfill is built right outside their fence, bringing the trash and corruption of a whole country to their doorstep.

As the landfill rises, so do tensions between leaving or resisting, threatening their idyllic home and family unity.

Mounia Akl makes her highly anticipated debut (Cinéfondation Residency, Torino Film Lab, Sundance Institute Lab), with a darkly comic commentary on the realities of modern-day Lebanon.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Growing up in Lebanon, I was surrounded by chaos and poetry. The country was always on the verge of an apocalypse, leading us to live in the present though never sleep peacefully.

This was both within the confines of my home and family, and the broader confines of the country. I was often surrounded by people in extreme states of being and I developed a fascination with human flaws and the truth that emerges in times of personal tragedy.

I started observing the tools that we arm ourselves with to fight trauma, often reverting to impulse or denial. This dichotomy is what Lebanon is, and who I have become. It has brought our society to a place of absurdity and has driven people to reinvent and sterilize their homes to protect themselves from a dystopian reality that is too painful to face. It has also armed us with limitless imagination, humor and a visceral experience of life.

Today, however, even that escape is no longer possible. The dystopia has entered our hearts.

In Costa Brava, Lebanon, I try to look at this family's structure in hopes of mirroring the one of our society. The Badri family's ideal of staying pure by disdaining society is an escapist fantasy. But from fracture and discord there is an opportunity for the Badri family – and Lebanon – to rebuild with clear-eyed truth and compassion.

– Mounia Akl

ABOUT THE FILM

OUR CHARACTERS

– THE PARENTS –

Walid and Souraya are two complex souls who met during protests, fell in love and healed some of each other's deepest wounds. The home they built is their shared project. They made the decision to leave Beirut at a time when they were disgusted with the country's political and literal filth. The pain of living with no dignity was no longer bearable.

SOURAYA (NADINE LABAKI), 43

Souraya was a famous singer and activist who toured the world with her music. She met Walid at a time of personal burnout, when she needed to step away from the excesses that accompanied her lifestyle. Walid provided a healthier path, introducing her to nature and family life. He also convinced her that the battle for the country was lost. For Souraya, the arrival of the outside world constitutes a reminder of the woman she was, the one she misses. And mostly, the fight for change.

WALID (SALEH BAKRI), 45

Walid is an idealist with a temper. A hypochondriac turned misanthrope. After giving his heart and soul to the country, he reached a place where he lost hope. He believes that the world and the country have become too rotten to continue fight for and has chosen to live in a bubble rather than facing constant trauma. Walid has gone off the grid in the family's country retreat in the mountains in search of an ideal of self-reliance in splendid isolation from a deeply corrupt society. He has armed his kids with limitless imagination and love and has done everything to create what he sees as the best home for them, an open-air prison of love. His big heart, charm and humor often mask his controlling nature and behavior.

– THE SISTERS –

RIM (CEANA RESTOM / GEANA RESTOM), 9

Rim was born on this land and has never seen the world outside. She is the pure product of her father's Utopia and the queen of his kingdom. She would do anything to protect it and has inherited her father's fear of the outside world which we observe through obsessive compulsive behavior. She is untamed and doesn't take no for an answer. She adores her sister but often brings her back to earth when her daydreams take her too far.

TALA (NADIA CHARBEL), 17

Tala was 7 when they moved out of Beirut. She is introverted and filled with repressed questions about the world and her mother's past. She seeks her father's approval and wishes she had the relationship Rim has with him. When the men tied to the landfill construction arrive outside her fence, her burgeoning sexuality rises to the surface and she crosses to a new chapter of her life - one that doesn't include her sister.

– *THE GRANDMOTHER & THE AUNT* –

ZEINA (LILIANE CHACAR KHOURY), 79

Zeina is Walid's mother, and he is the love of her life. They have a close relationship that grew even more when his abusive father passed away and her health decreased. Zeina brings a lot of humor to the home with her constant complaints about green living and her obsession with returning to her Beirut social life. She is not aware of what the city has truly become. The arrival of the landfill and its men is a breath of fresh air for her.

