

BIDAYYAT FOR AUDIOVISUAL ARTS
بدايات للفنون السمعية البصرية

ROUSL GROUP
تَجَمُّعُ زُسل

Present

لستة عم تسجيل

STILL RECORDING

Documentary | 2018 | 120 min | 16:9 | color | Arabic with English sub

A Film by

Saeed Al Batal & Ghiath Ayoub
سعيد البطل غياث أيوب

In Co-Production with

Films de Force Majeure
Blinker Filmproduktion

Supported by

L'Aide aux Cinémas du Monde
Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée
Institut Français
Berlinale World Cinema Fund
Doha Film Institute

Technical information

Original Title	لسه عم تسجل
International Title	Still Recording
Country of Production	Syria, Lebanon, France, Germany, Qatar
Year of Production	2018
Film Type	Documentary film
Duration	120 min
Shooting Format	HD
Screening Format	DCP, Blu-ray
Color	Color
Ration	16:9
Sound	Dolby 5.1; Stereo
Original Language	Arabic
Language of Subtitle	English

Contact

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SYNOPSIS

ملخص الفيلم

Saeed is a young cinema lover trying to teach other young people in Eastern Ghouta, Syria the rules of filmmaking, but the reality they face is too harsh to follow rules.

His friend Milad is in nearby Damascus, but it seems like a world away, under regime control and studying Fine Arts at University.

At one point, Milad decides to leave the capital and join Saeed living under siege in Douma, where they set up a local radio station and a recording studio. They pick up the camera to film everything they can until one day the camera films them...





The Directors' Statements

- Saeed Al Batal "The image is the last line of defense against time; it's my line of defence line against reality; my tool for preserving balance and a way for evading the question: what I am doing now?"

My relationship with memory is in continuous conflict. I find it difficult to remember a name or a specific period. My memory refuses to solve its riddles, as if hiding in images becomes a line of defense against oblivion, while feelings are based on a stronger survival instinct. As for the image, it knows no illusion, it does not misinterpret things, nor does it change their color; it does not exaggerate, nor does it underestimate.

This film is a journey of self-assessment and observation with a quiet eye and mind, in order to learn forgotten lessons and maybe express some apologies. When I moved to Douma, I started to feel the difference between me, the university milieu and Douma. I learnt the word 'elite', all those people in ivory towers talking down at normal people. I felt really sick. This feeling pushed me to abandon life in the capital and mingle with the people of smaller rural towns around Damascus like Douma, Saqba and Akraba in Eastern Ghouta, sharing and discussing their simple concerns. When the revolution started, I was sad to witness how this elite became confused, missing many opportunities to participate in this change. I wandered about the possibilities of breaking their ivory towers!

From the beginning I held a camera, I was repeatedly faced with one question: who is the target audience? For me, this movie carries a desire to get a deeper understanding of the contradictions facing a filmmaker, an attempt to look for definitions of the term artist and ponder their position in society; to reflect on what art is in times of revolution, war and death in Eastern Ghouta. From that universe that I have left but which has not left me, this movie is born, with the hope that I can be born again myself...

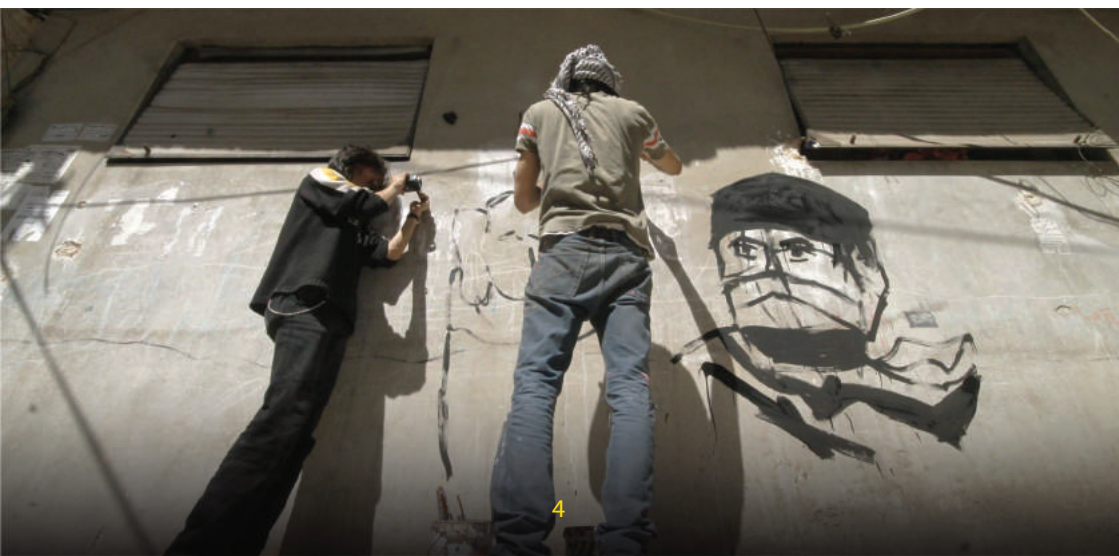
- Ghiath Ayoub

I remember my first trip to Douma in 2011. I remember feeling the fear of being rejected by the people of that city. The fear of differences which the regime had instilled deep in our minds still exists. In May 2013, I accompanied Milad on a visit that was my first after the liberation of the city. I was full of enthusiasm and questions. At that time, everything seemed clear.

