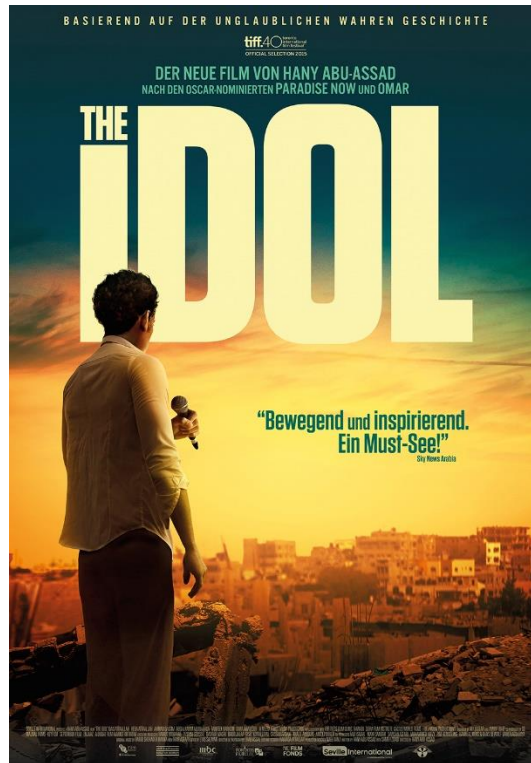




präsentiert



Mit Qais Atallah, Hiba Atallah, Ahmed Qassim, Abdelkarim Abu Baraka, Tawfeek Barhom,
Regie: Hany Abu-Assad
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SYNOPSIS

Schon als Kind träumt Mohammed davon, im Opernhaus in Kairo aufzutreten und seiner Stimme somit weltweit Gehör zu verschaffen. Doch auch wenn ihm das nötige Talent in die Wiege gelegt wurde, bleibt dies vorerst nur eine Träumerei. Bis er als Jugendlicher inkognito aus einem Flüchtlingslager in Gaza nach Ägypten flüchtet, um an der äusserst beliebten Talentshow „Arab Idol“ teilzunehmen.

Nach einer beschwerlichen Reise und einigen unerwarteten Hürden, wird er schliesslich doch noch zu den Auditions zugelassen. Nur muss Mohammed nun seinen eigenen Ängsten gegenüberreten und sein Schicksal in die eigene Hand nehmen. Mohammed trat in Gaza die Reise seines Lebens an und von nun gibt es für ihn kein Zurück mehr.

Der Filmemacher Hany Abu-Assad ist bekannt für seine sozialpolitischen Dramen. Mit PARADISE NOW und OMAR wurde er mehrfach ausgezeichnet und jeweils für den Oscar in der Kategorie „Bester fremdsprachiger Film“ nominiert. Das Biopic THE IDOL erzählt die bewegende, wahre und wundersame Geschichte des tatsächlichen ARAB IDOL™ 2013 Gewinners Mohammad Assaf.

BACKGROUND

The incredible true story of Mohammed Assaf defies belief. The 22-year-old Palestinian refugee from Gaza won the hearts of an entire region when he won Arab Idol (the Arab world's own version of American Idol) in 2013. Overnight he became a symbol of peace and possibility. He grew up in the urban prison of Gaza, singing at weddings and driving a taxi to support his university studies. He lost friends and loved ones to life under occupation and under siege. Through it all, he never lost hope that he could make a difference. Against all the odds, he managed to escape out of Gaza and make it to Cairo for the Arab Idol auditions. He actually arrived late for his audition and was about to be turned away. He refused to take no for an answer, though, jumping over a security fence and somehow getting inside the hotel where the auditions were taking place. There, he sang for the fellow contestants who actually had tickets. Once he heard Mohammed's voice, one contestant gave up his own slot for Mohammed. The rest is history. The finale of the show was one of the most watched TV events in Arab history, with tens of millions tuning in across the entire region as the young singer from Gaza helped a region forget its problems for a few songs every weekend and remember to smile again.

The story of Mohammed Assaf is a once in a lifetime event, an opportunity to put a human face on a people who have all too often been marginalised and misrepresented.

At a time of unprecedented upheaval in the Arab world, with revolutions, civil wars, strife and extremism, Mohammed's journey from humble wedding singer in Gaza, to the region's hottest young star played out before our eyes weekly. Every Friday and Saturday night, for a few minutes, viewers could release themselves from the daily struggles and remember how to smile again.

Mohammed Assaf represents the spirit and symbol of what might be; of dreams coming true; of the impossible becoming, for a precious moment at least, entirely possible.

THE FILMMAKER

Hany Abu-Assad is one of the world's most distinctive filmmakers. The two-time Academy Award-nominated director - Paradise Now (2006) and Omar (2013)- has won countless other awards including the Berlin International Film Festival's prestigious Blue Angel award, Best Foreign Language Film at the Golden Globes and the Special Jury Prize in Cannes' Un Certain Regard.