ALIA (YUMNA MARWAN), 39

Alia is Walid's sister who has been an expat in Colombia for 15 years where she works in finance. Alia represents the Lebanese who left Lebanon brokenhearted to build a life with more dignity elsewhere. She feels displaced wherever she is. Alia's presence is always felt at home though, on the screen of Zeina's phone.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Lebanon's waste crisis exploded in 2015 when a huge landfill site closed and government authorities failed to implement a contingency plan in time to replace it. Dumping and burning waste on the streets became widespread. When the rubbish crisis first started, it stimulated a civil movement; protestors rallied outside the Lebanese government and declared "You Stink." While the protests began over trash, they expanded to issues of civil representation, corruption and government inefficiency. This crisis represented everything that was wrong with the country since the end of the Civil War. In October 2019, a revolution started giving momentary hope. It was then followed by a financial collapse, a world pandemic and the third biggest explosion of the world in August 2020. The country fell apart and people felt angry and hopeless.

GREEN PRODUCTION

For the first time in the Arab region, green measures were implemented to create sustainability on set (recycling, saving water and electricity, reducing carbon emissions) with a goal to come up with a protocol that can be adopted by other film crews in Lebanon and in the MENA region.

ABOUT MOUNIA AKL

Mounia Akl is an award-winning Lebanese filmmaker. Her short film, *Submarine* (2016), was in the Official Selection of the 69th Cannes Film Festival (Cin fondation), SXSW, TIFF and Dubai Film Festival where it won the Muhr Jury Prize. In 2017, Mounia took part in the Lebanon Factory and co-directed a short film *El Gran Libano* which opened Cannes Directors' Fortnight and screened at BFI London among others.

Costa Brava, Lebanon was developed during the Cannes' Cin fondation Residency. The project was also selected to participate in Torino Film Lab Feature Lab and in Sundance Institute Screenwriters and Director's Lab.

Mounia holds a bachelor's degree in Architecture from ALBA and an MFA in Directing from Columbia University. She has taught film directing at the NISI Film Summer Institute at Northwestern University, Chicago. Mounia is currently developing new projects, in TV and Film, one of which is her second feature film.

FILMOGRAPHY

Director

- 2021 – COSTA BRAVA, LEBANON** | Feature Drama, 106'
- 2019 – DO NOT DISTURB** | TV Series documentary short (1 episode)
- 2017 – EL GRAN LIBANO** | Short Comedy, 18'
- 2017 – LEBANON FACTORY** | 70'

Writer-Director

- 2016 – SUBMARINE** | Short Drama, 21'
- 2014 – EVA** | Short Drama, 8'
- 2014 – CHRISTINE** | Short
- 2011 – BEIRUT, I LOVE YOU** | TV Series (44 episodes)
- 2011 – ANOESIS** | Short Comedy, 6'
- 2010 – CHEERS, TO THOSE WHO STAY** | Short, 20'
- 2009 – BEIRUT, I LOVE YOU YOU (I LOVE YOU NOT)** | Short, 10'

Writer

- 2017 – THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT** | Short, 19'
- 2014 – BETWEEN CURTAINS** | Short, 15'
- 2012 – FASATEEN: DRESSES** | TV Mini-Series

CAST BIOS

NADINE LABAKI

Nadine Labaki is a Lebanese actress, director, and activist. Labaki first came into the spotlight as an actress in the early 2000s. Her film-making career began in 2007 after the release of her debut film, *Caramel*, which premiered at the Cannes 2007 Film Festival and received many awards. In 2011, she directed *Where Do we Go Now?* which was also selected at Cannes Film Festival. She is known for demonstrating everyday aspects of Lebanese life and covering a range of political issues such as war, poverty, and feminism. She is the first female Arab director to be nominated for an Oscar in the category for Best Foreign Language Film with her latest feature *Capharnaüm/Capernaum* (winner of the Jury Prize in Cannes Film Festival 2018). As an actress, Labaki played in many Lebanese feature films supporting first time filmmakers such as Oualid Mouaness (*1982 - 2019*), Mounia Akl (*Costa Brava, Lebanon - 2021*) and Wissam Smayra (*Perfect Strangers - 2022*). She also worked with confirmed Arab filmmakers such as Laïla Marrakchi (*Rock the Casbah - 2013*) and Hany Abu Assad (*The Idol - 2015*).

