

FROM A TO B PRESS KIT



World Premiere at Abu Dhabi Film Festival
October 23, 2014

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Logline: Three estranged childhood friends (Omar, Ramy, Jay), travel on a road trip from Abu Dhabi to Beirut in memory of their lost friend. If what happens en route doesn't make them crazy, it might just bring them closer.

Synopsis: The year is 2011 and Omar (Rifaai) finds himself still racked with guilt over the death of his best friend Hady, who passed away five years ago. Now, just days away from the birth of his first child, he decides to take the road trip they never got to take...much to the dismay of his very pregnant wife.

Omar reaches out to his estranged high school friends Jay (Albutairi) and Ramy (Alfons) who have lost touch since Hady's death to take the road trip in his memory.

Jay, now a playboy/ wannabe DJ, and Ramy, a #activist (with 737 twitter followers!), take some convincing, but finally agree to the trip. The boys decide to drive from Abu Dhabi – via Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria to arrive in Beirut, on what would have been Hady's twenty-fifth birthday.

Their journey is filled with speedbumps - breakdowns, wrong turns, shady mechanics and a camel or two. If all of this doesn't drive them crazy, it might just bring them closer.

Directors Statement

I have always had this idea about doing a road trip film set in the Middle East. Since my first film, City of Life was a drama, I really wanted to try something that had some comedy. When discussing the early concept, I wanted to follow a route that would be interesting for Arab audiences. Abu Dhabi was my first choice being the capital city of the UAE - and being that my first film was about Dubai, it was important for me to start there. On the journey from Abu Dhabi to Beirut, the landscape changes so drastically from one place to the next. I love being able to show that. There are also significant cultural changes as you cross the different borders. My ultimate goal is to make films that are accessible to all audiences, but I especially hope that From A to B resonates with the Arab audiences.

Bios

Ali F. Mostafa - director

With his father from Dubai, and mother from London, Ali grew up in the UAE with a love for cinema. Following his passion, Ali went on to pursue a Masters degree in Filmmaking from the prestigious London Film School.

In 2006, Ali established a production company called AFM Films to have the creative freedom to write and produce cutting edge work. Today, AFM Films produces shorts, documentaries, corporate videos, commercials, and feature films

In 2009, he released his debut feature, *City of Life*, breaking box office records for an Emirati film. Ali's first big budget feature captured the hearts and minds of the UAE and the attention of global audiences.

As one of the pioneers of Emirati cinema, he has received numerous accolades during his career. His short film 'Under the Sun' won 'Best Emirates Film' at the Emirates Film Competition. Dubai International Film Festival named him 'Best Emirati Filmmaker', while Digital Studio magazine awarded him 'Young Filmmaker of the Year'.

While expanding his activities, Ali became an ambassador for various brands including Range Rover. In 2011 Ali was asked to develop the first ever online series in the region for the brand – 'Classified'.

After *City of Life*, Ali conceived the idea for *From A to B* and developed it into a script in collaboration with Mohamed Hefzy. In 2014, Image Nation and twofour54 co-produced the film in collaboration with Rotana which will be the first Emirati film to open the Abu Dhabi Film fest.

Mohamed Hefzy - Screenwriter, Producer

Already a thriving producer and scriptwriter, Mohamed Hefzy has continuously delivered on excellence through creating original films that always meet critics' expectations. In the last 12 months, his films have been officially selected and in some cases won awards in the five major festivals (Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Toronto, and Sundance). Audiences worldwide have praised his high-quality work, and fans have expressed their admiration to him as a talented Egyptian scriptwriter. Hefzy recently co-produced the British movie, *My Brother the Devil*, which has already been internationally commended and awarded for its dramatic debut. In 2011, he produced a number of films that have been recognized worldwide and won international awards, including *Tahrir 2011*. Both the audience and award committees have constantly received Hefzy's work with great acclaim. This has placed him on a fresh content-based platform in the Arab world, proving that stereotypes can be broken. Hefzy also teaches scriptwriting courses in the American University in Cairo.

Paul Baboudjian – Bio

Started his career working both creatively and managerially in the media industry (advertising, television and film). He produced short films and documentary projects in various Countries of the Mediterranean area, developing an international experience and reputation. He actively contributed to the setup of Screen Institute Beirut, a Lebanese NGO devoted to supporting the documentary film industry in the MENA region and is strongly committed to promote and develop an Arab screen culture that reflects the views, issues and interests of audiences and communities in the Arab world and to foster international collaboration and networks.

Among others, he produced the award winning (Black Pearl Award at ADFF 2010) film "Chatti Ya Dini" and supported two of the most successful documentaries of the Arab world "Teta Alf Marra" – 2010 and "A World Not Ours" – 2012.

Baboudjian is currently working on a new Emirati feature.

Fahad Albutairi – ‘Jay’ Yousef

Fahad Albutairi was born in Khobar, Saudi Arabia. Albutairi began performing stand-up comedy as a student at the University of Texas at Austin, graduating in 2007. His first material dealt with his identity as a Saudi foreign student studying in post-9/11 America. He considers his real start to have been at the open mic nights at the Cap City Comedy Club in Austin. His debut as a stand-up comedian in the Arab World was in 2008, opening for Ahmed Ahmed and Maz Jobrani in Bahrain alongside a host of other local comedians as part of the Axis of Evil Comedy Tour.

