



Noujaim Films Presents:

RAFEA: SOLAR MAMA

A film by
Mona Eldaief &
Jehane Noujaim

Rafea is a Bedouin living on the Jordan-Iraq border. She and 30 illiterate grandmothers from around the world will travel to The Barefoot College in India to become Solar Engineers.

If she succeeds, she will power her entire village, but can she re-wire the traditional minds of her Bedouin community?

www.rafeasolarmama.com
www.facebook.com/RafeaSolarMama
www.twitter.com/RafeaSolarMama

barefootengineers@gmail.com
+1 718 213 4959

Toronto International Film Festival 2012
DOC NYC 2012 – Audience Award & Special Jury Prize
International Documentary Film Festival, Amsterdam 2012 – Oxfam Global Justice Award
Doha Tribeca International Film Festival 2012
Sundance Film Festival 2013 – Stories of Change Convening
Sheffield Documentary Festival 2013
Human Rights Watch Film Festival 2013 – London, Chicago, NYC
Movies That Matter Festival 2013 – The Hague
International Documentary Film Festival Munich 2013
International Documentary Festival in Agadir, Morocco 2013
Documentary Edge Festival Auckland 2013
Cleveland International Film Festival 2013
Wakefield International Film Festival 2013 – Audience Award

RAFEA: SOLAR MAMA



Synopsis

“If we are going to see real development in the world then our best investment is women” -- Desmond Tutu

Rafea is a Bedouin woman who lives with her four daughters in one of Jordan’s poorest desert villages on the Iraqi border.

She is given a chance to travel to India to attend the Barefoot College, where illiterate mothers and grandmothers from around the world are trained in 6 months to be solar engineers. If Rafea succeeds, she will be able to electrify her village, train more engineers, and provide for her daughters.

Even when she returns as the first female solar engineer in the country, her real challenge will have just begun.

Will she find support for her new venture? Will she be able to inspire the other women in the village to join her and change their lives? And most importantly, will she be able to re-wire the traditional minds of some of the members of her Bedouin community that stand in her way?

RAFEA: SOLAR MAMA

Director's Statement

Wherever we come from, at one point in our lives, we have all been given a challenge that we doubted we were capable of. This film tells a very human story of struggle and success against all odds.

Our film is about one woman's journey away from her village for very the first time – to fly to India -- to get an education in solar engineering. As two Arab – American directors, we are well aware that challenges exist for women across the world— but with very different dimensions. By filming Rafea's very human and intimate journey to towards a new life, we have sought to make her struggle accessible to men and women worldwide. It is only by seeing the possibility of change that we believe that people on the ground can begin to imagine and be inspired to act. If a woman with a few years of schooling who has never left her village is able to learn solar engineering in a matter of months, what is impossible in the world? We do not believe that a film alone can change societies and cultural taboos ... but the people that watch them can.

Programs like The Barefoot College, and women like Rafea who dare to make a difference, have started a domino effect of swift technological & cultural progress in rural areas of the world that few knew existed. These women don't just learn, they will one day each teach another group of women-- and the process of learning, empowering, illuminating, and inspiring will spread exponentially. Few know of the Barefoot College, and its great impact on the remote corners of our world, but through Rafea's un-imaginable tale, this film will spread a simple idea-- that great change starts small but has the potential to be the lightning rod that creates a ripple effect. A recent screening of "Rafea" in Cairo left audience members inspired. Many called after the screening asking us for copies of the film to give to their mothers, and sisters and aunts and grandmothers—because Rafea's experiences needed to be seen to be believed.

Rafea is a woman who stood outside of the box to reach for her goals, she shook up the world around her and ultimately succeeded in winning the full support of those who initially resisted the most. But as Larel Thatcher Ulrich says "well-behaved women rarely make history," and we hope to do whatever we can to make sure that Rafea's story travels to the far corners of the world and emboldens and encourages women of around the world for years to come.

RAFEA: SOLAR MAMA

The Filmmakers



Jehane Noujaim, Director

Jehane Noujaim is a filmmaker (*Control Room*, *Startup.com*) who was raised in Cairo, Egypt where she began her career as a photographer. Following a BA in Film and Philosophy at Harvard, she was awarded the Gardiner fellowship under which she directed *Mokattam* (1998). Noujaim went on to produce and direct *Startup.com* in association with Pennebaker Hegedus Films, winning the DGA's Director award in 2001, and *Control Room* (2004).

