

FUJAIRAH FILMS
PRESENTS

NASER ALMESSABI

REEM ALMESSABI

AHMAD AL JASMI

BELAL ABDULLAH

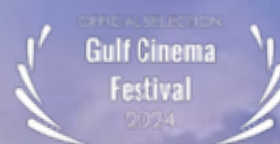
AHMAD ABDULRAZZAK

MAJID AL JASMI

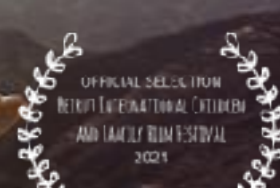


Mountain Boy

فتى الجبل



BASED ON A CHILDREN'S BOOK SERIES BY
MICHELE ZIOLKOWSKI



DESERT ROSE FILMS PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH FLYING TIGER ENTERTAINMENT AND ISEEMEDIA

PRODUCED BY
NANCY PATON AND MEREDITH BRETT

SCREENPLAY BY
NANCY PATON AND RAIHANA ALHAISHMI

DIRECTED BY
ZAINAB SHAHEEN

PRODUCTION DESIGNER
PRANALI DIWADKAR

CINEMATOGRAPHER
DENSON BAKER

EDITOR
FAKHER AL DEEN AL AMRI

MUSIC COMPOSER
SUAD BUSHNAQ

Mountain Boy

Adventure Family Feature Film

Diversity in action

- officially selected for 32 International Film festivals
- Winner of 18 awards
- the feature film debut of Emirati director Zainab Shaheen
- a female-led team of emerging Emirati and Gulf filmmakers and actors
- a story about autism, made by families living with autism, starring an actor with autism
- unknown landscapes: showcasing the natural environment of Fujairah
- new glimpses of our heritage: life before oil and nationhood in 1959 Fujairah
- sole Middle East nominee in Diversity & Inclusion category, 2023 Global Production Awards





Mountain Boy is a live-action feel good family adventure feature film based on the award-winning UAE children's book *The Boy Who Knew the Mountains* by Michele Ziolkowski.

Suhail is a young Emirati Boy with Autism shunned by his family and villagers who do not understand his disability. Suhail retreats to the Mountains of Fujairah where he lives alone. Inspired to find his destiny, Suhail ventures out with his new friend Barakah, the Arabian Saluki to find acceptance, family and redemption.



The film is a passionate exploration of the world of neurodiverse people to honor the entire human experience and understand there are many ways to be alive.

Neurodiversity on screen

A chance for families living with autism to see themselves

- The UAE is recognized world-wide for championing People of Determination (the nation's terminology for those living with disability or special needs in a world where they are not always accommodated).
- Not only is the book loosely based on a real Emirati boy with autism, but Desert Rose Films was adamant about finding an Emirati boy with autism to play the role of Suhail.
- Suhail is unique, but everyone who encounters autism in their lives will recognize some of the qualities and challenges of his story.
- Mountain Boy will join the growing body of work celebrating diversity by highlighting the special qualities that people with autism use to relate to their worlds.



Naser Almessaabi
Suhail Abdalla

12 year old actor Naser Almessaabi stars as Suhail. As a child living with autism, Naser was able to apply his love of memorisation to the challenges of script learning. Swimming and karate practice have also helped him build the physical and mental capabilities that have been part of creating this role. He has won Best Young Actor in a Feature Film at the Chelsea Film Festival 2024 and the Five Continents International Film Festival



Women in Film

Building the skills of Emirati and Gulf women filmmakers

- From the start we made sure women would be the heads of departments to be as inclusive as possible.
- This mostly female production team mentored Emirati and Gulf Women Filmmakers to build the national skilled crew base.
- Desert Rose Films is committed to creating original, independent, female character-driven films that capture compelling stories. We are giving women in the region a voice both in front of and behind the camera – creating a movement of organic, dynamic and compelling storytelling from a new perspective.
- Founder and creative director of Desert Rose Films Nancy Paton is the first president of Women in Film & TV - GCC, and founder of the Female Short Film Fund for the Middle East and North Africa Region





Zainab Shaheen
Director

Mountain Boy is the feature film directorial debut of Emirati director Zainab Shaheen. Born in Fujairah, she is committed to empowering Emirati and UAE-based talent to tell uniquely Emirati stories.

