

SPECIAL PRESENTATION



مناورة

MANARA

A FILM BY ZAYN ALEXANDER

HOW FAR WOULD YOU GO TO PROTECT A SECRET?

ZMA ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS "MANARA" HALA BASMA SAFIEDDINE ZAYN ALEXANDER PASCALE SEIGNEURIE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ARON MEINHARDT ART DIRECTION MARITA AKL AND LAURA MENASSA SOUND DESIGN HAITHAM ATME MUSIC BY SIMON TAUFIQUE
COLOR GRADING BELAL HIBRI PRODUCED BY ZAYN ALEXANDER EDITED BY STEPHANIE NASSAR EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS PASCALE SEIGNEURIE AND ARON MEINHARDT ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DAHLIA NEMLICH SCREENPLAY BY PASCALE SEIGNEURIE DIRECTED BY ZAYN ALEXANDER

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A FILM BY ZAYN ALEXANDER

منازة

M A N A R A

PRODUCTION TYPE	Short Film
RUNTIME	15 minutes
GENRE	Drama
COMPLETION DATE	2019
LANGUAGE	Arabic
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Lebanon
COUNTRY OF FILMING	Lebanon
FORMAT	1920x1080, 25fps, 1:85:1, Color, Stereo
RATING	Not Yet Rated



SHORT SYNOPSIS

Tragedy strikes when the Zayyad family loses its patriarch under mysterious circumstances, leaving the surviving members to fend for themselves within a judgmental community in Southern Lebanon.

LONG SYNOPSIS

In a coastal town in Southern Lebanon, the Zayyad family seemed to have it all: A hotel by the sea, a lasting marriage, and strong family ties. But this seemingly perfect portrait takes a hit when the father dies under mysterious circumstances. Alia, the bereaved wife, is intent on lying about her husband's cause of death in order to maintain appearances, despite the vehement objections of her adult children, Rami and Noura. One hour before the mourners' arrival, and still struggling to agree on a course of action, Alia, Noura and Rami are forced to reevaluate the long dysfunctional family dynamic that brought them here in the first place.



DIRECTOR STATEMENT

“Manara” began from a deep-rooted frustration and angst with a culture that is obsessed with appearances. An older generation who is willing to risk their well being and the well being of their children as long as they remain intact in the eyes of their immediate community, family, and the country as a whole.

With that in mind, we chose to tell a story about an affluent family in conservative Southern Lebanon who has just been dealt a “scandal”, which, if exposed, might stain them for the rest of their lives. How far is this family going to go to protect their secret? At the center is a woman who strives to remain dignified and put together in front of the world. She’s engrossed in her image to the detriment of her family. She has decided that living in dysfunction and keeping things bottled up is healthier for her and her family than going public with her secret.

Manara means lighthouse. A lighthouse is a steady and grounded structure that leads people to safety and away from danger, risk, and adversity. A lighthouse symbolizes the way forward and helps in navigating our way through rough waters. What happens when that light is extinguished? How then do we move from adversity?

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHY

Zayn Alexander is a New York-based actor and director of Lebanese origin. In 2018, Alexander's directorial debut, "Abroad", made its world premiere at the 33rd Santa Barbara International Film Festival. Alexander's second directorial effort, "Manara", debuted during the 76th Venice Film Festival in the Giornate degli Autori section (Venice Days).





CAST

Hala Basma Safieddine

Hala Basma Safieddine is a Lebanese actress known for her role as “Alia” in the short drama Manara. A mother of two, Hala currently resides in Toulouse, France.

Zayn Alexander

Zayn Alexander is a Lebanese actor and director, best known for his films “Abroad” and “Manara”. Alexander has also performed on stage starring in several productions including Between The Seas’ production of “Could You Please Look Into The Camera?” and ETNY Theater Company’s production of “Socrates on Trial”.





Pascale Seigneurie

Pascale Seigneurie is a Lebanese-American actress, writer and dancer currently trained at the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique in Paris and Fordham University in New York. Her stage work includes performances with multicultural New York theatre companies such as The Lark, Noor Theatre and Polybe+Seats.

As a film actress, she recently played the lead role in *Roads to Olympia*, a feature-length sports drama directed by Ramazan Nanayev, as well as multiple award-winning shorts, three of which she also wrote: *Abroad* (2018 Santa Barbara International Film Festival), *Manara* (2019 Venice Film Festival) and *Roadblock* (currently in post-production).

