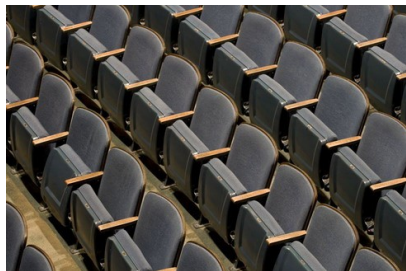


BAGHDAD FILM FESTIVAL - TRYING TO BE NORMAL



Baghdad, the capital of Iraq has become notorious for the more than frequent suicide attacks and the tragically painful atmosphere. This once great city is being torn into pieces on a daily basis; however, according to the latest news, the situation is slightly improving. The more unfortunate the locals are, the more they desire to experience something normal, usual. In the Western world, watching movies is a very ordinary free-time activity. In Iraq, movie going is an experience to remember. Therefore, when anyone dares to organize a film festival here, it is an attracting topic everyone will notice and discuss.

Going to the movies presented a weekly family outing in the 70s and 80s here. However, the Gulf War of 1991 turned the world upside down for the Iraqi. After the invasion of 2003, most cinemas were even destroyed. However, there is still a strong sentiment for the movie industry in Iraq. Based upon very positive feedback after the last film festival held in 2005, members of the Association of Iraqi Filmmakers without Borders have decided to revive this great tradition and organize - once again - the Baghdad International Film Festival in Dec 16th - 19th.

There will be many films on screen, most coming from Egypt (27), however, other countries volunteered to attend, too. Productions from Jordan, Iraq and Iran will proudly present their work. The guest list is finalized, as well as the number of films, only the venue is yet to be chosen. Unfortunately, the hotel which hosted the festival of 2005 was damaged after a suicide bomber killed 12 people here in June 2007. Yet hopefully, the organizers will manage to find a suitable place and succeed in making their dream come true. After all, even three days of normal entertainment may help to disperse local stressed atmosphere. Local inhabitants certainly deserve it.

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