Zainab's previous short films include *Journey of Hope*, *Dates to Mars*, *Fujairah Vlog*, and *UAE 2071*. Zainab's talent has not gone unnoticed, as she was recently nominated for the Jury Grand Prize at the OKO International Ethnographic Film Festival, for this visually stunning and emotionally powerful film.

Zainab has also worked with The British Council on an international collaboration with Manchester Metropolitan University, spotlighting her game development, social media, and digital filmmaking experience.



Michele Ziolkowski
Author

Michele is the award-winning author of children's books *The Boy Who Knew the Mountains*, *Suhail's Abu Dhabi Adventure*, and *Little Camel*. Originally a Polish, Australian, Michele is now a naturalised UAE citizen living in Fujairah with her Emirati husband and son, Suhail. She has received grants and awards for her work including the Sheikh Mubarak bin Mohammed al-Nahyan award (Emirates Natural History Group) in 2006 and a Sharjah Book Award for the best children's book (English) in 2017.

With a doctorate in archaeology, Michele has authored and edited numerous academic publications on the archaeology, history and heritage of the Emirates.



Denson Baker
Cinematographer

Denson Baker ACS, NZCS is an award winning cinematographer of international feature films, music videos, documentaries and commercials. His recent credits include feature film *The Colour Room*, *Ophelia*, *Measure Of A Man*, *The Black Balloon*, *The Waiting City* and *The Luminaries* series.

Denson was the set-up DP on the SkyTV series *Domina* and has shot episodes on the ITV series *Victoria* and the police detective crime drama *Grace*. He was the DP of the reshoots on the Academy Award winning *Get Out* which included the tone setting opening scene.

Originally from New Zealand, Denson is an Australian Film Television and Radio School alumnus. In 2005 he was accredited by the Australian Cinematographers Society. His films have been shown in major international film festivals including Sundance, Cannes, Toronto, Venice, Tribeca, Clermont-Ferrand, Berlin, and LA.



Nancy Paton
Producer
Screenwriter

Nancy is an award-winning Polish, Australian film director, screenwriter and producer, based in Abu Dhabi. Nancy's passion is to tell distinctive stories of this region and to help local women build their careers in film. She is the founder and Creative Director at Desert Rose Films and the Female Short Film Fund for MENA which recently produced the award-winning UAE short comedy *The Dinner*, selected for multiple film festivals in 2020.

When moving to the middle east ten year ago she wrote and directed the award-winning film *Daisy* and its companion documentary *Maisy and the Making of Daisy* which were shown on Showtime and still run on Amazon Prime. She wrote, produced, directed and starred in the award-winning drama *Postpartum*, filmed in Saudi Arabia with an amateur, all-female cast and then continued with the team to produce the documentaries *The Black Abaya* and *Nowell's Mission* while lecturing Digital Photography, Screenwriting and Storyboarding at Raffles Design Institute in Riyadh. Nancy is the President of Women In Film and TV MENA.



Raihana AlHashmi
Screenwriter

Raihana is an Emirati filmmaker, marketer and screenwriter. She started her arts & filmmaking career in 2014. She was featured in galleries in Riyadh, Jeddah & Abu Dhabi and has been part of short films with several international screenings and awards. She is also a voice over artist, most recently cast as the voice of the nation in the UAE's Year of the 50th campaign.

Raihana started her career as a special audience marketer in the tech industry where she advanced in audience marketing and partnerships. She currently manages events and outreach at the UAE Space Agency.

