

# PRESS NOTES



A feature documentary by Suhaib Gasmelbari  
*France / Sudan / Germany / Chad / Qatar, 2019, 94 min*

## Official Selection

Berlin International Film Festival 2019

*Panorama section*

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*“What kind of times are these, when  
To talk about trees is almost a crime  
Because it implies silence about so many horrors?”  
— Bertolt Brecht*

#### SHORT SYNOPSIS

Ibrahim, Suleiman, Manar and Altayeb; filmmakers, idealists and friends for over 45 years. After years of distance and exile, they are reunited in their wounded motherland hoping to finally make their old dream come true; to spread the art of cinema in Sudan.

#### LONG SYNOPSIS

Ibrahim, Suleiman, Manar and Altayeb have been friends for over 45 years. They left their motherland in the 1960s and 1970s to study film abroad and founded the Sudanese Film Group in 1989. After years of distance and exile, they are reunited, hoping to finally make their old dream come true; to bring cinema to Sudan. They are determined to leave something behind and ignite the love for cinema. Throughout the images they created, the ones they lost and the ones they had hoped to make, the beautiful and horrific faces of their country appear.



## DIRECTORS STATEMENT

"I can say without hesitation that this film was born from an epic yet real image that happened in front of my eyes, I remember it clearly. It was the first time that I participated in a screening at a village with the four friends. After they set up the canvas screen and the show started, sandy wind began to blow moving the screen left and right, two of them (Manar and Ibrahim) quickly got up and sat on each side of the screen to anchor it down by tying both corners to their chairs; no one left despite the wind and the audience continued watching the film engagingly. As the wind strengthened the screen blew up and deflated like the sails of a boat and sometimes the picture was getting out of the screen and coming back.

I was watching the faces of both men as they held the screen while laughing nervously like sail men in a storm. I felt that this trip to a nearby village to Khartoum granted me one of my most important existential lessons about resistance and determination, It was then when the necessity to make this film was born.

This image that granted me the motivation to create this film is not included in the film just like the many other images that these four filmmakers wanted to accomplish in the past forty years but the aggressive political winds of the country stood against their dreams leaving behind a great bitterness but also a strong desire in doing.



TALKING ABOUT TREES is the tale of their 45 years of attempting to make and to show films and of the tireless hope that unites them forever, the story of a struggle of four crafty men with a witty sense of humor."

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Suhaib Gasmelbari was born in 1979 in Sudan. He studied Cinema in France at the University of Paris VIII. He has written and directed several short films, both fiction and documentary. TALKING ABOUT TREES is his first feature film.

He is also a researcher with a special focus on audio-visual archives. Through his research he was able to find some long-lost Sudanese films, and actively participates in international and local projects for saving and digitizing Sudanese films, including those of Ibrahim Shadad, Suleiman Mohamed Ibrahim and Altayeb Mahdi.

## THE PROTAGONISTS

### Ibrahim Shadad

Ibrahim studied filmmaking at the Filmuniversität Babelsberg Konrad Wolf (at that time Academy for Film and Television of the GDR), he graduated in 1964. Over the course of his career, he has made many medium length and short films, among which 'Hunting Party' (1964) and 'The Rope' (1984). Several of his projects have been banned by the various governments in Sudan. He spent years in exile in Egypt and Canada before returning to Sudan. His love of cinema is deep and his vision of art is radical.



### Manar Al Hilo

Manar graduated from the Cairo Higher Institute for Cinema in 1977. He was always dedicated to uplift the works of his other friends. He worked in the production of all their films produced in Sudan. His smart wit persuasively found miraculous solutions to overcome production obstacles in a country without production means. He is a radical dreamer who loves cinema but does not cease to question the usefulness of their actions and the moral legitimacy of wanting to talk about cinema in a time of assassins and atrocities.



### Suleiman Mohamed Ibrahim

Suleiman studied documentary filmmaking at the VGIK Institute of Cinematography in Moscow from 1973 to 1978. He was awarded the Silver Prize for his short film "It still rotates" at the Moscow International Film Festival 1979. He is the driving force of the group, very disciplined and inventive; he finds the answers to all the practical questions. He refused to go into exile following the military coup in 1989.



### Altayeb Mahdi

Altayeb graduated from the Cairo Higher Institute for Cinema in 1977. He has directed several artistically daring short films such as 'The Station' (1988), 'Four Times for Children' (1979), 'The Tomb' (1976). Altayeb is a man of little word but his brevity will always deliver the missing thought.



## CREDITS

<b>With</b>	Ibrahim Shaddad Suliman Ibrahim Eltayeb Mahdi Manar Al-Hilo Hana Abdelrahman Suliman (Sudanese Film Group, SFG)
<b>Written and directed by</b>	Suhaib Gasmelbari
<b>Producer</b>	Marie Balducci
<b>Camera</b>	Suhaib Gasmelbari
<b>Editing</b>	Nelly Quettier, Gladys Joujou
<b>Sound</b>	ElSadig Kamal, Katharina Von Schroeder
<b>Sound Editing</b>	Jean Mallet
<b>Mix</b>	Jean-Guy V éran
<b>Colorists</b>	Herbert Posch, Marine Lepoutre
<b>Production</b>	AGAT Films & Cie (France)
<b>In association with</b>	Sudanese Film Group (Sudan)
<b>In co-production with</b>	GOÏ-GOÏ Productions (Tchad) MADE IN GERMANY Filmproduktion (Germany) Vidéo de Poche (France) Doha Film Fund (Qatar)
<b>With the support of</b>	Aide aux cinémas du monde Centre National du cinéma et de l'image animée IDFA Bertha Fund Europe IDFA Bertha Fund La Région Ile-de-France World Cinema Fund Film und Medienstiftung NRW Arab Fund for Arts and Culture Doha Film Institute SANAD Development Grant Venice Production Bridge