

Housekeeping

Lebanon

Mazen KHALED



Genre: Drama, Musical
Format: 35mm, HD
Estimated Running Time: 100 min.

Budget:
US\$ 495,000 (HK\$ 3,861,000)
Funds Secured:
US\$ 100,000 (HK\$ 780,000)

Producers:
Paul LEE
Fadi GANNI

Writing Credit:
Mazen KHALED

Production Company:
ii Films

HAF Goals:
Funds, Co-producers,
Sales agents, Pre-sales

Contact:
ii Films (Mazen KHALED)

Address:
Hamra Main Street,
Strand Building, 3rd Floor.
PO Box: 113-5875. Beirut, Lebanon.

Tel: +961-1741148

Email: mazen.khaled@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Housekeeping is about the changing Middle East. It is about parents and their experiences with their children's sexual identity, and the interplay among repression, fantasy, sexuality, and parenthood. Set in present day Beirut, it is the story of Farida, a strong-willed, middle-aged Kurdish cleaning woman in a posh neighborhood who has come to believe that she shares the same values, traditions, and lifestyle as her upper class clients. But underneath it all she's not who she thinks she is. By the end of the film, this loving mother who is totally devoted to her family, will turn on her only son, and stab him to death.

SYNOPSIS

As the film opens, the audience sees the world as if it's a dream. There's a child here, who may or may not be Farida, the main character. Are these her memories? The film fades out and into the present, everyday life of Farida, a middle-aged cleaning woman living in a nice Beirut neighborhood, who is obsessed with a reality show cast in the mold of *American Idol*. Her favorite contestant is a sexy female singer who has been burning up the stage with her provocative dance numbers.

An independent woman, Farida has built a living for herself and her family through sheer force of will. She cleans houses for several clients from different social spheres: Madame Nadia, an upper class woman whose son is planning on marrying a foreign woman and whose late husband helped Farida get the lease to her apartment on the same posh street where they live; Hazem, a gay man in his 30's; the ASWADS, a couple with two young daughters and a terminally ill mother. Farida feels like she's one of them, part of their circle.

She learns just how shallow their connection is now that her lease is up and her landlord is raising the rent. Faced with eviction and a humiliating retreat to her husband's village in eastern Syria, she seeks help from her clients, but all they do is express non-committal sympathy. They expect her to listen to their problems and help them with their issues, but they pay her for that. They're not her friends; they won't lend her money, and they won't try to influence her landlord. The only people she has any real solidarity with are those of her own social level to whom she previously felt superior.

The one thing everyone loves to talk about is the TV show. The show's three months match Farida's final three months in her apartment, and the show is building to a climax at the same time that she faces eviction. The show's results are constantly being broadcast on the news; and as the tension mounts in Farida's life, she becomes increasingly desperate, as the fate of her favorite contestant becomes more desperate as well. Both of them are reaching crisis points where one may be voted off the show, and the other may lose everything she has worked for her entire life.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Everything gets dirty, but Lebanese houses are kept obsessively clean, usually with the help of a cleaning lady. But *Housekeeping* is about more than just cleaning houses – it is also about cleansing our minds. It is about getting into the dusty cracks between the different spaces in the social net and washing them out, exposing what's there. The tensions between all the different parts of society will be portrayed in *Housekeeping*, through the interactions of a large, lively cast of characters.

The film itself will unfold on three parallel levels: the main story of Farida, filmed in a naturalistic manner; flashbacks or dreams such as in the first scene that reveal themselves slowly and obliquely; and the actual studio drama of the reality show that will be shot in the high drama, high gloss manner of a live television event. The music sung by the contestants on the show will be modern covers of classic Arabic songs of the 50's and 60's, many of which have lyrics deemed too racy or controversial to be sung today. I will be working with local and international musicians to repurpose and re-record these songs, to shake off the dust, and to match them to the psychological and emotional states of the film's characters.

At its heart, *Housekeeping* is about motherhood, a vital subject in the Arab world, where mothers are put on pedestals, and not treated as normal human beings with wants and needs, but as inhuman avatars of virtue and modesty. Not so in *Housekeeping*. Here we will shatter the taboos that surround motherhood, and also look at the changing face of masculinity in the Arab world.

DIRECTOR

Mazen KHALED studied public policy and political studies both at the American University of Beirut and at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. Fluent in English and Arabic, he worked as a creative director at various advertising agencies, directing television commercials and corporate films. He is one of the founders of EXIST, an arts collective in Beirut, and has directed numerous short films, most recently *My Queer Samsara* which premiered at the 39th International Film Festival Rotterdam, and *Mohammed and the Wings*, which he shot in February 2010.

PRODUCERS

Paul LEE was born in Hong Kong and graduated from the University of Toronto. Since 1991 he has curated and programmed film festivals around the world. He has also produced many films by first-time filmmakers, such as Jenni OLSON's *The Joy of Life*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, as well as Dominique CARDONA and Laurie COLBERT's *Below the Belt* which premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival. His own short films, *Thick Lips Thin Lips*, *These Shoes Weren't Made for Walking* and *The Offering* have won over eighty awards, and screened at hundreds of international film festivals. He also handles International Marketing for the Cinema Development Fund in Kyrgyzstan, and for the Swedish film distributor, Glimz AB.

Fadi GANNI was born in Beirut, Lebanon. He studied at the American University of Beirut and graduated from Concordia University in Montreal. Mr. GANNI is a CPA and has been working in the investment and the auditing and training fields for more than 20 years. He recently joined forces with ii Films with his valuable financial consulting experience.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

ii Films is a Beirut-based company dedicated to the creation of a new cinema scene in Lebanon. It offers support to young filmmakers through technical assistance, produces feature films based in Lebanon, and presents workshops, screenings and film festivals. ii Films also provides logistical support for foreign film crews working in Lebanon.