Recently she co-founded MISHKA, a storytelling home to represent the regional identity in Emirati TV shows, films, and commercials.



Meredith Brett
Producer

Meredith has extensive experience in film development and finance, media tech and digital distribution. She has a number of films in development, including *Star of the Morning* (with Oscar-winning producer Gareth Unwin), the true story of Lady Hester Stanhope who went in search of Arabia in 1815.

Meredith is from Canada and is a partner of Flying Tiger Entertainment, a production/finance company in London. She has worked on the finance for titles including *The Dresser* and BBC's *Wolf Hall*.

Meredith has also advises governments on the creation and management of tax incentive programmes to build local film industries. Meredith co-founded The Studio Group, which is developing a portfolio of film studios across the world.



Pranali Diwadkar
Production Designer

Pranali is an international production designer, illustrator, painter, photographer and interior designer. She has been an integral part of Hollywood films including *Mission Impossible*, *Star Wars — the Force Awakens*, *Star Trek - Beyond*, *Syriana*, *Fast and Furious* and *Misfits*. Pranali was also the HOD of the art department of *Desert Warrior*, the first feature film shot in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, starring Sir Ben Kingsley and Anthony Mackie.

Pranali is a graduate of Sir JJ School of Arts and London Film Academy based in Dubai.



Fakhreddine Amri
Editor

Fakhreddine is a Chief Editor of Tunisian origin with over 15 years of post-production experience.

Some of his most notable projects include *De La Guerre*, by Fadhel Jazari, *Babylon*, by Alaeddine Slim, and most recently, "Night Courier" by Ali Kalthami.

Whether it's a feature film, TV show, or commercial, Fakhreddine's passion for storytelling and creative vision shines through in every project he undertakes.



Suad Bushnaq
Composer

Suad is an award-winning composer with more than forty film credits to date. Her awards include a Hollywood Music in Media Award for her piece "Tomorrow" and a Best Original Score at the LA Fine Arts Film Festival for the feature film *Jasmine Road*.

Her latest work includes *Hanging Gardens* which had its world premier at the 79th Biennale di Venezia. She was selected for the Festival de Cannes' Spot the Composer Program 2021 and the SESAC's Film Story Residence in LA. Her work has been screened at festivals including La Biennale di Venezia, Locarno, Hot Docs and Edinburgh.



Firdaus Orchestra
Soundtrack

The 50-strong Firdaus Orchestra is an all-female orchestral ensemble comprising musicians from across the Arab world.

It was formed initially to perform at the Dubai Expo 2020, with musicians to be mentored and conducted by AR Rahman, composer for Indian and international films, whose music for *Slumdog Millionaire* earned him Best Original Score and Best Original Song at the 81st Academy Awards.

Emirati people and culture

Onscreen and behind the camera

- *Mountain Boy* is bringing together Emirati and Emirates-based talents to tell a uniquely Emirati story.
- *Mountain Boy* presents the unseen beauty and history of the UAE to international audiences
- Author Dr. Michele Ziolkowski is a naturalized Emirati citizen based in Fujairah who has been researching the archaeology, history and heritage of the Emirates for many years.
- We seek to strengthen and promote Emirati culture by telling their stories, **showcasing Emirati People**, culture and landscape internationally, and ensuring that gulf people see themselves onscreen.
- A unique and vivid feature of the film are the authentic Arabic dialects indigenous to each specific region used by the various characters. It is rare to be able to capture these diverse Arabic dialects that span multiple areas of UAE. The nuanced metaphorical references and the linguistic details also directly relate to not only the sociology but also the historical context of the country.

Gulf news

The National News


PRESS INTEREST

FRIDAY
Beauty | Welcoming | Arts & People | Home | Friday Partner

Abu Dhabi mom's book on her son becomes movie to raise awareness about autism

Upcoming movie Mountain Boy will raise awareness

Published: March 17, 2023 9:00
Tania Khushf



On the set of Mountain Boy

A little away, I see an abaya-clad young woman inspecting the lighting and set before getting "action". She is Zahra Saibani, an Emirati who is directing the film.