He was born in Nazareth, Palestine in 1961. After having studied and worked as an airplane engineer in The Netherlands for several years, Abu-Assad entered the world of cinema as a producer and produced the feature film Curfew, directed by Rashid Masharawi, in 1994.

In 1998 he directed his first film, The Fourteenth Chick, from a script by writer Arnon Grunberg, followed by his documentary Nazareth 2000, his second feature film Rana's Wedding and his second documentary Ford Transit.

In 2006 his film Paradise Now about two Palestinian men preparing for a suicide attack in Tel Aviv, was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. The film won the Golden Globe for Best Foreign language film in 2006.

In 2011 Abu-Assad finished working on The Courier, a Hollywood movie starring Jeffery Dean Morgan, Til Schweiger and Mickey Rourke.

Most recently, Abu-Assad's Omar, which featured star-making performances from Adam Bakri and Leem Lubany, garnered the director his second Academy Award nomination for the edge-of-your seat thriller. The film won several worldwide prizes including the Jury Prize of Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I always ask myself why I want to make a movie and spend almost two years of my life working very hard to complete that movie. In the case of Arab Idol, the answer was clear and simple. The story of this young man, Muhammad Assaf, is such an incredible story that even somebody like me who, just three weeks earlier had won the Jury Prize of Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival, was more excited for Assaf to win Arab Idol than for myself. I was caught on camera between thousands of people gathered in the square in Nazareth to hear the final results for Arab Idol; I was jumping in excitement like a little kid, and I have not had this kind of excitement for a very long time. When Ali Jaafar offered for me to direct Muhammad Assaf's story, my arms were covered in goosebumps. I knew immediately that I would do everything to make this story a great movie.

I see Arab Idol as the story of fighting and the will of surviving under extreme circumstances. It's a story of hope and success, where a brother and a sister were able to make from their disadvantages an advantage, and from the impossible possible, who come from nowhere to overcome all odds, beating poverty, oppression, and occupation. They have the ability to convert ugliness to beauty, which, in the end, is the power behind all art and the fuel to nurture hope.

THE PRODUCTION

Filming began in January this year. For filmmaker Hany Abu-Assad the key to this film has always been authenticity both in front of and behind the camera. That is why The Idol is one of the first, if not the first, international production to shoot on location in Gaza, despite the logistical difficulties to get a film crew in and out safely. Shooting amongst the devastated landscapes of a Gaza still reeling from the month-long bombardment in 2014, Abu-Assad and his crew were still able to find great moments of beauty and surprise. The Gaza Parkour team, for example, supply their amazing acrobatic display in the most surprising way in one moment, proving that art can thrive in even the most challenging of situations.

That desire for authenticity is also why Hany insisted on finding and employing real kids from Gaza to act in the film. The crew did a Gaza-wide search, holding casting sessions and rehearsals in schools across the area. Ultimately, the production was blessed to find four amazing Gazan children to star in the film, all first time actors, and all incredible natural performers.

That is also why Hany insisted on using an overwhelmingly local Palestinian crew and also filming in entirely Palestinian locations for the Palestinian scenes, filming in Gaza and Jenin. Hany has worked with the same DP, Editor, Line Producer and Art Director on all his films. They have grown up with him and learned from him to the point they are now top quality technicians who can work on both local and international productions. It is this approach behind the camera that we hope will also inform the on-screen experience. Hany also insisted on shooting on location in both Beirut and Cairo for the exterior scenes set in those cities so that the film would look and feel real.

CREDITS

CAST:

Qais Atallah
Hiba Atallah
Ahmed Qassim
Abd-Elkarim Abu-Barakeh
Tawfeek Barhom
Dima Awawdeh
Ahmed Al-Rokh
Saber Shreim
and Nadine Labaki

CREW:

Director of Photography	Ehab Assal
Production Designer	Nael Kanj
Editor	Eyas Salman
Composer	Habib Shehadeh Hanna
Casting Director	Amer Hlehel
Costume Designer	Hamada Atallah
Location Manager	Wajdi Ode
Line Producer (Palestine)	Laura Hawa
Line Producer (Jordan)	Rula Nasser
Co-producer	Fadi Ismail
Co-producer	Baher Agbariya
Co-producers	Hanneke Niens, Hans de Wolf, Pim Hermeling, Maya Sanbar, Sawsan Asfari, Mohammed Hefzy
Executive Producers	Tiziana Sousou, Hamed Mokhtar, Bashar Masri, Badr Jafar, Sassan Ahsani, Khalil Amiouni, Gisel Kordestani, Mufid Shawwa, Anick Poirier, Harold Van Lier
Written by	Hany Abu-Assad with Sameh Zoabi
Directed by	Hany Abu-Assad
Produced by	Ali Jaafar, Amira Diab