



**META**  
FILMFEST

# PANELS, WORKSHOPS, AND MASTERCLASSES



THURSDAY  
9 NOVEMBER 2023



**META**  
FILMFEST

# JURY PANEL DISCUSSION AND PRESS CONFERENCE

THURSDAY, 9 NOVEMBER | 5:00- 6:00 PM | AUDITORIUM 9 | VOX CINEMAS, WAFI CITY



**Dr. Jabbar Patel**

Award Winning Director, India



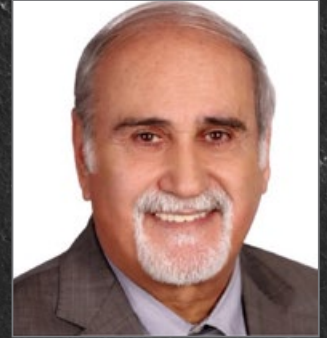
**Taghreed ElAsfoury**

Award Winning Script Writer  
and Director, Egypt



**Mano Khalil**

Award Winning Director,  
Switzerland-Syria



**Bassam A. Hajjawi**

President/CEO Near East  
Productions, Board Member  
Royal Film Commission  
Jordan, Jordan



**Aakanksha Naval-Shetye**

Editor, Filmfare Middle East,  
Dubai, UAE



**Tony Asankomah**

Creative Writer, Founder  
GhMoviefreak.com, Ghana



**Nozhat Badi**

Film Critic and Analyst,  
France-Iran



**Roozbeh Kafi**

Professor of Digital Production  
and Storytelling,  
American University in Dubai,  
UAE



**James Hughes**

Multi-Award-Winning Writer,  
Director, Producer



**Ahil Fakh**

Film Critic,  
Founder of ItzyReviews



**Shihan Shoukath**

Award-Winning Filmmaker

FRIDAY  
10 NOVEMBER 2023



# WOMEN IN CINEMA

## PANEL DISCUSSION

FRIDAY, 10 NOVEMBER | 11 AM-1 PM | AUDITORIUM 9 VOX CINEMAS, WAFI CITY

### MODERATOR



**Manju Ramanan**

Film Journalist and Ted X Speaker

### PANELIST 1



**Zain Duraie**

Award Winning Jordanian  
Director and Writer

### PANELIST 2



**Sarwat Gilani**

, Sarwat Gilani Pakistani  
Model, Film, Television and  
Voice Actress

### PANELIST 3



**Fateme Fereydoun**

Iranian, UAE Filmmaker  
and Director

### PANELIST 4



**Gauri Shinde**

Indian Film Director  
and Screenwriter

### PANELIST 5



**Valeriia Tsvietok**

Acting Coach and Actress

### PANELIST 6



**Victoria Aizenstat**

Argentinian Producer

# DIRECTOR'S MASTERCLASS:

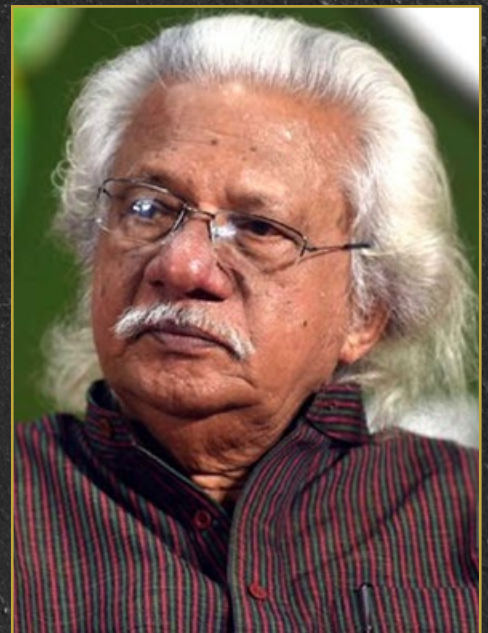
*IMAGES, REFLECTIONS & TECHNIQUES OF A CINEMATIC JOURNEY  
(1.5 HOURS)+ FILM SCREENING OF VIDHEYAN (THE SERVILE)*

