Voices Breaking Boundaries presents

HOUSTON PALESTINE FILM FESTIVAL

Admission $5; 5-night Film Pass $20 (excluding May 13 screening at Museum of Fine Arts Houston)
May 11-13 and May 18-20, 2007, 7:00 pm every night

(HOUSTON, April 18, 2007)—Voices Breaking Boundaries is pleased to present for the first time a Houston Palestine Film Festival. This exciting festival, cosponsored by The Station, Rice Cinema and Fotofest Inc., will bring not only cutting edge new cinema from Palestine about Palestine but will also present three directors Lina Makboul, Nida Sinnokrot and Elle Flanders along with political analyst/academic/journalist (and Angry Arab) As'ad Abu Khalil and Rice University Associate professor Ussama Makdisi.

The first annual Houston Palestine Film Festival brings an honest and independent view of Palestine and its diaspora’s society, culture, and political travails through the art of film. This group of groundbreaking cinematic texts rise above the degrading stereotypes or reductively politicized depictions that are so familiar to Houstonians. A major goal of the Festival is to directly expose our local community to the perspective of artists as a first step toward circumventing the many government and media filters that pollute our understanding of Palestine and the wider region. Some of the films in this year’s festival include Waiting / Attente (Dir. Rashid Mashrawi) and Leila Khaled, Hijacker (Dir. Lina Makboul). The first annual Houston Palestine Film Festival will include film screenings and conversations with directors and political scientists.

“We are presenting this much needed festival because of the urgency to talk about the issues that don’t get covered in mainstream media,” says VBB Board Member Hadeel Assali. “Through the films that we present—about marriage, curfews and historical wars—the festival will present an alternative perspective about controversial issues that are urgently in need of a place in public discourse today.”

FILM SCHEDULE

Friday May 11, 2007, 7:00 pm
Rice University Media Center
Rice University campus, Entrance No. 8 off University Blvd. at Stockton Dr
(Parking at Rice Media Center is 2$. Free Parking is available across from the Media Center, behind the campus police station building)

Kemo Sabe
Rana Kazkaz
United States, 2005, 13 minutes
Yussef, a six year old Arab-American boy, dreams of being the Cowboy instead of the Indian on the playground. Daring to challenge the role his race has determined, Yussef learns the playground rules of becoming a Cowboy. But is being a Cowboy everything Yussef hoped it would be?
Leila Khaled, Hijacker
Director, Lina Makboul
Sweden, 2005, 58 minutes

*Leila Khaled, Hijacker* documents the life of activist Leila Khaled, who achieved international notoriety with two airplane hijackings in 1969 and 1970. For filmmaker Makboul, her teenage hero worship of the world’s first female hijacker served as the catalyst for her pursuit of the present-day Leila Khaled, a motherly but unrepentant 60-year-old who staunchly defends guerilla action in service of the Palestinian cause. In Makboul’s increasingly intimate conversations with Khaled, and in interviews with airline personnel, difficult questions elicit surprising answers. In Swedish, Arabic, and English with English subtitles.

Lina Makboul will be in attendance to answer questions. Makboul was born in Sweden by Palestinian parents who are from Nablus on the West bank. She started working as a journalist at the Swedish National Radio 1996. In 1998 she began working with television at the Swedish National Television, SVT. *Leila Khaled: Hijacker* is Lina’s debut film.

Reception follows screenings.

Saturday, May 12, 2007, 7:00 pm
The Station Museum
1502 Alabama, Houston, TX 77004

Clothesline
Director Alia Arasoughly
Palestine, 2006, 13 minutes

The *Clothesline* examines the war inside and war outside of an apartment during the 2002 Ramallah siege.

Bethlehem Bandolero
Director, Larissa Sansour
2004, 5 minutes

*Bandolero* features the artist herself as a Mexican gunslinger arriving in Bethlehem for a duel with the Segregation Wall. Wearing a big, red sombrero and a scarf, she walks the streets of Bethlehem and greets the people before taking off for her final showdown.

Palestine Blues
Directed by Nida Sinnokrot
USA, 2005, 80 minutes

The demolished house that is the site of the death of American peace activist Rachel Corrie is only the first of the troubling markers in the landscape charted by *Palestine Blues* as the director travels the route of the infamous security wall. A bereft farmer grieves for his ancient orchard as the bulldozers lay it to waste, but a new movement in nonviolent resistance grows in its place. In Arabic and Hebrew with English subtitles.

Filmmaker and installation artist Nida Sinnokrot will discuss the film with the audience. Born and raised in Algeria, Sinnokrot has exhibited installations at the Station (Made in Palestine, Houston, TX, 2002); Mexican American Cultural Council, Austin, TX, 2001; Cinematexas International (Austin, TX, 2000); the Chocolate Factory, (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, 1999); the Fisher Arts Center (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, 1998 and 1997). Sinnokrot has been part of the Whitney Independent Studio Program (2001-2002) and he lives in New York. His film *Obstacle* was released in 2005.
**Waiting (Attente)**  
*Director, Rashid Masharawi*  
*France-Palestine, 2005, 72 min*  
From the director of the highly regarded *Ticket to Jerusalem* comes another strong film about the contemporary Palestinian experience. In *Waiting*, the National Palestinian Theatre is about to open in a magnificent new building financed by the European Union in Gaza. Ahmad, a famed Palestinian stage director, sets out to hire actors for the new company despite his reluctance upon viewing the construction site. Enlisting a local television personality and her cameraman for his crew, Ahmad travels to refugee camps in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, where open casting calls have been issued. The resulting auditions are chaotic, funny, and poignant, revealing much about the lives of people who have been displaced from their homes and separated from their families.

