

PICTURE TREE INTERNATIONAL
PRESENTS

INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS

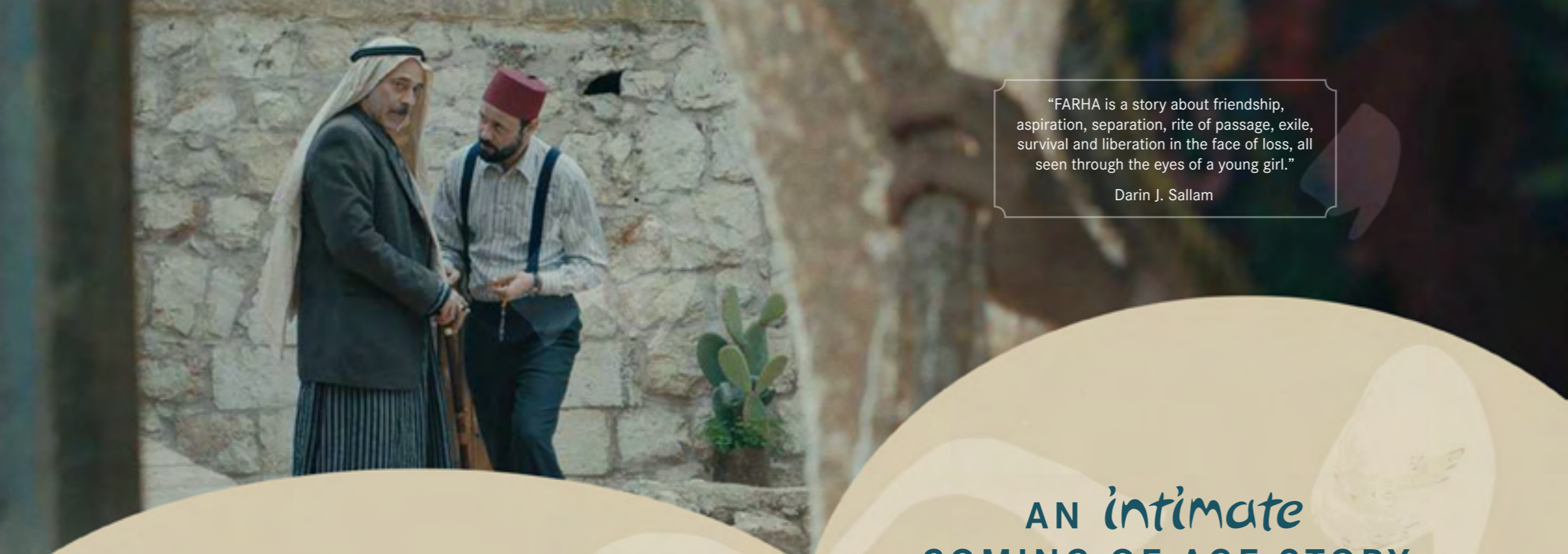
Official Selection
tiff
Toronto International
Film Festival 2021



F A R H A

A FILM BY DARIN J. SALLAM

 PICTURE TREE
INTERNATIONAL



“FARHA is a story about friendship, aspiration, separation, rite of passage, exile, survival and liberation in the face of loss, all seen through the eyes of a young girl.”
Darin J. Sallam

AN intimate COMING OF AGE STORY

Inspired by true events, FARHA tells the story of a young girl whose dreams change from seeking an education in the city to survival in Palestine 1948.