21 August 2013, the chemical strike took place. Milad and I received the news while we were in Damascus. The feeling of responsibility we had grew. The chemical strike could have killed my friends, and kept me outside Syria. Later, Saeed arrived to Lebanon with the archives of Ghouta. All that I knew then was his willingness to film and document, I was not expecting this huge archive of footage. It was hard to expect what the second film will be. I can hear the personal stories filmed in the archive saying "There are people who pass through life, and there are others whom life passes through".

Today, the three of us are in Beirut. And this film is my journey to Douma, to the revolution, to the failures and defeats, to hope, but this time through the eyes of Milad and Saeed. It's a journey of exploration of my position regarding what is happening, and a search for the different options that our generation has.

It's an exploration for a space inside Syria, how one can live day by day, as if every day might be the last, and how to reconcile oneself with the idea. I'd like to understand and know how my friends went so close to death, and lived with it so intimately and cruelly. They came back from the brink to Beirut, seeking a new life with hope that would grow in this garden of darkness. So, I want to translate the archive and the generation's story into a work of cinema that intersects our experiences with the experiences of everyone watching it, regardless of what kind of war anyone fights in.



Still Recording Team

Directed by **Saeed Al Batal**



Born in 1988 in Tartous, Syria, **Saeed Al Batal** is a citizen journalist, photographer and filmmaker. He led numerous trainings in photography and news reporting. He worked as a reporter for various radio stations and wrote articles on Syrian current affairs for agencies and institutions worldwide. He is one of the founders of an online gallery entitled "Sam Lenses" and the "Humans of Syria" project.

Ghiath Ayoub

Born in 1989 in Yabrod, Syria, **Ghiath Ayoub** is a filmmaker and visual artist. Graduate of the faculty of Fine Art University Damascus 2013. He is the co-founder of a number of open spaces across Beirut. Ghiath also participates in various civil society initiatives such as "Humans of Syria", graphic design work, and films that have featured on websites and in exhibition spaces globally.

"لسه عم تسجل - Still Recording"

is Saeed and Ghiath's first co-directed feature-length film. They co-directed a short film entitled **Frontline** in 2014. They have both directed other short films separately.

The Producer **Mohammad Ali Atassi**



A journalist and documentary filmmaker. He was born in 1967 in Damascus, Syria. Atassi obtained a diploma in civil engineering from Damascus University in 1992 and a DEA in history from the Sorbonne Paris 4 in 1996. Since 2000, he has been writing for several Arab and international newspapers on political and cultural topics. As a director, he's made four documentaries on intellectual and political issues in the Arab world, of which *Waiting for Abu Zaid* (2010) and *Our Terrible Country* (2014) received success and recognition internationally. Atassi is the founder of Bidayyat for Audiovisual Arts, He produced with Bidayyat 3 feature documentaries (*Taste of Cement* by Ziad Kalthoum in 194 .2017. *Us, Children of the Camp*, by Samer Salameh in 2017 and *Houses Without Doors*, by Avo Kaprelian in 2016) and more than 20 short films.

The production company **Bidayyat for Audiovisual Arts** (Lebanon)



Created in 2013, Bidayyat specializes in producing short and feature-length documentaries by emerging filmmakers from the Arab world who wish to question and reflect on the reality they bear witness to in their own distinctive way. Bidayyat aims to contribute to the re-emergence of a documentary cinema in the Middle East that relates to, and interacts with, its societies, rather than being disconnected and disengaged.

Co-production **Films de Force Majeure** (France)



- Jean-Laurent Csinidis



Blinker FilmProduktion (Germany)

- Meike Martens

Cinematography **Abed AlRahman, Saeed Al-Batal, Rafat Bearam, Ghith Beram, Milad Amin, Ghiath Ayoub, Tim Siofi**

Editors **Raya Yamisha & Qutaiba Barhamji**

Sound mixing & design **Pierre Armand**

Artistic Advisor **Rania Stephan**

Postproduction **the postoffice (Beirut)**

Supported by **Centre National du Cinema (CNC)** **Berlinale World Cinema Fund** **Doha Film Institute**

Festivals

World Premiere at the Venice International Film Critic's Week, 2018

Awards

"FIPRESCI Award", the prize of the International Federation of Film Critics.

"Audience Award", the main prize of the Venice International Film Critics' Week.

"Mario Serandrei - Hotel Saturnia & International Award for Best Technical Achievement", which is assigned by a jury composed of members of the Union of Italian Film Critics.

"Edipo Re Award".

"Vivere da sportivo il fair-play al cinema Award".



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