

Beur is Beautiful

Maghrebi-French filmmaking



A retrospective of Maghrebi-French Cinema curated by Carrie Tarr and produced by ArteEast in New York.

Tea in the Harem (Le Thé au harem d'Archimède), by Mehdi Charef

France, 1985, 110min

Synopsis:

Two adolescent young men in the suburbs of Paris, Pat and Madjid, fail to find employment after leaving school and drift into a life of petty crime, stealing and pimping when the mood takes them. Both live in a run-down housing estate and both dream of a better life, but neither is able to break free of their situation. Although not the first film to address second-generation Maghrebis in France, *Tea in the Harem* was the first feature to be directed by a filmmaker of Maghrebi origin; Charef earned the César for Best First Film in 1986 and inspired the term *cinéma beur*. Despite the grim environment of the banlieues, the film refuses to dwell on racism and violence, emphasizing instead the friendship between white and beur youths and the problems they share.

Filmmaker's Biography:

Mehdi Charef is an accomplished filmmaker and novelist. His first feature film, *Tea in the Harem*, based on a novel he penned, is considered a milestone in the emergence of Maghrebi-French (*beur*) cinema and won numerous prestigious awards, including the Prix Jean Vigo in 1985 and the César in 1986. He has since directed seven more feature films, including *Miss Mona* (1986), *In the Country of Juliets (Au pays des Juliettes)*, 1992), *Marie-Line* (2000) and *The Daughter of Keltoum (Fille de Keltoum)*, 2002). His newly completed film *Cartouches Gauloises* (2007) premiered at Cannes in the official selection. Charef has also published four novels: *Tea in the Harem of Archimedes (Le Thé au Harem d'Archi-Ahmed)*, 1983), *Le Harki de Meriem* (1988), *La Maison d'Alexina* (1999) and *À Bras le Cœur* (2006).

Credits:

Cast: Kader Boukhanef, Rémi Martin, Laure Duthilleul, Saida Bekkouche, Nicole Hiss, Brahim Ghenaïem, Nathalie Jadot, Frédéric Ayivi, Pascal Dewaeme, Sandrine Dumas, Bourlem Guerdjou, Jean Pierre Sobeaux

Writer: Mehdi Charef (adapted from a novel published by Mercure de France)

Producer: Michèle Ray-Gavras

Cinematographer: Dominique Chapuis

Editor: Kenout Peltier

Sound: Jean Paul Mugel

Music: Karim Kacel

