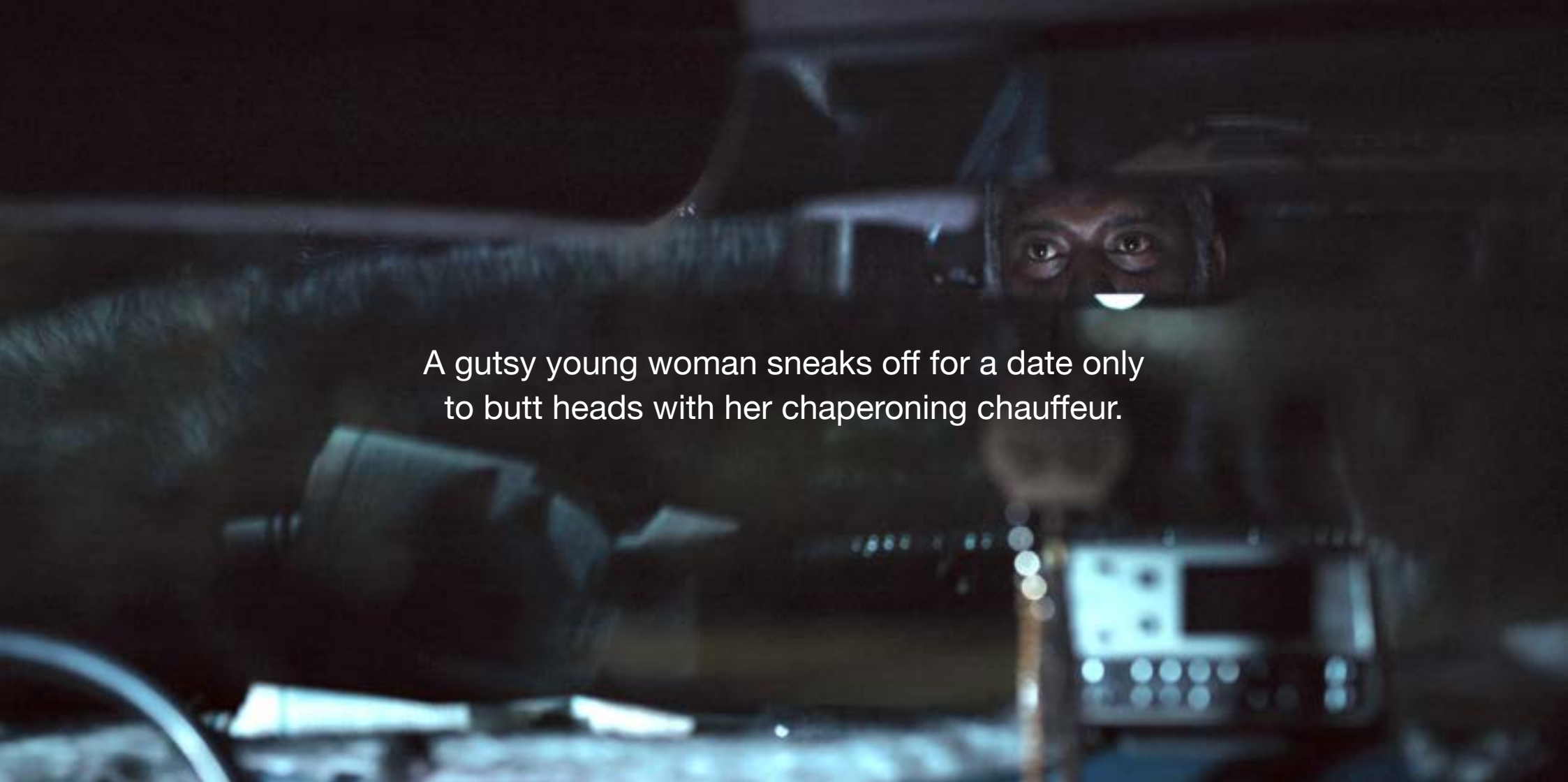


Me & Aydarous

A film by
SARA BALGHONAIM

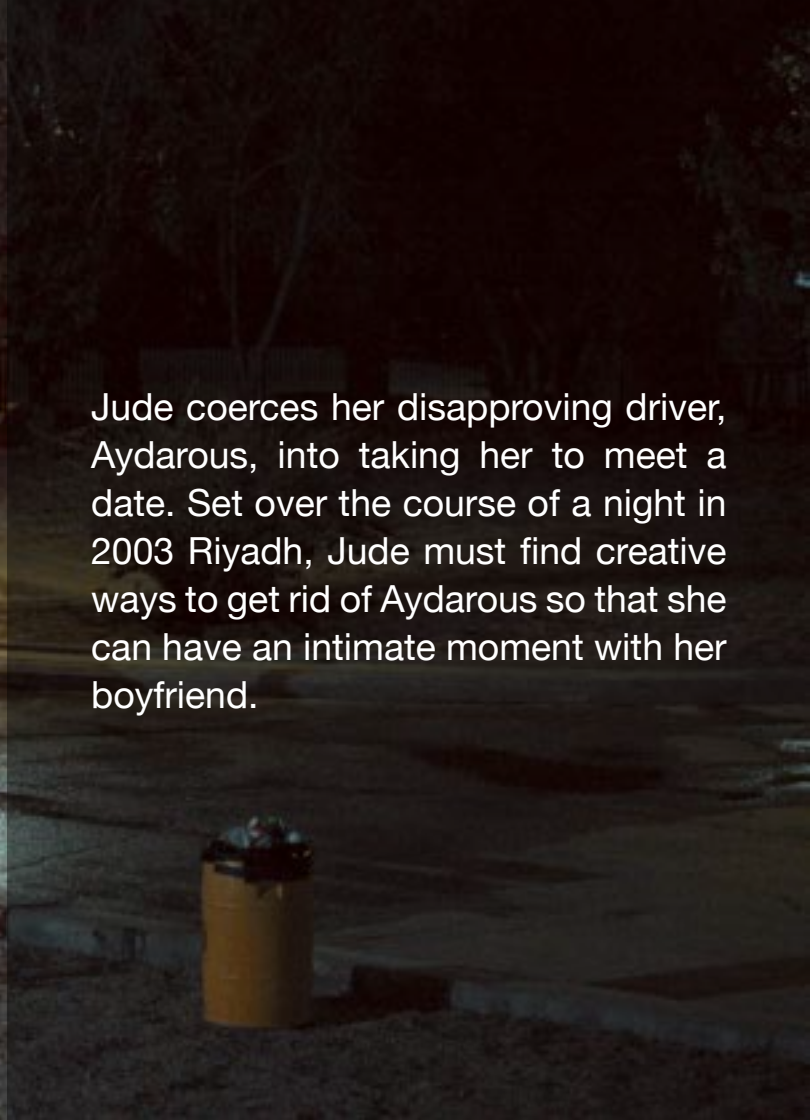


A man in a dark suit and hat is looking out of the open rear window of a car at night. The interior of the car is visible, showing a dashboard with a screen and various controls. The scene is dimly lit, with some light reflecting off the man's face and the car's interior.

A gutsy young woman sneaks off for a date only
to butt heads with her chaperoning chauffeur.



Jude coerces her disapproving driver, Aydarous, into taking her to meet a date. Set over the course of a night in 2003 Riyadh, Jude must find creative ways to get rid of Aydarous so that she can have an intimate moment with her boyfriend.



