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IN THE DESERT

THE DOHA TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL PRESENTED 51 PRODUCTIONS, 19 OF WHICH WERE ARABIC.

BY MADLEN CHOLAKOVA

3 Hours is a short film that tells the story of the futile murder of six children playing football in Baghdad in 2007. Filmed on a modest budget, with a cast of Iraqi refugees, the film has a smack of sincerity, humanity and concern, without

political commentary. The director Regan Hall left his native New Zealand at the age of 23, relocating to London with a dream to make movies. Today he is a highly successful creator of short films and commercials. He works with clients such as Dolce and Gabbana, Dazed and Confused, and Swarovski.

How does it feel to make it from the fashion catwalk to the war in Iraq?

The commercials pay the bills and allow me to experiment creating beautiful imagery and mood. My end goal is to make feature films about human stories, not necessarily films with political messages or social commentary.

3 Hours is a short film with an Arabic script. Was it easy to work with people who were not real actors?

It was a slow process but worth it. My cast did an amazing job. Most films

about Iraq are usually shot in a handheld documentary style. My goal was to make something more cinematic.

What is the next film you are planning to shoot?

I have a few projects in development. One set in New Zealand, one in Russia, and one in the Middle East. I'm passionate about stories with strong human characters in extreme conditions.

What was the reaction of the Iraqi viewers to your film?

It's often hard from them to see it objectively. I purposefully tried not to give an opinion about the war, or take a side in the sectarian conflict. This is just one character's story.

What do you think will be the effect of this film festival in this part of the world?

There is normally censorship in the cinemas here. I think film can play a strong role in bringing together different cultures. That's what has allowed me to be here at the festival.

What are your future steps?

I'm working on scripts, but I'm not doing that alone. I'm always looking for people to work with who share my mindset. There are so many stories to tell. If I'm successful I hope to make a few commercials per year and concentrate on making films. I

part-financed 3 Hours myself. You need invest in yourself sometimes, that's the way it goes if cinema is your passion.

Can't you see yourself on the other side of the camera?

Haha, no. Plus I'm too tall and it's hard to find the clothes to fit.

What is your fashion style?

Stylish and simple. Accessories are important.

How does it feel to work with famous models?

I hate that old cliché of directors and models. When I'm working I'm focused on the film as a whole. It's work for all of us. It's only afterwards in the edit that I have time to stop and think "Wow, she really was beautiful."

What makes you happiest; making a film about Iraq, or filming beautiful women and products?

I love drama and I'm happy to be making steps towards my film goals. I'm able to be here in Doha because the goals of the festival are international. It's not that the audience here necessarily wants to watch Western films; many of them want to make films themselves. Here they have so many resources open to them. As the Arabic proverb says; "When the student is ready to learn, the teacher arrives".

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