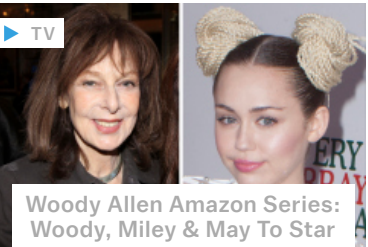
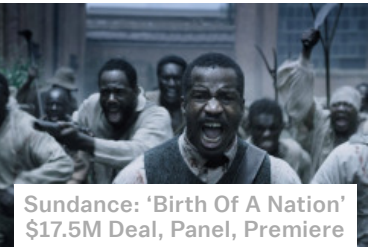




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Libyan Filmmaker Questions Authenticity Of Michael Bay's '13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers Of Benghazi'

by Ali Jaafar
January 25, 2016 9:02am



Osama Rezag

- FILM
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- 13 HOURS
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Michael Bay's *13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers Of Benghazi* is drawing the ire of some filmmakers in Libya, even though the film has not even screened there. Filmmaking is a precarious business in Libya, where simply getting through a film shoot without getting shot is an achievement in itself. Bay's film, about a group of U.S. special forces caught in the middle of the chaos surrounding the September 11, 2012 attack on the U.S. Diplomatic compound in Benghazi that took the lives of U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans, has not screened in Libya yet and is unlikely to, given the paucity of cinemas there. That hasn't stopped Libyan filmmakers from decrying what they see as a lack of authenticity.



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"Just from the trailer, you can see it's not Libya, the actors aren't Libyan, even what the characters are wearing is not authentic to what a Libyan would wear," says director and producer Osama Rezg, one of the few- if not only- active filmmakers in Libya. "I wish Michael Bay and the production had come and spoken to us. We could have helped him. We were all saddened by the death of Ambassador Stevens. He was loved by the Libyan people. That action did not help Libya. We all mourned for him. I hope this is not another example of the Arab world being portrayed in a negative way and the wrong image being spread."

13 Hours shot in Morocco and Malta, where there is a sizeable Libyan contingent. Libya and Malta are only a few hours boat ride apart from each other. Rezg understands the decision not to shoot in Libya given the country's lawlessness and precarious security situation. Even he and his crew are going to shoot their next production *Rubik* in neighboring Tunisia. Prior to that, Rezg was responsible for producing one of Libya's only post-war TV series *Dragunov*, named after a Soviet-era sniper rifle. That show, about two young Libyan lovers from opposite sides of the political tracks, was almost fully financed through sponsorship and product placement with local telco and car companies. The show, which aired in 2014, was a success in Libya. Since then, however, the situation in the country has deteriorated to the point where it is no longer safe for Rezg to film in Libya.



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"You need to get permissions from every different group, every different militia, if you want to shoot a film or TV series," says Rezg. "We're surviving and we're used to it but it would just be too difficult to shoot *Rubik* here now. The series deals with human trafficking, drugs, a lot of subjects that might upset some people so for security's sake, we will shoot in Tunisia."

Given the weak state of the country, there is no government support for filmmakers in Libya and private investors are also thin on the ground in the Mediterranean country. Rezg is having to patch together a tapestry of financing to raise the funds needed to film *Rubik* in time for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, traditionally the most lucrative and competitive season for new Arab dramas as families gather round the TV every evening after breaking their fast to binge on hours of TV.

13 Hours is set for release March 3 in the Arab world, although it has still to get approval from censors in the region. *13 Hours* has largely managed to avoid becoming overly embroiled in the ongoing political controversy over the tragic events of that night. The Republican Party, in particular, has been a vociferous critic of Hillary Clinton's role as Secretary of State in the events that led to the death of four Americans. Speaking to Deadline prior to the film's release, producer Erwin Stoff made clear that the film was not a political statement on either side of the aisle.

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“Nobody on the movie is going to get involved in any political discussion,” said Stoff. “This is a story of selfless heroism about how a number of good Americans helped prevent that night from spinning into an even larger tragedy than it was.”

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Mark • on Jan 25, 2016 9:47 am

"I hope this is not another example of the Arab world being portrayed in a negative way..."

– Maybe he should see the film before criticising it. The film ends with Libyan's coming to the rescue and saving the day. The filmmaker also points out that a group of Libyan's rushed the Ambassador to the hospital in the hopes of saving him and the movie ends with the filmmaker pointing out that 100 000 Libyan's mourned the Ambassadors murder.

Wow what a "negative portrayal."

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Mike • on Jan 25, 2016 12:20 pm

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