FRIDAY, 10 NOVEMBER | 12:45-4:30 PM | AUDITORIUM 11 | VOX CINEMAS, WAFI CITY

This masterclass is designed for aspiring and seasoned movie directors alike, as they get to pick up tips and tricks from one of the most successful and celebrated award winning Indian directors in the history of cinema. While Adoor will share his learnings over the years, the attendees are encouraged to bring forth their challenges and questions and seek best tips and advice for their specific requirements.

## MASTERCLASS LEADER:

**Adoor Gopalakrishnan**



One of the leading lights of the New Indian Cinema, Adoor Gopalakrishnan made his debut film, 'Swayamvaram - One's own choice' in 1972 and it marked the beginning of a new era in Malayalam Cinema. He has won the coveted British Film Institute Award (BFI) for 'Elippathayam' - Rat-trap for the most original and imaginative film of 1982. The International Film Critics Prize has gone to him six times successively. His films have been shown in every important festival around the world. In recognition of his contribution to cinema, the French Govt. has honored him with the title, Commander of the Order of Arts & Letters (2004). In 2005 he has received the Dada Falke Award India's highest honour for Cinema. In 2006, he was chosen for the top civilian recognition, Padma Vibhushan.

# BEYOND THE GLITZ:

## A WORKSHOP ON THE BUSINESS AND LEGAL SIDE OF MOVIE PRODUCTION

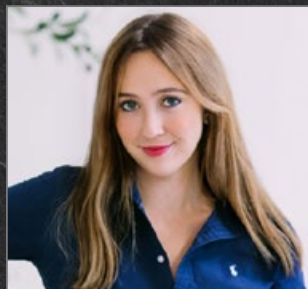
FRIDAY, 10 NOVEMBER | 4:00-6:00 PM | AUDITORIUM 11 | VOX CINEMAS, WAFI CITY

### WORKSHOP LEADERS:



**Nancy Paton**

Founder, Desert Rose Films  
and President of WIFTGCC



**Charlotte Louise  
Sutcliffe**

Associate at CWB and Head  
of Events at WIFTGCC

### MOVIE PRODUCTION AS A BUSINESS:

- What is your product?
- How to get partners
- How to build a team
- Building you movie's Business Plan
- How to network with the industry
- Film financing
- Production and post production
- Marketing and promotion
- Distribution

A multi-award winning and globally renowned director, screenwriter and producer, Nancy Paton's prosperous career has seen her work across New York, London, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Renowned for creating moving, thought-provoking films that break through boundaries and challenge perceptions, she is committed to promoting women empowerment and telling the stories of the women of the GCC.

Born in Australia and currently based in Abu Dhabi, UAE, she attended acting school in New York before discovering her passion for directing. She then experienced her first taste of the film industry at Hollywood production company, Michael Mailer Films.

Moving to London in 2009, she wrote Daisy, her first breakthrough short film, whilst working at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital. Telling the story of a girl who is suffering from a terminal illness, it received wide-spread praise across the world and no fewer than 16 different awards and accolades.

In 2013, she relocated to Saudi Arabia. Here she taught digital photography, screenwriting and storyboarding to Saudi female students at the Raffles Design Institute in Riyadh. She also founded Desert Rose Films, the ground-breaking, female-focused production company that is now renowned across the world for its dynamic, compelling, and female-led films. Tirelessly committed to developing Saudi Arabia's female talents, she also ran 'underground' filmmaking workshops and recruited all-female amateur crews for her next award-winning film, Postpartum, and her short documentary The Black Abaya. Her many other achievements include winning the 48 Film Project and Best Director award for her short film Choke. In 2022, the ambitious and creative director became President of Women in Film & TV – GCC. The first ever GCC chapter of Women in Film & TV, the revolutionary global organisation, Nancy was honoured to represent the movement at the Red Sea International Film Festival 2022.

