

Nadia Hamza: The First Woman Film Director in Egypt

Nadia Hamza's love for the cinema goes back to her childhood days when she used to live in the city of Port Said, on the Mediterranean Sea, North of Cairo.

"I don't know why I loved the cinema so much she said in an interview. * All I remember is that I used to go very often to movies. Then, immediately after watching a film, rush and write a film critique on a small piece of paper. I used to wait impatiently for the specialized movie magazines to come out in order to read what the film critics wrote so I would compare my comments with theirs. My joy was great when I didn't find much difference between their opinion and mine.

When my family moved to Cairo, I worked as a journalist in the labor section of an evening paper, then in the arts section of "Al Goumhouriah" newspaper. After that, I managed to find a job in "Al Kawakeb," one of the most popular entertainment magazines in Egypt.

It is there where I really started making contacts with artists, actors, producers and film directors. At the same time, I learnt that the Cinema Institute was giving a course in script writing as part of its extension program, so I took it.

After completing the course, I submitted my resignation to "Al Kawakeb" and contacted my teacher, film director, Niazi Mustafa reminding him of a promise he had made to let me be his assistant once I had finished studying.

As promised, Mustafa took me as a trainee film director for the film "Fares Bani Hamdan" (The Knight of Hamdan).

The first film for which I earned a wage as assistant film director was "Saghira Ala Al Hobb" (Too Young to Love). After that, I graduated from second assistant, to first assistant, to ... film director."

Nadia recalls her first two hours as film director and said she felt nervous and lost her



voice. But now, having completed her second film, "An Nissa' " (Women), she has definite opinions about the role and responsibilities of a film director.

She believes that a woman film director will differ from her male counterpart, not only in her choice of a film subject but also in the way she will handle and use the camera.

"I for instance, declares Nadia, tend to favor strong female characters in my movies. I prefer to depict them as winners rather than losers and like to concentrate on issues and problems related to women-especially the working ones. This trend is very clear in my second film."

When asked whether women make good film directors, Nadia is positive, on the condition, she adds, that they dedicate themselves completely to their profession. She remembers her teacher Niazi Mustafa asking her to wear trousers when she started working with him because it is more practical on a plateau. Since that day, she declares, she's never worn a dress.

* (Al Sharkiah -Elle, N. 121, Aug. 1984, p. 95)