A woman with long dark hair is shown in profile, looking at a smartphone held in her hands. She is wearing a black headband. To her left is a professional boom microphone on a stand. The background is a warm, out-of-focus outdoor scene, possibly a sunset or sunrise. The text "DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT" is overlaid in the center of the image.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

It is 2003. You are in the back of the car with your boyfriend, and Missy Elliot's "Get Your Freak On" is playing in the background. It is an electrifying moment, an intimate date between romantic teenagers... until a conspicuous cough from the front seat reminds you that your disapproving chauffeur is also present at this date. This was the norm for clandestine dating in Saudi Arabia, and "Me & Aydarous" captures a formative moment in my own life as the film explores this unusual agreement (and disagreement) between a young woman and her driver.

Given their differences spanning class, age, gender, and beliefs, I was drawn to the power dynamic between these two characters that is in flux throughout the film. With this film I wanted to encapsulate the absurdity of normalized dating behavior in a conservative environment, as well as explore the multilayered—beautiful, awkward, and unconventional—relationship between these two characters in this specific set of circumstances.





“Me & Aydarous” is a comedic take on a young woman’s fight for agency and formal relationships, complicated by conceptual clashes across values and tradition, and operational hurdles (i.e., the inability to drive). I want people to question, to reminisce, and to laugh at the creative lengths we go to when it comes to getting what we want, to exercising our basic need for intimacy and connection.

A man and a woman are on a film set at night. The man, on the left, is bald and smiling, wearing a dark jacket over a blue shirt. He is operating a professional video camera mounted on a tripod. The woman, on the right, has long dark curly hair and is wearing a light purple hoodie. She is wearing large headphones and holding a black mobile phone to her ear, smiling. The background is dark, with some blurred lights and the structure of a vehicle or set visible.

CREW

Writer/Director

SARA BALGHONAIM is a Saudi filmmaker pursuing her MFA in Film & TV production at New York University, Tisch School of the Arts. Sara's directorial debut "Me & Aydarous" was in Official Selection at the Aspen Shortsfest, Palm Springs Int'l Shortfest, Hamptons Int'l Film Festival, Red Sea Int'l Film Festival, and the New Filmmakers LA Film Festival in 2023. The film received the Wasserman Award in 2022. Sara also recently produced "Sweet Refuge", winner of the Director's Guild of America Student Award, and winner at the Int'l South Asian Film Festival Canada.

Before her time at NYU, she worked for director Haifa Al Mansour as an Assistant Director on "The Perfect Candidate." She was also an Assistant Director on several notable Saudi films. In 2019, Sara starred in "Dunya's Day", winner of the Special Jury Award at the Sundance Film Festival.





Producer

RAED ALSEMARI is a filmmaker from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. His short film “Dunya’s Day” premiered at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival, where it won the Jury Award for International Fiction. It’s toured over 30 film festivals, including Palm Springs ShortFest, San Francisco Int’l Film Festival, Cairo, and Durban International Film Festivals.

In 2020, Alsemari completed his MFA in Filmmaking at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts. Before that, he obtained his BA in History and Literature at Harvard University. Since 2020, he has been teaching an intensive screenwriting program with the support of the Saudi Film Commission.



Director of Photography

KHALID AL SUDAIRY is a cinematographer based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Previously, Khalid worked on numerous feature films such as “The Perfect Candidate”, “Zero Distance”, “Last Visit”, and “Tickling Giants”.

Khalid worked on independent documentary films with BMC films, as well as his own personal project, the “Doxiadis” documentary. He earned his bachelor’s degree at Wheaton College, majoring in Film and New Media. During those years, he attended a film program at FAMU in Prague. Khalid also completed film-intensive summer programs at New York Film Academy, as well as Studio Institute Global in Los Angeles.





CAST



Jude

IDA ALKUSAY is a Saudi actress. She started her acting career in 2019 by starring in the feature film “Junoon”, which led to her nomination for best actress in a feature film in the London Film Festival. She has also acted in multiple MBC productions, including the show “White Eyeliner”, “Innocent Victims”, and “Cut Off”.

A man with a grey beard and a white kufi is shown in profile, looking out of a window at night. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the window and a small light source behind him. The background is dark, and the window shows a blurred view of the outside world.

