

EL CLÁSICO



FILM FACTS

PREMIERE: April 15 2016 Norway

LENGTH: 97 MIN

DIRECTOR: Halkawt Mustafa

SCRIPT: Anders Fagerholt & Halkawt Mustafa

DOP: Kjell Vassdal

EDIT: Inge-Lise Langfeldt

MUSIC: Trond Bjerknes

GENRE: Drama

STAR: Dana Ahmed, Wrya Ahmed,
Kamaran Raof, Rozhin Sharifi

PRODUCER: Halkawt Mustafa

CO-PRODUCER: Anders Graham

DISTRIBUTOR: Euforia Film



ABOUT THE FILM

A road movie about the most important things in life: Football. And love. Or the other way around.

El Clasico takes us on a journey through modern day's Iraq. Through the eyes of our main characters, we get an insight into everyday life in a war-torn country. The film shows us the strength people can harbor, even under the worst circumstances.

It tells us how we can find love in the strangest places: Love, friendship and even passion for football can grow where you least expect it to.

SYNOPSIS

El Clásico is the story of Alan, who is willing to sacrifice everything for the love of his life, Gona. It takes him and his brother Shirwan on a road trip from a small village in Iraq to the football stadium of Real Madrid in Spain.

The brothers Alan and Shirwan are little people, living in a town in Kurdish Iraq. Alan wants to marry his girlfriend Gona, but when her father Jalal finds out about it, he forbids her from marrying a little person and gets the brothers evicted from their home. Alan knows that Gona's father, who is a shoemaker, is also a big Real Madrid-fan. He has made some special shoes that he dreams of giving to Cristiano Ronaldo.

Alan steals the shoes thinking that if he can get them to Ronaldo in Madrid, Jalal will let him marry Gona. Therefore the brothers set out on a road trip to Spain. Their perilous journey through modern day Iraq puts them up against bureaucracy, smugglers and terrorists. Will he manage to give the shoes to Cristiano Ronaldo and will this win him the love of his life?





DIRECTORS NOTE

El Clásico is probably the biggest football match in the world; between Real Madrid and Barcelona.

One time while visiting Erbil for work, I was out walking in the streets one evening. The streets were completely empty and I found that very strange. All of a sudden they filled up in one instance with people celebrating. They had all seen a game of El Clásico (won by Real Madrid). This got me thinking how universal football is and it gave me the idea for the film. One week later I watched my first El Clásico game in Barcelona.

Later I got to know the brothers Wrya and Dana. They were rivals when it came to football, supporting one team each. I got to know them very well as I spent one year living with them developing the script and their acting skills. The brothers had never acted before, and not even been to a cinema. I learned that despite all their everyday challenges their biggest dream was as everybody else's; to experience real love. In the end this resulted in a script about football, love and big dreams.



LOCATIONS

The location controls the way the film is experienced and therefore I found it important to shoot where the story is actually taking place, which is from Baghdad in Iraq on a dangerous road trip to Madrid in Spain. Iraq and Spain represents two extremely different societies in 2015 that are hugely interacting because of, in our case, a sport like football.

The shoot was shot over a period of 60 days in Baghdad, and one week in Madrid, Spain.

One of our biggest challenges during the shoot was to get the cast and crew into the “Green Zone” in Baghdad, as it was not open to the public. We were the first production ever given permission to film there.

During the time in Baghdad, three till four bombs went off every day, and one day we had an explosion on set as well. Despite the danger of filming in a country like Iraq, it was important in order to tell the story and portray the current situation in there.

In big contrast to Iraq, we finished the shoot in Madrid. This was Wrya and Dana’s first time ever outside of Iraq. We filmed outside Real Madrid’s Estadio Santiago Bernabeu during an El Clásico game. The contrast was huge from experiencing bombings up close (this being our biggest challenge in Iraq) to extras and real football- fans, being our biggest problem in Madrid.



FOOTBALL STOPS BOMBS

Football is a popular sport in Iraq. It helps people distance themselves from the unstable political situation. The interest for the sport is so huge that during a football game the bombing completely stops. Especially during *El Clásico*.