Since then, he has shared the stage with the likes of Gabriel Iglesias, Sebastian Maniscalco, Bobby Lee, Erik Griffin, Dean Edwards, Angelo Tsarouchas, Aron Kader and Dean Obeidallah. Albutairi performs regularly in Saudi Arabia. Although he was initially worried about how audiences in Saudi Arabia might receive stand-up comedy, his first performance in Saudi Arabia was in Riyadh in February 2009, which attracted over 1,200 audience members. On November 3, 2009, Albutairi was chosen out of 65 English-speaking contestants as the winner of the "Be a Part of the Amman Stand-up Comedy Festival 2009" Contest.

Fahad's fame has now gone viral with the launch of his popular YouTube channel *La Yekthar Show*. Since its launch in 2010, the show and its sister channel *Temsa7LY* has amassed over 1million subscribers and over 100million video views.

From A to B will be Fahad's first feature film.

Shadi Alfons - Ramy

Egyptian comedy writer Shadi started his career as a copywriter for an advertising agency after graduating from the American University in Cairo with a degree in Performing Visual Arts. During this time, Shadi freelanced as a voice over artist and actor for a number of regional commercials including Pepsi, Vodafone, Nokia and Pfizer.

In 2011, Shadi joined the critically acclaimed *Bernameg AL Bernameg* hosted by Bassem Youssef as a writer and a featured player and remained at the show for over two years until the show ended mid-2014.

Shadi has guest starred in numerous hit TV shows in Egypt including 'Al Kabeer Awi' starring Ahmed Mekky and Donia Sameer Ghanem.

In Ramadan 2014, Shadi starred alongside his 2 other writer/actor colleagues, Ayman Wattar and Khaled Mansour, in a Vodafone powered hit show, 'Ramadan Galak'.

From A to B is Shadi's first feature film, and he aims to continue acting in movies, until one day he fulfills his dream of starring in Hollywood blockbusters.

Fadi Rifaai - Omar

Twenty-two-year old Fadi, was a practicing Civil Engineer before professionally pursuing his dream career as an actor.

As a student of the American University of Sharjah, Fadi was a member of the Performing Arts Department, where he received three years of theatrical education by American Director Anthony Tassa.

He played lead roles in several plays and musicals including Willy Russells's *Blood Brothers*, Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, and Mansour Rahbani's *Summer 840*. Fadi also starred in Bilal Al Beirakdar's short film *Click*, which was recognized by a number of film festivals in the Middle East.

From A to B will be Fadi's first acting role in a feature film.

Madeline Zima – Samantha

Madeline Zima was born in New Haven, Connecticut and began acting at an early age. She and her sister were both discovered by Woody Allen for his movie *Alice* (1990). In 1992, she booked the role of Emma in 'The Hand that Rocks the Cradle' alongside Julianne Moore – the pair's first feature film.

After numerous roles on sit-com pilots and film shorts, she landed a starring role on 'The Nanny' (1993) as Grace Sheffield. Here is where Madeline honed her comic timing on the six-year CBS comic hit that is now a linchpin of the Lifetime daily programming in the US.

After numerous stints on popular TV movies, Madeline was chosen to play Lucille Ball as a teenager, in the CBS mini-series, 'Lucy' (2003) after a worldwide casting call. She followed that up by playing the wicked stepsister of Hilary Duff in 'A Cinderella Story' (2004).

In a return to television, she agreed to play the mysterious and destructive character 'Mia' on the hit Showtime series, 'Californication' (2007) starring opposite David Duchovny. In 2009, Zima joined the cast of 'Heroes' as Gretchen Berg, Claire Bennett's quirky roommate.

Leem Lubany – Shadya

Leem Lubany appears as Shadya in 'From A to B' a dramedy revolving around a road trip taken by three childhood friends directed by Emirati director Ali F Mostafa.

Lubany made her screen debut in the Oscar-nominated film by Hany Abu-Assad 'Omar'.

Lubany recently wrapped a starring role in 'Rock the Kashbash' alongside Billy Murray, Bruce Willis and Kate Hudson, Danny McBride, Scott Caan and Zooey Deschanel. Lubany will play Salima, a young Pashtun singer who is discovered by Richie Lanz (Murray), a has-been rock manager when he visits her Village while on a USO tour to Afghanistan. Against the wishes of Salima's family, on the run from an Afghan warlord and American mercenaries, Richie manages Salima through Afghanistan's version of 'American Idol', the wildly popular 'Afghan Star'. In the film, Leem will sing four songs by this year's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens).

The talented Harduf high school student recently added acting to her passion for singing and dancing. Born in Nazareth, Leem started ballet at a very young age, then turned to singing at 13. She is also an avid photographer and looks forward to exhibiting her work one day.

Christina Ulsparre – Julie

Christina is an actor and singer of half Spanish and half Swedish descent but was born and raised in London. She moved to Madrid when she was 14, began modelling and featured in a few episodes of a Spanish TV series.

When she returned to the UK for university, she graduated with a First Class degree in English and Philosophy and was very active in the Drama community. She then attended Drama School where she was trained in classical theatre and modern screen acting by industry professionals. Since graduating, she has appeared in a various feature films, a TV series, short films, a radio drama and numerous commercials in many different countries. She is equally adept at comedy and drama. She is currently working on a new TV series in London.

Film Specs:

- Director: Ali F. Mostafa
- Producers: Paul Baboudjian, Mohammed Hefzy, Ali F. Mostafa
- Runtime: 107 min
- Exhibition Format: **DCP**
- Premiere: World Premiere
- Aspect Ratio: 2.40:1
- Colour: **Colour**
- Language: **English / Arabic**
- Cinematographer: **Michel Dierickx**
- Screenwriter: **Mohammed Hefzy with with Ashraf Hamdi, Ronnie Khalil and Ali F. Mostafa**
- Composer: n/a
- Production designer: Petra Abousleiman
- Middle Eastern Distributor: **Empire**