As the actress and the roles, a small group of models begin performing and the dramatic the mountains is coloring, almost hypnotic.

"The filmmaking process is new to me. I'm a bit nervous and thrilled at the same time," admits Michele, the author of the book. "The book series is important to us as a family. While it is a work of fiction, the characters are based on our son and our experiences as a family. We hope that the story translates into an acceptable film that also highlights a powerful message of inclusion."

Michele Zolovskii and her son Sahil in their home in Abu Dhabi. Michele's book on her son is being made into a film.

<https://gulfnews.com/friday/art-people/dubai-moms-book-on-her-son-becomes-movie-to-raise-awareness-about-autism-1.94366546>

ARTS & CULTURE

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Emirati film Mountain Boy tells story of an autistic boy in Fujairah

The film is based on 2017 children's book The Boy Who Knows the Mountains by Emirati-Australian author Michele Zolovskii



The film's producers, however, were worried whether they would be able to find someone to play the leading role for her. It was only after some of the early scripts by UAE that were dedicated to stories with cultural.

"We auditioned 20 boys with autism," she says. "It's a delicate and tender subject and we were afraid that they would offend the audience. (Zolovskii) understood that immediately. There are two boys in the book. My team and I had started to panic that we weren't going to find the right person because he has to be calm and speak in a soft, steady voice."

Though there were challenges, Khatib says it was all in the end.

"There were some amazing scenes that I really loved from the film," she says. "The scene where the boy is with his mother in the mountains. It was so beautiful to see him with his mother. I hope the audience will love it and that it gives them a good message. My team and I had started to panic that we weren't going to find the right person because he has to be calm and speak in a soft, steady voice."

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/film-tv/2023/02/28/emirati-film-mountain-boy-tells-story-of-an-autistic-boy-in-fujairah/>

Variety

HOME - FILM - GLOBAL Dec 3, 2022 1:26am PT

Zainab Shaheen Set to Direct Adaptation of Book Series 'Mountain Boy' (EXCLUSIVE)

By Rafa Salas Basso

CEO of Desert: Rose Films Nancy Pataen has joined forces with Meredith Erick of Flying Tiger Entertainment to produce a family-friendly adaptation of Michèle Ziolkowski's children's book trilogy 'The Boy Who Knew the Mountains,' to be titled 'Mountain Boy.'

The project is supported by Creative City Fujairah and the Abu Dhabi Film Commission. Bahrain filmmaker **Zainab Shaheen** ("Journey of Hope," "Dotes to Man") is set to direct, with Pataen co-authoring the screenplay and Erick producing.

https://variety.com/2022/film/global/zainab-shaheen-mountain-boy-1235448836/?cx_testId=48&cx_testVariant=cx_1&cx_artPos=0#cxrecs_s

DIVERSITY INCLUSION NOMINATIONS 2023

SHORTLIST 2023

Congratulations to all those that made the 2023 shortlist!

Winners will be announced at an exclusive awards ceremony at 23 Wile in Cannes, France. This event is invite only, but if you are interested in attending, please contact: globalproductionawards@globalproductionawards.com

City of Film

Calgar

Diversity & Inclusion Award

- Dreaming Whilst Black**
Bio Deal Films (UK)
- Fashion Dis**
Milk Bar Media Agency (CANADA)
- Great British Photography Challenge**
Starboard Studios (UK)
- McNay (In My Mind)**
Bioport Studios (UK)
- Mountain Isay**
Desert Rose Films & Flying Tiger Entertainment (UK)
- UNIVERSAL: Below-the-Line Training on the set of MCFE**
Universal Times Creators Group (USA)

<https://www.globalproductionawards.com/shortlist-2023>



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Creating positive change
one story at a time

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