Her recent family adventure feature film Mountain Boy is an adaptation of children's book trilogy The Boy Who Knew the Mountains. Mountain Boy touches on crucial subjects such as autism awareness, inclusivity, climate change and the importance of preserving Arabian heritage. Due to staying true to her core beliefs of empowering women, the production has been nominated for the Diversity and Inclusion award at Cannes 2023.

# AI IN THE FILM INDUSTRY:

## THE CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE APPLICATIONS MASTERCLASS

FRIDAY, 10 NOVEMBER | 6:30-8:30 PM | AUDITORIUM 9 | VOX CINEMAS, WAFI CITY

- **Introduction**
- **Creative Assistance and Enhancements**
- **Audience Analysis and Marketing**
- **Cost and Time Savings**
- **Job Displacement and Human Touch**
- **Data Privacy and Security**
- **Upskilling and Adaptation**
- **Responsible AI Implementation**
- **Exploring New Avenues**
- **AI-assisted Projects in the Film Industry**
- **Testimonials from Film Professionals**
- **Conclusion- Recap the main points discussed in the presentation.**
- **Q&A Session**



**Pooyan Sedghi**

Digital and AI Expert  
Filmmaker



**SATURDAY**

**11 NOVEMBER 2023**



**META**  
FILMFEST

# TRUST YOUR AMBITION

## MASTERCLASS

SATURDAY, 10 NOVEMBER | 11:00 AM-12:45 PM | AUDITORIUM 11

VOX CINEMAS, WAFI CITY

### James Hughes

Multi-Award-Winning  
Writer, Director, Producer

James Hughes is a multi-award-winning writer director producer who has worked with Emmy Winners, BAFTA Winners, and Oscar nominees. His short films have screened at over 300 festivals, including Oscar and BAFTA qualifying ones. During his career, James has been a Speaker for BAFTA, numerous international film festivals – including the inaugural Meta Film Festival, and he has taught a popular filmmaking class at the Creative Screenwriting Expo in Los Angeles. James is also a member of BAFTA.



### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In this filmmaking masterclass, award-winning director producer James Hughes breaks down how you should approach the three stages of production to make an ambitious film. Using his short film festival hit SONAR as a case study, James details how a low to no-budget project can have a big production value, by applying an important mindset throughout the production.

James will discuss the key details the script needs to harness to lay the foundations for a successful high-end production. He will follow this with stage two, the shoot itself – why one element of this is more important than any other if you wish to give your project the wow factor. In the final stage, post-production, James outlines how patience and professional relationships can elevate your film to a level you never thought was possible when you started.

This masterclass will also offer a Q&A section to discuss your questions and projects, to help transform your own low budget projects into ones with an impressive production value.

Masterclass – Overview (Internal Use) – 75 minutes

Short intro about SONAR – 3 minutes

SONAR screening – 7 minutes

Stage 1 – Pre-Production. How the unique objectives of the Sonar production created challenges to deliver a big production, and how those challenges were overcome to put ambition at the centre of the production. – 15 minutes

Stage 2 – The Shoot. Why your choice of location/s is paramount in creating production value, and how you should approach securing your locations. – 15 minutes

Stage 3 – Post-Production. Allowing time in your schedule for patience. How to harness professional relationships to bring your project to the next level. – 15 minutes

Q&A – For the students to ask questions about the class and discuss their own projects to understand how a change in approach could yield a higher production value. – 20 minutes

# INTRODUCING CINEMA TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH **MASTERCLASS**

**SATURDAY, 11 NOVEMBER | 1:00-6:00 PM | AUDITORIUM 11  
VOX CINEMAS, WAFI CITY**

This 5 hour masterclass is designed for children and youth between age of 10-18. The class will be an introduction, as well as hands on application of creating a stop-motion 5-minute movie. The class will teach the youth how to create a story, set up the image sequence, shoot and edit their work.