When awarded the prestigious TEDPrize in 2006, she founded *Pangea Day* —a four-hour live global broadcast that briefly united the world through the power of film. She also has worked in both the Middle East and the U.S. as a co-director on *Egypt: We Are Watching You*, which premiered as one of the ten films in the *Why Democracy?* series focusing on contemporary democracy around the globe, and as executive producer on *Encounter Point*, and *Budrus*. Her film with Mona Eldaief, *Rafea: Solar Mama*, will premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival 2012, while *The Square* just completed filming in Cairo and is in post production.

RAFEA: SOLAR MAMA

Jehane Noujaim, Filmography

The Square (Documentary)
Director, 2013

Rafea: Solar Mama (Documentary)
Director, 2012

Budrus (Documentary)
Executive Producer, 2009

3 Dancers (Documentary Short)
Camera, 2007

Storm From The South (Documentary)
Co-Director, 2006

Encounter Point (Documentary)
Executive Producer, 2006

Control Room (Documentary)
Executive Producer, Director, Cinematographer & Writer, 2004

Born Rich (Documentary)
Second Camera, 2003

Only the Strong Survive (Documentary)
Cinematography, 2002

Startup.com (Documentary)
Executive Producer, Director, Cinematographer & Editor, 2001

Down From The Mountain (Documentary)
Cinematography, 2000

RAFEA: SOLAR MAMA



Mona Eldaief, Director

Mona Eldaief works as a director, director of photography, and editor on documentary film and television projects around the world. Born in Cairo, Egypt and raised in the United States, she graduated from New York University with a degree in political science and photography. Documentary feature credits include ***Control Room***, ***A Wedding In Ramallah***, and ***Her Name Is Zelda***. Television credits include programs for ***PBS Frontline World***, ***Discovery Networks***, ***Travel Channel***, ***ABC News***, and ***MTV News and Docs***.

With a goal of using video advocacy as a tool for social change Mona started her career as the producer of ***MTV News Unfiltered***, a show in the mid 90's which pioneered the use of first person documentary as a platform for democratic television. The show featured user generated segments about social issues. Mona went on to implement a video diary exchange program in the Middle East between young Palestinians and Israelis promoting dialogue and understanding as a step towards conflict resolution.

She continued documenting global stories through video exchange for the international film event ***Pangea Day***. For this live broadcast, Mona sent camera phones to NGOs and UNHCR refugee camps around the world and produced and edited their first-person film narratives.

RAFEA: SOLAR MAMA

Mona Eldaief, Filmography

Director

Rafea : Solar Mama, 2012

Shakespeare Harlem Blu, 2009

Who am I ?(Holy Land Diaries), 2007

Her Name is Zelda, 2003

Cinematography

First Comes Love, 2012

Rafea : Solar Mama, 2012

Frontline/World – Egypt: Middle East, Inc., 2009

Her Name Is Zelda, 2003

A Wedding in Ramallah, 2002

World Birthday TV, 2002

[Startup.com](#), 2001

Music Department

Control Room, 2004

Editorial Department

Pangea Day, 2008

Control Room, 2004

Her Name is Zelda, 2003

RAFEA: SOLAR MAMA

The Producers

Mike Lerner, Executive Producer

Mike Lerner has been producing arts, travel and popular culture documentaries for twenty years. He has produced films in many countries from the Middle East to South America, and from Central Asia to the Far East. He has made films for BBC, Channel Four, Five, ITV, Discovery and Travel Channel; the subjects include *Picasso*, *Turkmenbashi*, *The Sistine Chapel*, *Hawkwind* and *Afghanistan*.

Mike joined Mentorn Films as a researcher in 1986. Worked on a variety of arts magazine programmes including *01 For London* as a researcher then producer as well as producing a large number of arts documentaries and entertainment and music programmes for BBC, ITV and Channel Four.