SALEH BAKRI

Saleh Bakri is a Palestinian film and theater actor. *Salt of this Sea* (2008) by Annemarie Jacir was his debut performance in a Palestinian film and went on to be Palestine's official submission for the Academy Awards. Saleh went on to play in all Jacir's films including her latest film *Wajib* (2017) where he acted beside his father, iconic actor Mohamad Bakri. The film was distributed worldwide and also won numerous prizes and awards. Saleh Bakri also portrayed Elia Suleiman's father Fouad in *The Time That Remains* (2009). In 2011, he appeared in Radu Mihaileanu's movie *The Source*. He was the protagonist in the Italian thriller *Salvo*, which won the Critics' Week Grand Prize at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival. In 2015, Bakri appeared at the Royal Court Theatre in the play *Fireworks* by Palestinian playwright Dalia Taha. In 2019, Bakri starred in *Dialogue with the Unseen* by Italian artist Valerio Rocco Orlando. His latest performances are in the Oscar nominated short film *The Present* by Farah Nabulsi (2020), *Costa Brava, Lebanon* by Mounia Akl (Venice Film Festival 2021) and *The Blue Caftan* by Mariam Touzani (2022) which premiered at Cannes Film Festival.

CAST

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|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Souraya | Nadine Labaki |
| Walid | Saleh Bakri |
| Tala | Nadia Charbel |
| Rim | Ceana Restom & Geana Restom |
| Alia | Yumna Marwan |
| Zeina | Liliane Chacar Knoury |
| Tarek | François Nour |

CREW

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|----------------------------------|--|
| Writer-Director | Mounia Akl |
| Co-Writer | Clara Roquet |
| Producers | Myriam Sassine, Georges Schoucair |
| Co-Producers | Sophie Erbs, Sergi Moreno, Olivier Guerpillon, Ingrid Lill Høgtun, Katrin Pors, Tom Dercourt, Tono Folguera, Eva Jakobsen, Mikkel Jersin, Joakim Rang Strand |
| Executive Producers | Jeff Skoll, Anikah McLaren, Fouad Mikati, Candice Abela Mikati, Karam Abulhusn, Monique Dib, Lara El Khoury, Elie Tabet, Harriet Harper Jones |
| Director of Photography | Joe Saade |
| Editors | Carlos Marques-Marcet, Cyril Aris |
| Visual Effects Supervisor | Peter Hjorth |
| Original Score Composer | Nathan Larson |
| Additional Score | Zeid Hamdan |

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| Sound Designer | Rana Eid |
| Re-recording Mixer | Peter Albrechtsen |
| Sound Recordist | Rawad Hobeika |
| Production Design | Thomas Bremer, Issa Kandil |
| Art Director | Hanady Medlej |
| Costume Designer | Beatrice Harb |
| Production Supervisor | Nermine Haddad |
| Line Producers | Ginger Beirut Productions, Abla Khoury & Lara KaramChekerdjian |
| Production Manager | Raja Zgheib |
| Produced by | About Productions |
| In Co-Production with | Cinema Defacto, Lastor Media, Fox In The Snow Films, Snowglobe, Barentsfilm, Gaijin |
| In Association with | mk2 films, Participant, Boo Pictures |
| With the Support of | Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée, Région Île-de- France, Ciclic-Région Centre-Val de Loire, Doha Film Institute, Sørfond - Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Fonds Image de la Francophonie, TorinoFilmLab with the support of the Creative Europe - MEDIA Programme of the European Union, Visions Sud Est with the support of the SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), The Swedish Film Institute, The Danish Film Institute, The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC), The Beirut DC Madar Fund, the Sundance Institute Feature Film Program |
| With the Financing of | Instituto de la Cinematografía - Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte - Gobierno de España |
| With the Participation of | Departament de cultura - Institut Català de les Empreses Culturals - Generalitat de Catalunya |
| In Co-Production with | Film i Skåne |

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