Countries of Production: Jordan/Sweden/KSA
Specs: DCP/ Scope/ 5.1/ 7.1/Color
Genre: Coming of Age/Identity/Exile
Duration: 92'
Year of Production: 2021
Written and Directed by Darin J. Sallam
Produced by Deema Azar
Produced by Ayah Jardaneh
Co-Produced by William Johansson Kalén
Production Company: TaleBox (Jordan)
Co-Production Company: Laika Film & Television (Sweden)
In co-production with Chimney (Sweden)
International Sales: Picture Tree International
Distribution: Folkets Bio (Scandinavian Territories)
Publicist: Required Viewing



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SYNOPSIS

Farha is a 14 year old girl who lives in a small village in Palestine, 1948. Girls her age are traditionally married off or spoken for yet Farha wants to continue her education despite traditions and the restrictions of schooling in her village for boys only. Inseparable from her best friend Farida, who lives in the city but who spends weekends in the village, Farha dreams of joining her at a school in the city. Life in the village is threatened and aggressively changed by the looming danger. Just when Farha’s father is finally convinced and Farha’s dream is at last coming true, the danger comes closer to their village. As violence escalates, Farha is brutally separated from Farida. Ter-

rorized for his daughter’s safety and fearing for her life, Farha’s father locks her up in a concealed, small food storage space by the house, promising to return. But he never does.

Over the course of the next few days, Farha undergoes a life-changing experience while buried in the tight dark space, her only connection to the outside world is a small hole in the wall and a few cracks in the wooden door. Farha witnesses a lot of events, outside and inside the room, setting off her journey of transformation and forcing her to grow up and leave her childhood behind.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Like many Jordanians with Palestinian roots, I exist today because my father was one of the people who survived the events of Al-Nakba (the Catastrophe) in 1948. Sadly however, many Palestinians did not survive and those who did were never able to return to their homes. I grew up listening to many stories about life back then. One of them, shared by my Syrian mother who met the real character after she made it to Syria, struck a chord with me: a young girl who was locked up by her father in a pantry fearing for her life and family honor when the violent events started in Palestine 1948, promising her to come back, but he never does.

I couldn't take that girl out of my mind, I kept thinking of how she felt in this small dark room, especially because I have a fear of tight and dark places. Over the years, all these stories, people, their lives, happy and sad moments in history came together in my mind, slowly forming the story of FARHA.

I didn't want to treat Farha as just a number, one of the 700,000 that were forced into exile, I wanted to focus on her personal journey and dreams that changed from fighting to learn, to fighting to survive, always keeping the war in the background. It's a story about friendship, aspiration, separation, rite of passage, survival and liberation in the face of loss. All seen through the eyes of 14-year-old, Farha.

Any time I thought of her a feeling of suffocation would come over me. The urge to share her story and journey continued to grow. I wanted to convey

this feeling to the audience to allow them to go through this journey with FARHA. This is why I had the majority of the film take place inside a small, confined space where the only connection to the outside world is a high hole in the wall and later on some cracks in the wooden door, and I chose to keep the camera inside with FARHA as we never leave this room for approximately 50 minutes of the film to experience Farha's hopes, fears and transformation, to witness first hand her coming of age.

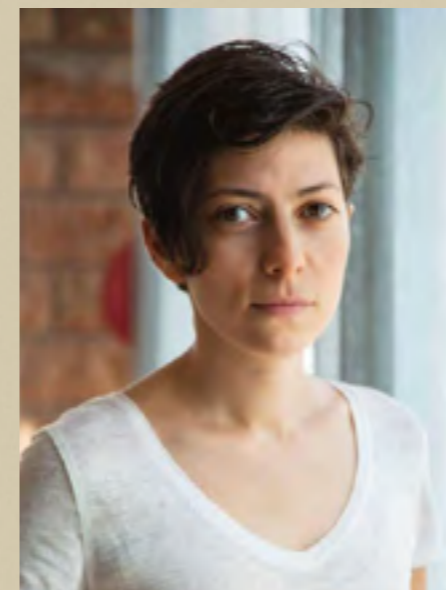
I was attracted to that challenging setup and I always knew the coloring and sound design would be major components for realizing my vision. This is why they were incorporated in the script early on before shooting, to help deliver the different emotions Farha goes through and the contrast between the different acts of the film. But also, especially in the dark pantry where some moments rely completely on sound.

Directing actors is essential for me. I chose a non-actress to embody Farha through her emotional journey as I believe there is something beautifully raw about non-actors, especially the young, where you can shape them into characters. During our acting workshops I always maintained a fine line between coaching her and keeping something fresh for filming.

