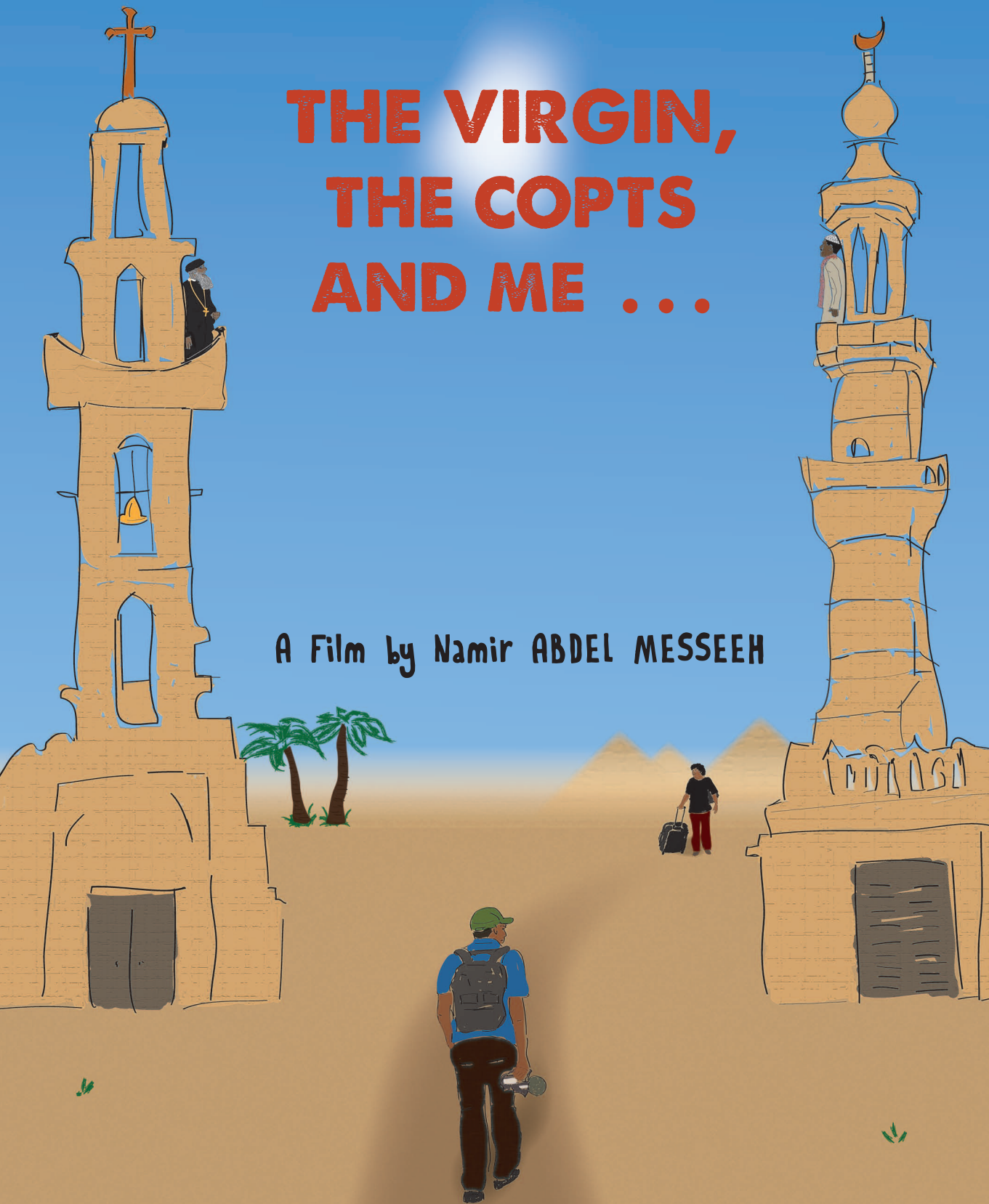


THE VIRGIN, THE COPTS AND ME ...

