

Hollywood? Bollywood? Try Cairo – home of the Egyptian Cinema Classic.

The 2nd Sydney Arab Film Festival (SAAF) will present a daily screening of the best Egyptian Classic Cinema from Saturday 26th November – Sunday 4 December. SAAF's Egyptian Classics retrospective will offer cinema aficionados the opportunity to revel in enjoying these celluloid gems on the big screen - where they belong!

Egyptian Cinema has been an obvious and vital component of the modern Egyptian and Arabic cultural landscape, affirming and shaping 20th century Arabic popular culture. It shares as vast a cinematic impact as India's Bollywood Industry, yet it is still largely unseen and unlauded in the Occident.

Having a strong cinematic tradition since the 1930s, Egypt remains the major motion picture industry in the Arab world, with Cairo as its capital. It is worth considering that the influence of the Egyptian cinema on the Arab world is as profound as that of the American cinema on the western world.

Despite its anonymity in the West, the 'golden age' of Egyptian cinema independently paralleled the ascent and influence of the 'golden age' of Hollywood. Omar Sharif, already a huge star in the Arab world, was one of the few Arab artists to 'cross over' to enjoy an international career. Sadly, to the average non-Arab film buff, he is probably the only Egyptian screen artist they can name. To the initiated however, the cinematic work of singers such as Farid Al Atrache and the quasi-divine Oum Kalthoum, are modern treasures.

The five Egyptian Classics selected for screening at the Sydney Arab Film Festival films remain revered celluloid vessels of songs, voices and of-course narratives that are so

deeply embedded in the hearts and consciousness of Arab people everywhere. Artistically, film may be the ultimate social and cultural mirror of our time.

The Egyptian Classics presented by the Sydney Arab Film Festival stand as a testament to the continuation and constant renegotiation of the magnificent Arab visual and lyrical cultural tradition in the modern world. These cinematic works are highly specialised interdisciplinary collaborations between writers, composers, actors, singers and directors and their interface with the then emerging technology of film.

The 2nd Sydney Arab Film Festival is managed and hosted by Information & Cultural Exchange (ICE) and driven by a volunteer Organising Committee. ICE aims to support the Sydney Arab Film Festival into an independently managed annual event in the coming years.

Sydney Arab Film Festival - EGYPTIAN CLASSICS

Daily: Sat 26 & Sun 27 Nov, Fri 2, Sat 3, Sun 4 Dec

Venue: Campbelltown Arts Centre & Banksotsn HOYTS

Ticket-price: \$13 / \$11 con / \$30 book of 3 SAAF sessions

Bookings: 02 4645 4100 (10-4pm daily)

www.sydneyarabfilmfestival.com

**For Further Sydney Arab Film Festival Media Enquiries please call
Anna on 9897 5744 / 0416 527 591 or Fadia on 9897 5744 / 0416 077 464**

Sydney Arab Film Festival '05 - EGYPTIAN CLASSICS Programme

A Drift On The Nile

We meet a group of hedonistic middle-aged friends who gather each night on a luxurious houseboat for dancing, love-making and smoking hashish. When a young news reporter visits the houseboat to write a story on the group, she is outraged to learn the tragic depths of their social alienation. Based on the novel by the Nobel Laureate **Naguib Mahfouz**, this 1971 production offers a revealing look at the Egyptian elite on the eve of the 1967 War. By this time, Nasser had ushered in an age of enormous social change, leaving the sons and daughters of the old bourgeoisie high and dry.

Director: Hussein Kamal 1971, 115mins

Afrita Hanem

Meet Asfour (**Farid Al Atrache**), a poor singer/actor who stumbles upon a magic lamp and its wish-granting genie (**Samia Gamal**). When he uses his new-found power to woo his gold-digging girlfriend away from her rich suitor, Asfour discovers that his genie has a few wishes of her own. Sure to delight and entertain, this classic film-stars two of Egypt's cinematic legends in an innovative and endearing blend of comedy, fantasy and musical genres.

Director: Henri Barakat, 1950, 110mins

Fatma

The legendary diva **Oum Kalthoum** stars in this classic film about a poor nurse who falls in love with the son of one of her wealthy patients. Abandoned by her husband while pregnant, she must fight her husband's wealthy and powerful family in court.

A rare treat, this film features nine of **Oum Kalthoum's** most famous songs by composers **Mohamed Al Asabgui** and **Riad Al Sunbati**.

Director: Ahmed Badrakhan, 1947, 126mins

A Man In Our House

Based on the famous novel by **Ihsan Abdel Qoddous**, this 1961 classic is set prior to the 1952 revolution and stars the legendary **Omar Sharif** in one of his most memorable roles. Sharif plays Ibrahim, a member of the underground resistance who seeks refuge from the so-called "political police" by taking shelter in the home of a civil servant and his family. Directed by **Henri Barakat**, this film offers a vivid depiction of the Egyptian resistance to the British occupation and features some of Egypt's finest filmmaking talents.

Director: Henri Barakat, 1961, 159mins

A Nightingale's Prayer

Based on the novel by the great Egyptian novelist, **Taha Hussein**, *The Nightingale's Prayer* stars the first lady of the Arab silver screen, **Faten Hamama**. This compelling tale of love and betrayal, set in the upper Egyptian countryside, follows the story of Amna (Hamama) as she plots her revenge on the engineer (**Ahmed Mazhar**) who destroyed her family's honor. A gripping portrait of a courageous young woman's rebellion against tradition and poverty, this film is an undiscovered masterpiece of world cinema.

Director: Henri Barakat, 1959, 126mins