Leaving her childhood behind and in spite of Farha's many losses, her liberation from her prison is the ultimate win. She is reborn.

"This girl's harsh experience travelled over the years to reach me, now it is time to share it with you"

Darin J. Sallam



DIRECTOR/WRITER DARIN J. SALLAM

Jordanian writer and director Darin J. Sallam holds an MFA in Cinematic Arts from the Red Sea Institute for Cinematic Arts (RSICA), affiliated with the University of Southern California (USC). To her credit are five award winning short films including STILL ALIVE (2010), THE DARK OUTSIDE (2012) and THE PARROT (2016), all of which received multiple awards and screened in internationally acclaimed film festivals worldwide. A Berlinale Talent 2021, Sallam is the recipient of the 2015

Film Prize of the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the 2017 Artist in Residency Fellowship at La Cité Internationale des Arts and the 2018 Global Media Makers Fellowship by Film Independent. She has been a jury member on several international film festivals and is also co-founder and managing partner at TaleBox, a Jordanian production and training company based in Amman. Her debut feature film, FARHA, will have its world premiere in 2021 at the 46th Toronto International Film Festival.

"That remarkable setup struck a chord inside of me, and FARHA started to emerge. She stayed in my mind, I kept thinking of how she felt in this small dark room, especially that I have the same fear of the dark and tight places. A feeling of suffocation invaded me every time I remembered her. The urge to share her journey kept growing within me, gradually forming the story of FARHA."

Darin J. Sallam

FILMOGRAPHY

FARHA (2021) – Feature Fiction Film

THE PARROT (2016) – Short Fiction Film

THE DARK OUTSIDE (2012) – Short Fiction Film

STILL ALIVE (2009) – Short Fiction Film

THE BALCONY (2008) – Short Fiction Film

THE MOMENT OF NIDAL (2006) – Short Fiction Film

ALRAWABI SCHOOL FOR GIRLS (2021) – Netflix Original

AHLAN SIMSIM | SESAME WORKSHOP (2019-2021) – TV Series

Director/Writer

Director/Writer

Director

Director/Writer/Producer

Director

Director/Writer/Producer

Second Unit Director

Director

PRODUCER DEEMA AZAR

Deema Azar is a Jordanian film producer and script consultant. She is also co-founder and managing partner at Tale-Box, a Amman-based production and training company which fosters and nurtures new talents in Jordan and the Arab World. Azar occupied the position of Regional Training Manager at the Royal Film Commission – Jordan between 2012 and 2016. She was also Head of Industry at the inaugural edition of the Amman International Film Festival in 2020. Azar's producing credits include Jordan's Darin J. Sallam's bold

debut feature film FARHA (2021), selected for its world premiere in the official selection of the 46th Toronto International Film Festival, as well as the short film THE PARROT (2016), recipient of the 2015 Film Prize of the Robert Bosch Stiftung. A Torino Film Lab Story Editing program alumna, Azar is also a script consultant who advised for several film entities regionally and internationally (Hubert Bals Fund, Red Sea Lodge, Doha Film Institute among others) in addition to privately consulting on film projects.

PRODUCER AYAH JARDANEH

Ayah Jardaneh is a Palestinian/Jordanian Producer. She holds a B.A. in Interactive Multimedia and Design from Carleton University and Algonquin College, Canada. She also obtained certificates in producing from New York Film Academy, PGA certificate, and 3D intensive from VanArts. Jardaneh started her career in film by joining the Royal Film Commission - Jordan (RFC). She then launched her career as

a freelancer in the production department by working on numerous productions including: UNDER THE SHADOW (2016), winner of BAFTA for Outstanding Debut; THE PARROT (2016) which premiered at the 2016 Dubai International Film Festival and THE GREAT ARAB REVOLT. Jardaneh produced FARHA (2021), in addition to currently working on other projects in the development stage.