In 1997 Mike founded ZCZ Films with Waldemar Januszczak producing landmark arts and travel documentaries for British Broadcasters including, *The Truth About Art*, *Music of the Millennium*, *Supercities With Will Alsop*, *Picasso: Magic Sex and Death*, *Gauguin: The Full Story*, *Van Gogh: The Full Story*, *Every Picture Tells a Story*, *Travels In Virtual Japan*, *The Michelangelo Code: Secrets of The Sistine Chapel*, *Paradise Found – A History of Islamic Art*, *What Age Can You Start Being An Artist*, *Beijing Swings*, *Kazakhstan Swings*, *Turkmenabashi – The Happy Dictator*, *Hawkwind – Do Not Panic and Sickert Vs Sargent*, *HD Atlas Japan*.

March 2007, Mike established Roast Beef Productions with Martin Herring and Ian Wright, producing *America*, *The Wright Way*, *Wright Out of Bounds* for the Travel Channel/Discovery, *Afghan Star*, *Big in Dubai*, *Vote Afghanistan!*, *A Bipolar Expedition*, *Silencing the Song*, *Invite Mr. Wright*, *The Miracle Baby of Haiti*, *Hell and Back Again*, *The Pet Detectives*, *Smash and Grab – The Story of the Pink Panthers*, *Show Trial – The Story of Pussy Riot*, *Michael Lane – Life and Death*, *A Whole Lott More*, *White Elephants* and *First To Fall*.

Alexandra Johnes, Supervising Producer

Alexandra Johnes is a NYC-based producer, most known for producing feature documentaries for Oscar-winning director Alex Gibney and award-winning filmmaker Eugene Jarecki. From 2007 – 2012, Alexandra ran Gibney's company, Jigsaw Productions, while simultaneously producing several of his documentaries, including "Magic Trip: Ken Kesey's Search for a Kool Place," "Client 9: The Rise and Fall of Eliot Spitzer," "Casino Jack & The United States of Money," and "Freakonomics." For Eugene Jarecki, she served as a consulting producer on "Reagan" and "The House I Live In," winner of the 2012 Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury prize and slated for an October 2012 release. Alexandra's most recent collaboration with Gibney, "Mea Maxima Culpa: Silence in the House of God," an investigation of sex abuse in the Catholic Church, premieres at the 2012 Toronto Film Festival. Production partners on her films have included Participant Media, HBO, Magnolia Pictures, A&E, and BBC

RAFEA: SOLAR MAMA

among others. A graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, Alexandra was recently selected as one of eight US producers for the 2012 TAP / IFP Producing Fellowship.

Mette Heide, Producer

Mette Heide is an award winning producer and owner of +plus pictures ApS. Mette has worked as a producer for the past 18 years.

Recent titles include Lauren Greenfield's Sundance winner for the US directing award "Queen of Versailles", "Rent a Family" and "The Invention of Dr. Nakamats" by Kaspar Astrup Schröder, "The Record Breaker" by Brian McGinn, Danish Academy Award for best documentary, "Little Miss Grown Up" by Anders Gustafsson.

Former titles include: "Honestly, mum and dad". TV format sold to 22 territories world wide. "Why Democracy?", 10 part series, including: Emmy nominee "Please Vote for Me", Banff winner "Iron Ladies of Liberia". The film was also winner of the MDGs Award and One World Media Awards, London. "Milosevic on Trial", Danish Academy Award for best feature documentary 2008. Best Doc Production 2008, CPH:DOX. Best European Co-Production, EBU 2007. "Liberace of Baghdad" by Sean McAllister, winner of the Jury Special Prize at The Sundance Film Festival

+plus pictures is a Danish independent award winning production company producing high quality factual television and documentaries for the domestic and the international market. The company works with Danish as well as international talent and have worked with broadcasters world-wide, including the BBC, Channel 4, ITVS, ZDF, SVT, NRK, TV 2 Norway, VPRO, DR-TV, TV 2.

Mette Heide has a Masters degree in Political Science and Film- and Media studies.

Karim Amer, Co-Producer

In 2011 Karim Amer cofounded Maktube Productions, to focus on developing media content from the Middle East. He has been producing films with award director Jehane Noujaim, with a focus on Middle Eastern stories including, *The Square*, chronicling the events of the Tahrir Square revolution., and *Voting for God*, a documentary film covering the first democratic elections in Egypt.

RAFEA: SOLAR MAMA

Production Stills



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