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

2019 VENICE DAYS

16th Giornate degli Autori
during the 76th Venice
Film Festival

NOMINATED

TANIT D'OR

2019 Carthage Film Festival

WINNER

LAGUNA SUD AWARD FOR BEST SHORT FILM

*5th edition of "Laguna Sud,
Il Cinema fuori dal Palazzo" /*
Laguna Sud, The Cinema
Outside the Palace

WINNER

THE AHMED KHEDR AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ARAB FILMMAKING

2020 ÉCU The European
Independent Film Festival

WINNER

SILVER HYPATIA AWARD FOR BEST NARRATIVE SHORT FILM

*6th Alexandria Short
Film Festival*

CAST

ALIA Hala Basma Safieddine

RAMI Zayn Alexander

NOURA Pascale Seigneurie

CREW

MUSIC BY Simon Taufique

EDITOR Stephanie Nassar

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Aron Meinhardt

ART DIRECTION Marita Akl, Laura Menassa

SOUND DESIGN Haitham Atme

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Dahlia Nemlich

COLOR GRADING Belal Hibri

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS Pascale Seigneurie, Aron Meinhardt

PRODUCED BY Zayn Alexander

SCREENPLAY BY Pascale Seigneurie

DIRECTED BY Zayn Alexander

CONTACT

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MENA FESTIVAL DISTRIBUTION (MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA)

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MANARA: Highlights Lebanon's Increasing Mental Health Crisis

After the premiere of his latest short film, *Manara*, at the Venice Film Festival in 2019, director Zayn Alexander explained that the film grew out of his angst and frustration with Lebanese culture and its obsession with appearances, and the picture perfect illusion forced to remain intact towards the outside community.

Filled with strong performances from its three leads and highlighting a crisis sweeping silently throughout Lebanon, *Manara* is densely packed within its fifteen-minute runtime. Set against a stunning coastal backdrop, the film is gorgeously shot by cinematographer Aron Meinhardt. Alexander has something to say about his country's behavioural and psychological attitudes and it is remarkable what he manages to achieve in such a short time frame.

A FAMILY CONSUMED BY GRIEF

"*Manara* means lighthouse. A lighthouse is a steady and grounded structure that leads people to safety and away from danger, risk, and adversity. A lighthouse symbolises the way forward and helps in navigating our way through rough waters. What happens when that light is extinguished? How then do we move from adversity?"

This is the question posed by Alexander and screenwriter Pascale Seigneurie — who previously collaborated on the short film, *Abroad* (2018). After tragedy falls upon Alia Zayyed (Hala Basma Safieddine) and her two children, Rami and Noura (Alexander and Seigneurie), the three surviving members, prepare for the funeral of the family's patriarch who has died under mysterious circumstances. With little time before mourners and locals arrive to pay their respects, Alia takes out her anger on her children and desperately wants them to keep the reason for their father's death a secret. However, Rami and Noura don't want to hide and Rami, in particular, rejects the idea, "Lying about what happened, that's not weakness?" Alia quickly responds with a firm, "Yes". Rami and Noura just want to grieve their beloved father in peace, without their mother concerning about possible judgmental locals.

Shot in the beautiful Al-Fanar Resort in Tyre, Southern Lebanon, the entirety of the film takes place around a lighthouse; symbolising what Alexander said about navigating through rough waters. On the inside of the lighthouse; however, the family dynamic is crumbling due to secrecy. Anger and grief overcome Alia and, a moment of vitriol pierces through her veins, she snaps at Rami, "You're almost

thirty and accomplished nothing." Likewise, Rami and Noura are struggling to grieve and take out their frustrations on their mother and her inability to let go of avoiding embarrassment.

MANARA: CONCLUSION

Alexander does a wonderful job of examining a culture struggling with an increasing mental health crisis. *Manara* feels almost like a mini-play and it deserves to be a part of the conversation, and Alexander and Seigneurie are confident in discussing these vital issues. Mental health is a global crisis at the moment but some cultures struggle to openly discuss these matters more than others. With social media and technology, we are more connected than ever, yet we have never been so disconnected.

Manara is thoughtful and quietly powerful, and feels particularly timely.

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