CAST



Karam Taher
as FARHA

The lead Karam Taher is a non-actress who showed unwavering commitment throughout the coaching sessions with the director Darin J. Sallam, until she was ready to embrace the challenging role of Farha. Working closely with Sallam, Karam transcended obstacles to deliver a touching performance, the role and the process transformed her into a budding actress and young woman.

Biography: In her first ever onscreen appearance, Karam Taher (born in 2004, Jordan) was 15 years old when she played the titular role in FARHA by Darin J. Sallam (TIFF 2021). She underwent intense acting training for several months with the film's director, leading her to transform into FARHA and embody a character in a period piece.

"Directing actors has always been a main focal element and a great passion of mine. Working especially with child non-actors is a challenge I always love to take on."
Darin J. Sallam



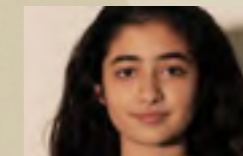
Ashraf Barhom
as FARHA's FATHER

Palestinian actor Ashraf Barhom starred in numerous hit film and television productions. He is mostly known for his roles in the series *Tyrant* and the Hollywood blockbusters *The Kingdom*, *300* and *Agora*.

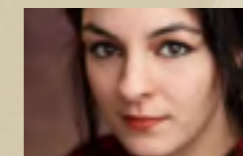


Ali Suliman
as ABU WALID

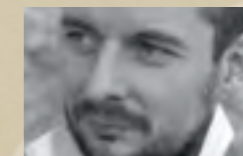
Ali Suliman is a Palestinian actor known for his work on the series *Jack Ryan* and the films *Paradise Now*, *The Attack* and *Rattle the Cage* among others.



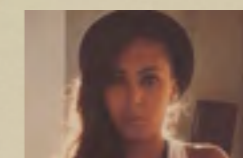
Tala Gammoh
as FARIDA



Majd Eid
as ABU MOHAMMAD



Samuel Kaczorowski
as COMMANDER



Batoul Ibrahim
as FEMALE SOLDIER



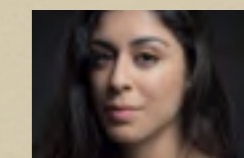
Sameera Asir
as UM MOHAMMAD



Firas Taybeh
as FARIDA'S FATHER



Sultan AlKhail
as YOUNG SOLDIER



Leanne Katkhuda
as FARIDA'S MOTHER

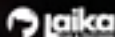
CREW

Cinematography: Rachel Aoun
Production Designer: Nasser Zoubi
Editor: Pierre Laurent
Costume Designer: Jamila Aladdin
Sound Designer: Rana Eid
Re recording Mixer: Florent Lavallée
Music: Nadim Mihslawi
Hair & Make Up Designer: Farah Jadaane
Lighting Designer: Ferenc Radnai
Colorist: Antonio Ikovic
Casting: TaleBox

WORLD SALES PICTURE TREE INTERNATIONAL

Picture Tree International (PTI) is an energetic world sales and production company with its headquarters in Berlin. PTI's line-up of up to 15 films a year is designed to ensure the right mix of arthouse and crossover productions to fully maximize the artistic and financial potential of each film. Picture Tree International was founded in December 2012 by Andreas Rothbauer and has been run jointly by his partner and Co-Managing Director Yuan Rothbauer since 2017.

TALEBOX PRESENTS IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH LAIKA FILM & TV IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH CHIMNEY A FILM BY DARIN I. SALLAM "FARHA" ASHRAF BARHOM KARAM TAHER TALA GAMMORH WITH ALI SOLEIMAN
EDITED BY JAMILA ALADDIN MUSIC BY NADIM MIHSLAWI EDITOR PIERRE LAURENT PRODUCTION DESIGNER NASSER ZOUBI CINEMATOGRAPHY RACHELLE AOUN COSTUME DESIGNER RANA EID HAIR & MAKEUP DESIGNER FARAH JADAANE
PRODUCTION DESIGNER DEEMA AZAR EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS AYAH JARDANEH PRODUCED BY WILLIAM JOHANSSON KALEN
DIRECTED BY DARIN I. SALLAM



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