SHOES FOR CRISTIANO RONALDO

In reality, the lead characters in *El Clásico* Dana and Wrya are shoemakers. They make traditional Iraqi/Kurdish shoes, Klash, and had before I met them made a pair of Klash for Cristiano Ronaldo. Throughout the shooting of the film, they also had the chance to give the shoes to Ronaldo personally. Klash has been an important part of the Iraqi culture for more than 3000 years. The shoes are environmentally and allergy friendly and recommended by doctors in the country.

It exists a deep tradition in being a shoemaker in Iraq. If your father was a shoemaker, it is expected that you will take on the business. Making Klash is about more than just being a shoemaker. To carry on this old tradition is considered an honor.





CAST & CREW

HALKAWT MUSTAFA

Director & Producer

Halkawt Mustafa (1985) became a Norwegian citizen when he moved to Norway with his family in 2000. Mustafa's father was a political refugee and the family came to Norway through the UN.

By growing up in both Iraq and Norway, Halkawt has developed an interest in the big differences and the social issues of the two societies. He decided at an early point that he wanted to use film to address social injustices.

Halkawt studied directing at the Film Academy in Oslo and made several films after graduating. His latest film "Red Heart" from 2011 was sold during the Cannes Film Festival and won two awards in Vincennes Film Festival: Best Film and Audience Award.





WRYA AHMED

Wrya Ahmed was born in 1993 in Sulaymanyah, Iraq and he is now studying to be a pharmacist. El Clásico is his first meeting with acting.



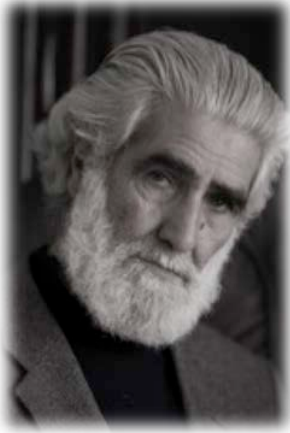
DANA AHMED

Dana Ahmed was born in Sulaymanyah, Iraq in 1990. Dana is also studying to be a pharmacist. El Clásico is his first movie.



ROZHIN SHARIFI

Rozhin Sharifi was born in 1991 in Sanandaj-Iran. She is taking her bachelor in International studies at the American University of Iraq Sulaymanya. Before she started her acting career, she worked for a women's right organization.



NASSR HASSAN

Nasr Hassan was born in 1947 in Khanaqin, Iraq. He attended the Baghdad Art Academy and graduated in 1970. He is a known director with 19 documentaries and two feature films under his belt. He has also acted in 6 feature films and has more than 45 years of experience.



KAMARAN RAOOF

Kamaran Raoof was born in 1955 in Sulaymanyah, Iraq. He attended Baghdad Art Academy and graduated in 1983. He is a renowned actor in Iraq.



NYAN AZIZ

Nyan Aziz was born in 1989 in Sulaymanyah, Iraq. She started working early on in an organization working for the rights of little people. El Clasico is her first meeting with acting.



ANDERS GRAHAM – CO- Producer

Anders Graham graduated from London Film School with the Oscar Nominated short feature film “Visiting Hours”. Since then he has been working in the film industry, and produced several feature film, shorts, documentaries and web series.



SALWAN ZAITO – Co- Producer

Salwan Zaito started Babylon Media in Erbil, Kurdistan-Iraq in 2005. The company later expanded with three TV channels and two radio stations in its headquarters. He is the head of the department, as well as serving as a TV show planning manager.



ANDERS FAGERHOLT – screenwriter

Anders Fagerholt (1979) is a Norwegian screenwriter. He graduated from the Norwegian Film School in 2008. El Clásico is his debut feature.



KJELL VASSDAL - Director of photography

Kjell Vassdal was born in Norway in 1955 and is a Professor at the Photography unit of the Norwegian Film School. He has worked with more than 30 feature films, and is one of Norway's most renowned film photographers.



INGE-LISE LANGFELDT – EDITOR

Inge-Lise is one of Norway's most experienced film editors. She has edited over 50 feature films, as well as various short films, short stories, television dramas and documentaries.



TROND BJERKNES – Composers

Trond Bjerknæs is a Norwegian composer, based in Oslo. He composed scores for more than 20 feature films and several TV series in Scandinavia and the UK. His musical style ranges from orchestral works to electronic scores.