## **TRAINER:**



**Fateme Fereydoun**  
Filmmaker and Director



# FUNDING, POST-PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION WORKSHOP (90-MINUTES)

SATURDAY, 11 NOVEMBER | 6:45-8:45 PM | AUDITORIUM 11  
VOX CINEMAS, WAFI CITY

## INTRODUCTION

This essential workshop tackles the critical topics of how to secure funding and the steps to take for successful post-production and distribution of your film. Topics covered are as follows:

### Funding

- Selling your idea in your network and at festivals
- Setting the cast
- Setting the crew International cooperation
- National film Institutes and film workshops
- Other organisations
- Local support

### Post Production

- The material and how to watch it
- Cooperation
- Director
- Sound
- Color
- Music

### Distribution

- Festivals
- Television
- Streaming

## WORKSHOP LEADERS



**Mazen Haj Kassem**

Mazen Haj Kassem is an Actor, Director, Producer and Director of Film festivals from Syria. Mazen currently resides in Denmark and directs and manages Film Festivals in most of the European and Scandinavian countries. Mazen lived during his childhood in Denmark. Mazen moved to Damascus to study as an actor and director, among his works as an actor in Syria, he starred in the Syrian drama- Under the skies of homeland and the series -Calendar and there were dubbing experiences such as in the work- taxi 17. Mazen returned to Denmark when the war in Syria began to pursue his life dream as an Actor and producer. He worked as a director in Danish television and made a program called Power. Mazen directed and acted in two Danish plays that were screened in the biggest galleries such as The Musikhuset in the European Capital of Culture, the city of Aarhus and in the Museum of Arts in Copenhagen, he also acted in

the film The Nile Hilton and also in the Danish film Ditte and Louisa and Netflix series The Rain. In addition to that, Mazen directed the opening ceremony of the Aarhus Capital of European Culture 2017 in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen of Denmark and directed a number of short films in Denmark and also worked as a Producer for several Danish short films. During the past two years, Mazen has been organizing and running film festivals in several European cities. In addition to his studies in Damascus Mazen also graduated in 2019 from Via University in Denmark / Aarhus-Drama Department, He also simultaneously graduated as a filmmaker in 2019 from Potemkin Film school in the city of Aarhus /Denmark



**Steen Bech**

Steen Bech is a trained film editor from film training 18 FRAMES in Denmark. His experiences range from feature films to documentaries and short films to primary school teaching. Steen teaches film production on a daily basis at Svendborg Efterskole when he is not editing or developing film and series ideas.

# EXPAT CONNECTIONS:

## EXPLORING CULTURAL INTERSECTION IN UAE CINEMA PANEL DISCUSSION

SATURDAY, 11 NOVEMBER | 8:30-10:00 PM | AUDITORIUM 11  
VOX CINEMAS, WAFI CITY

This panel discussion can focus on the unique contributions of the expatriate community to UAE's film scene. The diverse stories, experiences, and perspectives of expats have greatly enriched Emirati cinema, creating a tapestry of narratives that transcends borders. The panelists can discuss their personal experiences navigating this cultural intersection, the challenges and opportunities of portraying an expatriate's experience in the UAE, and how they believe this fusion of cultures can shape the future of UAE cinema. This topic will resonate with local and expat creatives alike, offering valuable insights on crafting relatable, compelling narratives that can connect with a global audience. It will also appeal to professionals interested in exploring the unique landscape of UAE cinema, understanding its past and future, and the role of expatriates in shaping it.

### MODERATOR



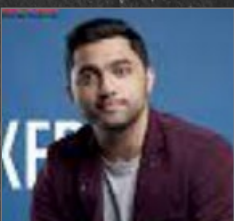
#### Dr. Sabir Haque

Assistant Professor, American University Of Ras Al Khaimah

Sabir Haque is a multi-faceted media professional with over 18 years of experience in academia, broadcast media & filmmaking. He finished his Master's in Mass Communication from Mass Communication Research Center, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, in 2003. He completed his Ph.D.