A Film by Namir ABDEL MESSEEH



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LA VIERGE, LES COPTES ET MOI

SYNOPSIS

FRANCE-QATAR / 2011 / HD / 85' / COLOR / FRENCH-ARABIC / DOCUMENTARY

Namir is a French filmmaker of Egyptian origin. One day he watches a videotape of the Virgin Mary's apparition in Egypt with his mother who, like millions of other Copts (Egypt's Christians), sees the Virgin on the screen while he sees nothing. Skeptical about the videotape, Namir travels back to Egypt, to make a film about the bizarre occurrence of these apparitions.

CREW

SCRIPT NAMIR ABDEL MESSEEH, NATHALIE NAJEM, ANNE PASCHETTA DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY NICOLAS DUCHÈNE EDITOR SÉBASTIEN DE SAINTE CROIX PRODUCER NAMIR ABDEL MESSEEH PRODUCTION OWEDA FILMS CO-PRODUCTION DOHA FILM INSTITUTE WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF THE CNC

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Born in France of Egyptian parents, I've always kept close ties with my family in Egypt, ties that are all the stronger because we belong to the Christian minority, the Copts, who are being persecuted more and more each day.

I don't share the religious beliefs of my community, and this has been a source of conflict between my family and me for a long time. In Egypt, as is often the case in Arabic countries where religion is part of one's identity, it's impossible to argue about religious beliefs. But it is precisely because this question of believing is at the very core of my relationship with my family and appears to be indissociable from what we are, how we define ourselves, I wanted to make a film about religious beliefs and more specifically about that of the Copts in the apparitions of the Virgin Mary.

I wanted to investigate what still ties me to this community where I no longer live and with which I no longer share the religious beliefs. But a film can sometimes take one where you least expect it to. The relationship with my producer, my mother's opposition, the Egyptian revolution have made me discover what I really wanted to recount: the path I've followed as a filmmaker, my relationship with my mother and the inhabitants of my village, my ties to Egypt. The goal was not to make a film about myself, but rather to use my persona as a filmmaker as a vector, as a means for those around me to reveal who they are.

I wanted to show the poor country folk of Said where my family is from. People who never draw the attention of the media, and for whom the revolution doesn't mean much – their conditions for just staying alive being extremely precarious. But these people are rich with humor, with a joy of life and a generosity that irremediably ties me to them.

I also and above all wanted to recount something profound about Egypt: the relations between Christians and Muslims, the role of women in society, the manner in which political powers use religion to maintain their positions, all while keeping it light, amusing.

This is my first feature-length film. I've tried a lot of things, some with success, others with failure. With this film I've sought to walk the line between fiction and documentary, mixing scenes captured live with scenes tightly written, sometimes reshooting scenes that had already taken place with some of the characters and sometimes filming other scenes without their knowing it.

The production of this film was very complicated, most likely due to a lack of resources, but also because of my determination to find a way to write the script progressively, as the shooting and editing work advanced.

But I have had incredible luck because I have been surrounded by a team of extraordinary technicians who trusted me and backed me up. Tell me they were right to do so!!!

PRESS CONTACT IN BERLIN

LES PIQUANTES
FLORENCE ALEXANDRE
+ 33 6 31 87 17 54
ALEXANDRA FAUSSIER
+33 6 14 61 48 41
alexfl@lespiquantes.com

INTERNATIONAL SALES IN BERLIN: UNIFRANCE BOOTH 38

DOC & FILM INTERNATIONAL
13 rue Portefoin 75003 Paris France
Tel + 33 (0) 1 42 77 56 87
Fax + 33 (0) 1 42 77 36 56
sales@docandfilm.com
www.docandfilm.com

DANIELA ELSTNER
+ 33 6 82 54 66 85
d.elstner@docandfilm.com

ALICE DAMIANI
+ 33 6 77 91 37 97
a.damiani@docandfilm.com

HWA-SEON CHOI
+ 33 6 59 21 70 00
hs.choi@docandfilm.com