As'ad Abu Khalil will be discussing the film with the audience. Born in Tyre, Lebanon, Khalil grew up in Beirut and received his education from American University of Beirut. After coming to the US in 1983, Khalil received his PhD from Georgetown University and went on to teach at universities around the US. He also served as free-lance Middle East consultant for NBC News and ABC News, an experience that only served to increase his disdain for mainstream US media. He is now professor of political science at California State University, Stanislaus and visiting professor at UC, Berkeley.

**Friday, May 18, 2007, 7:00 pm**  
*Rice University Media Center*  
*Rice University campus, Entrance No. 8 off University Blvd. at Stockton Dr*  
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**Make a Wish**  
*Director Cherien Dabis*  
*2006, Palestine, 12min*  
A young Palestinian girl will do whatever it takes to buy a birthday cake. Eleven year-old Mariam begs her mother for the extra money she needs to buy a cake at the local bakery. Her mother begrudgingly relents, but when Mariam arrives at the bakery, she realizes that she still doesn't have enough. Determined to get the cake, she sets out to brave the obstacles and land some cash. What begins as a simple trip to the bakery turns into a journey that depicts not only the subtle tensions of a politically charged environment, but also illustrates the grief that can result from growing up under occupation. In Arabic with English subtitles.

**Just Married**  
*Director Ayelet Bechar*  
*Israel, 2005, 71 minutes,*  
In this documentary recording a Fall 2003 wedding in the north of Israel, two hundred guests, dance to music. The bride in a white dress. 36-year-old Kifah Massarwi, an Israeli citizen, organized a wedding for herself, minus the groom as part of her bitter battle against the Israeli authorities, who forbid her spouse from entering the country. The Citizenship Law, effective since 2003, states that residents of the Palestinian Authority may not enter Israel, even if married to Israeli citizens. *Just Married* is the story of two Palestinian couples who decided to marry knowing that it would be impossible for them to bring their partners back to Israel.
**Saturday, May 19, 2007, 7:00 pm**  
Fotofest Inc.  
1113 Vine Street, Suite 101, Houston, TX 77002

**Kings and Extras: Digging for a Palestinian Image**  
Director Azza el-Hassan  
2004, 62 minutes  
In *Kings and Extras: Digging for a Palestinian Image*, Azza el-Hassan uses rare and 1970s and 1980s archival footage of the Palestinian national movement and a series of contemporary interviews with filmmakers, archivists and historians to explore the role of film-making and photography during this period. At the heart of the film is her search for answers as to the apparently mysterious ‘loss’ of the central Palestinian cinema archive in Beirut during the Israeli occupation. Arabic with English subtitles.

**A medley of 13 shorts films by various Palestinian artists**  
Summer 2006, Palestine (35 minutes)

Reception follows screening.

**Sunday, May 20, 2007, 7:00 pm**  
Rice University Media Center  
Rice University campus, Entrance No. 8 off University Blvd. at Stockton Dr  
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**Zero Degrees of Separation**  
Dir. Elle Flanders  
(Canada: 2005, 89 mins.)  
The documentary feature *Zero Degrees of Separation* takes viewers on a unique journey through the complex lives of Israeli and Palestinian gays and lesbians in inter-ethnic relationships. Though living on the margins of society, these couples defy the odds, existing in the midst of conflict with a gentle humanity and mutual respect. Interwoven into these stories is director Elle Flanders' own narrative of growing up with grandparents who were intimately involved in the founding of the state of Israel. *Zero Degrees of Separation* premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival and has toured extensively, winning awards internationally.

Director **Elle Flanders** will be present at the screening and will be available to answer questions at the end. Born in Montreal and raised in Canada and Israel, Flanders is a filmmaker and photographer based in Toronto and New York City. Also present at the question and answer series will be **Ussama Makdisi** Associate Professor of History and the first holder of the Arab-American Educational Foundation Chair of Arab Studies at Rice University. He is the author of *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (University of California Press, 2000).

The Houston Palestine Film Festival’s closing includes a reception and an award ceremony.

**HPFF is curated by Hosam Aboul-Ela, Hadeel Assali, Said Assali, Hana El-Sahly, Iman Saqr and VBB. Houston Palestine Film Festival is presented by Voices Breaking Boundaries and cosponsored by the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, the Station Museum, FotoFest, Rice Cinema and KPFT Pacifica Radio 90.1 FM. This festival has been generously supported by the Arab American Education Foundation, The City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance, Free Press Houston, Houston Endowment Inc., HoustonSoReal, NAGAM, Swedish Film Institute, and the Arab US Bilateral Chamber of Commerce. Special thanks to the Chicago Palestine Film Festival and Aladdin's.**

For more information contact VBB Managing Director Oskar Sonnen (713-524-7821, oskar@vbbarts.org).

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