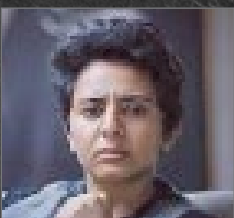
in Journalism & Social Media from the School of Communication, Manipal University India, in 2017. His first Documentary film bagged the National Award for Environment & Wildlife Conservation, which was screened at various film festivals worldwide. He joined NDTV, a premiere TV News Channel in New Delhi, India, and later NDTV ARABIA in the UAE. He continues to direct Documentary films and has built up a strong industry profile creating films for Corporates and Govt. UAE agencies. His last production as a Script Writer and Director was a 15 episode Docu-drama telecast on Dubai TV, Sama Dubai, and Dubai One. The docu-drama was produced for the Government of Dubai. He presently teaches Broadcast Media & New Media Technologies at the School of Arts and Sciences, American University of Ras Al Khaimah.

### PANELISTS



#### Faisal Hashmi

Awarded 'Independent Filmmaker of the Year' by Digital Studio Magazine and the prestigious Golden Visa by Ministry of Culture, Faisal Hashmi is a UAE-based independent freelance filmmaker with a number of award-winning short films and narratively driven commercials under his belt. At the age of 21, his short film 'Perfect Living' screened at the Cannes Film Festival Short Film Corner in May 2011, while his next film 'Bubble' screened at various international film festivals and won Best Film at Tunisia Human Rights Film Festival. Over the next two years, his fascination with the horror and thriller genre gravitated his short films in that direction. His horror short films 'Scrambled', 'Cold Feet' and 'Sleight' have played at more than a dozen horror film festivals in the United States, Europe and Asia and won multiple awards. On Youtube, his short films have more than 1.5 million views combined. He has received major press with a cover story in Weekend Magazine and featured in other publications like Digital Studio, Broadcast Pro, The National, Gulf News as well as radio and TV features.



#### Abeer Abdullah

a Saudi producer and filmmaker based in Dubai. She made her directorial debut with a film that she also co-wrote and produced titled (Trail of lights) which was to be first screened in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, at The Golden Falcon Film Festival- (2018) in Riyadh, after re-opening cinemas in Saudi Arabia. Her work highlights psychological stories in an artistic manner. She believes through being a filmmaker she has the power of telling stories that inspire change.

## PANELISTS



### **Ivor Gracias**

Ivor Gracias, is an award winning short film producer who has produced more than 15 films. Many of his films he was involved with have won awards globally and also have been officially selected in film festivals worldwide. He is also a casting director and has cast actors in TVCs, Bollywood Feature films, Netflix, Disney Hotstar OTT platforms and music videos. He is also an actor and has acted in many TV commercials, short films. He acted alongside Shah Rukh Khan in the Be My Guest TVC, featured in the Etihad Airways Re-imagined TVC featuring Nicole Kidman to name a few. He loves working with people from different cultures and nationalities as he believes it gives more depth and meaning to whichever project he is involved in and it is a learning process. He believes in a positive approach to all things. Teamwork is one important aspect of his success and all accomplishments are obtained with a combined effort.



### **Mark Hobson**

Mark Hobson an award winning Australian Cinematographer over 15 Years Experience, spanning feature films, TV series, commercials, and music videos worldwide. His accolades from the Australian Cinematographers Society and his recognition on international film festival circuits are commendable. Given his extensive knowledge of numerous projects in this region,

SUNDAY  
12 NOVEMBER 2023



# ROADMAP TO SUCCESS:

## *A ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW WITH SAJAL ALY*

SUNDAY, 12 NOVEMBER | 12:00-1:00 PM | AUDITORIUM 9  
VOX CINEMAS, WAFI CITY



Sajal Aly is a Pakistani actress and model who predominantly appears in Pakistani television and films. Aly received several accolades including five Hum Awards and was considered one of Pakistan's highest-paid actresses.