Aydarous

BALLAH MOHAMMED ALFADHEL is a Sudanese poet living between Khartoum and Jeddah. His first acting experience was in “Me & Aydarous”. His background in literature and language led to his passion for poetry. He published a compilation of poems titled: *A Forgotten Path is in my Hands*. He also has more than seven manuscripts of poetry.

A man and a woman are shown in a dimly lit room. The man, on the right, is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He has short dark hair and a light beard, and is wearing a grey V-neck shirt over a black long-sleeved shirt. The woman, on the left, is looking down and is out of focus. She has long dark hair and is wearing a red and white patterned top. The background is dark and blurry, suggesting an indoor setting with some objects on shelves.

Faisal

SALEH ALSHIRIAN is a Saudi actor based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. He has a Master's degree in Acting for Screen from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London. In 2018, he studied Acting for Film at the New York Film Academy in Los Angeles. He starred in "Hell/Quit", and his recent works include "Me & Aydarous" and "Survive & Adapt".

A man with a beard and dark hair, wearing large black headphones, is seated in the driver's seat of a dark-colored car at night. He is looking out the open driver-side window. The interior of the car is dimly lit, with some light reflecting off the dashboard and steering wheel. Outside the car, a street lamp is visible, casting a soft glow. The background shows dark trees and a night sky. The word "CREDITS" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters in the center of the image.

CREDITS

Written and Directed By:

Sara Balghonaim

Starring:

Ida Alkusay

Ballah Mohammed Alfadhel

Saleh Alshirian

Produced by:

Raed Alsemari

Salman Almusaad

Director of Photography:

Khalid Alsudairy

Production Designer:

Tamara Kalo

Costume Designer:

Hanouf Abdulrahman

Editor:

Hasan Hadi

Sound Recordist:

Mohammad Al Baassiri

Hair/Makeup Artist:

Nada Alfayez

Music Composer:

Quelque Bourdon

1st Assistant Director:

Sarah Elnawasrah

2nd Assistant Director:

Waleed Alqahtani

Script Supervisor:

Nada Alfayez

1st Assistant Camera:

Waleed Alqahtani

2nd Assistant Camera:

Farah Alturki

Key Grip:

Khalid Ismail

On-Set Photographer:

Reem Monib

Associate Producers:

Khalid Alsudairy

Ida Alkusay

Maryam Sindi



**Production Drivers:**

Biseshar Sah Kanhaiy Sah
Muhammad Ejaz Iqbal
Omar Ben Sumaida

Creative Consultant:

Ajai Vishwanath

Assistant Editor:

Waleed Alqahtani

Sound Editor / Mixer:

Sara Kaddouri

Colorist:

Elias Nousiopoulos

VFX Producer:

Sam Motamedi

Graphics:

Marina Xarri

Special Thanks:

Karen Madar
Saleem Homs

Sameh Zoabi
Julia Solomonoff
Andrew Maclean
Todd Solondz
Mashary Balghonaim
Khairia Alaska
Monera Alsudairy
Hana Almodaimeegh
Fahad Althenayan
Salman Aldukheil
Sara Almutlaq
Noor Taher
Rahaf Ibrahim
Nasser Almulhim
Basma Alrasheed
Ibrahim Ali Bakhsh
Sarah M. Salman
Reema Alsudairy
Reem Alsowailam
Ahmed Alhouwaidi
Abdulaziz Alhusainan
Faisal Aldoukhi
Ahmad Alrajeh
Nada AlMojadedi
Raneen Bukhari
Nour Tufenkeji

Hessa Al Athel
Faisal Baltuyour
Mohamed Aboujawdah
Barbara Schock
John Tintori
Elizabeth Elsass
Lauren Fritz
Jennifer Ruff
Abdulaziz Almutairi
Abdulaziz Albraik
Fahad Alsuwayan

TECH SPECS

Saudi Arabia
8 minutes
2022
Arabic (English subtitles)
24 fps

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