During this one-on-one session, Sajal will share her roadmap to stardom and offer tips, tricks and advise for those navigating their way through the film industry.



# ACTING MASTERCLASS

SUNDAY, 12 NOVEMBER | 2:45-4:45 PM | AUDITORIUM 10  
VOX CINEMAS, WAFI CITY

## Over acting in UAE –how to improve your skills?

- Asking the right questions to prepare for the role
- Preparing for the roles
- Getting into character
- Adjusting your acting skills based on the project
- How to clearly communicate and understand your Director's need
- How to provide feedback to the Director
- Acting tools and techniques

## MASTERCLASS LEADER:



**Valeria Tsvietok**

Valeria Tsvietok, a luminary hailing from Moldova and nurtured in Ukraine, boasts an illustrious career spanning 12 years across the realms of theater, cinema, advertising, and presenting. Her artistic journey has spanned the globe, gracing stages and screens not just in the UAE but around the world. Beyond her acting endeavors, Valeria has shared her wisdom as an acting coach, shaping the talents of budding actors in modeling schools and offering personalized guidance. Notably, her pinnacle moments unfolded in Dubai, where she dazzled in advertising campaigns and made her mark in the realm of Bollywood cinema. Adding to her accolades, Valeria has lent her expertise as an acting coach to aspirants in beauty contests, showcasing her multifaceted contributions to the world of entertainment.

During her impressive 11-year tenure in Dubai, Valeriia Tsvietok carved a niche for herself in diverse domains. She became an integral part of the Russian speaking community by contributing her talents to a local theater. Her journey in Bollywood took flight as she took on roles in notable Indian movies. Furthermore, Valeriia's captivating presence graced advertisements for renowned brands, showcasing her versatility and appeal. Her multi-faceted contributions underscore her impactful presence within Dubai's entertainment and creative circles. Valeriia Tsvietok's portfolio in Dubai is adorned with an impressive array of prestigious brands. From Warner Bros to Etisalat, Du to Aldar Properties, and Audi Middle East to local designer Abayas, her charismatic presence has graced advertising campaigns that resonate with a wide audience. Additionally, her collaborations with brands like IKEA, Home Box, and Mall of the Emirates, Emirates Airlines further attest to her versatility and widespread recognition. Valeriia's involvement with these prominent names underscores her impact on the advertising industry in the region.

# MASTERCLASS :

## *THE POWER OF A STRONG NARRATIVE*

SUNDAY, 12 NOVEMBER | 2:15-5:15 PM | AUDITORIUM 11  
VOX CINEMAS, WAFI CITY

### About the Masterclass:

- Dim the screens and awaken the storyteller within, for you are about to embark on an immersive master class in the art of crafting a compelling story.
- So, whether you're an emerging filmmaker, architect or you steer marketing campaigns and sense an unspoken narrative within you yearning for expression, this 3 hour master class is designed to unleash your voice through the power of a strong narrative.
- **Length: 3 hours**



**Mohammed Mamdouh**

### ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Mohammed Mamdouh is a multidisciplinary, award-winning storyteller, with over 17 years of experience across the UAE media landscape. Having played a lead role in enhancing some of the region's most prominent brands and government entities. Mamdouh has gained a rich experience on all aspects of brand building, including developing 360 brand campaigns that leverage on impactful visual storytelling and immersive technologies.

Following years of filmmaking adventures, a Master of Fine Arts in Film from the Vermont College of Fine Arts in the United States, as well as various opportunities to learn from some of the greatest in the industry over the years, such as James Cameron and Robert McKee, Mamdouh became a Professor of Film and Multimedia at the American University of Sharjah, and has been invited to speak across various universities and entities including NYU Abu Dhabi, the Higher Colleges of Technology, ITP Media Group, the Al Marmoom Film Festival and many more. What sets Mamdouh apart as an educator is his genuine and contagious passion that is felt in any conversation about storytelling and film, any day.