
ABBOUT PRODUCTIONS,
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AND PARADISE CITY SALES
PRESENT
A SAD AND
BEAUTIFUL WORLD
نجـــــوم الأمـــــل والألـــــم
A FILM BY CYRIL ARIS
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KEY INFO

Title: **A Sad And Beautiful World**
Director: **Cyril Aris**
Year of Production: **2025**
Duration: **109 min**
Language: **Arabic**
Technical Info: **Ratio : 1:78, Sound : 5.1**

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VENICE SCREENINGS SCHEDULE

Press Screening: Thursday, August 28th at 7:45 PM – Sala Corinto
World Premiere: Sunday, August 31st at 4:30 PM – Sala Perla
Additional Screening: Saturday, September 6th at 11:30 AM – Sala Perla



SYNOPSIS

In this sweeping love story that spans three decades of passion, heartbreak, and hope, Nino and Yasmina find themselves drawn together by a magnetic relationship. As they face an impossible choice between love and survival, they must decide if they want to build a family and chart a path to happiness in Lebanon, despite the tragedies ravaging the country.

CAST

Mounia Akl (*Costa Brava, Lebanon*)
& **Hasan Akil** (*Memory Box; The Insult*)

also starring **Julia Kassar**, **Camille Salameh**, **Tino Karam**, **Nadyn Chalhoub**





CYRIL ARIS

BIOGRAPHY

Lebanese writer-director, Cyril Aris's feature documentary The Swing (2018) premiered in Karlovy Vary. His second feature documentary Dancing on the Edge of a Volcano (2023), recipient of a grant from the Sundance Institute, premiered in the main competition of Karlovy Vary, won a special jury mention, and played in BFI, CPH DOX, DOC NYC and over 80 festivals. His short film The President's Visit (2017) premiered at TIFF and played in over 100 festivals. He holds an MFA from Columbia University and is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

FILMOGRAPHY

- *A Sad and Beautiful World* (Feature Fiction, 2025)
- *Dancing on the Edge of a Volcano* (Feature Documentary, 2023)
- *Beating Hearts* (Short Documentary, 2020)
- *The Swing* (Feature Documentary, 2018)
- *The President's Visit* (Short Film, 2017)
- *Siham* (Short Film, 2013)
- *Beirut, I Love You* (TV series, 53 episodes, 2011–12)

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

"A Sad and Beautiful World draws from my own experiences growing up in Lebanon during the tumultuous 90s and early 2000s. The film follows Nino and Yasmina, whose relationship mirrors the country's oscillation between hope and despair. As Lebanon cycles through prosperity and devastation, we watch these lovers navigate romance, harsh realities, and the universal question of bringing children into an uncertain world.

Nino carries a deep longing for Lebanon's past—a nostalgia for what once was. Yasmina, on the other hand, embodies the possibility of escape, reinvention, and a future elsewhere. Together, they must confront their wounds and broken dreams to build a future together, learning what it means to build something lasting through love and trust.

Amid Lebanon's perpetual crises, I witnessed how humor and love became our shields against darkness. This film embraces that unique sense of Lebanese humor while exploring deeper themes of parenthood and legacy. During filming, as yet another major war unfolded in Lebanon, my own son was born thousands of miles away—a fateful event that crystallised my belief that in the face of chaos, it is our love for one another that carries us forward."

- Cyril Aris, director

Q&A WITH DIRECTOR CYRIL ARIS

The film carries the warmth and wit of a lighthearted rom-com even though it unfolds against a darker political backdrop. Why was that dual tone important to you, and how did you navigate it?

The film is built on the duality between beauty and sadness, embodied in the characters of Nino and Yasmina, who often swap places between these two poles. That duality is also the foundation of the Lebanon I know. Since my early childhood in the post-civil war days, life has meant extremes: an overzealous lust for life, wild celebrations, moments of joy and hope… but always shadowed, preceded and followed by wars, regional conflicts, collapse, and feelings of despair.

What survives through all of it, though, is humor, love, and family. So it felt disingenuous to show Lebanon only in darkness. The balance between warmth and devastation, between romance and rupture, was the most authentic way to tell their story, and the story of the place I call Home.

At its core, A SAD AND BEAUTIFUL WORLD is a love story, yet the historical and political subtext builds to a point where it disrupts the couple's balance. How did you approach creating and sustaining such tension?

In Lebanon, history and politics are never just "background". They intrude into daily life, relationships, and into the most intimate decisions. From assassinations to wars to the August 4th port explosion, every shock makes us question if we can imagine a future here, or if we can even start a family and raise children when one grows hopeless with the country. That impossibility shapes Nino and Yasmina's love: as pure as it is, it cannot exist outside its context. If they had been born elsewhere, their relationship would look entirely different. What saves them is their ability to dream together, to make each other laugh, and to escape, if only in imagination, to "The Island."

Where did the idea of the island come from? In a way, it feels like a reminder of the island with the pink beach in Antonioni's Red Desert - was that an inspiration?

Antonioni's Red Desert marked me deeply, so it may well have lingered subconsciously. In Red Desert, the pink beach is a dreamlike beach detached from the industrial landscape of the film and its toxic colors. Here, The Island, despite having first been mentioned by Nino's grandfather, comes from Nino and Yasmina's own childhood imagination. It is an invention that becomes their refuge when life in Beirut grows harsher, and stays throughout the years and throughout their relationship. The Island is the most beautiful place in the world, emblematic of their eternal love and family harmony; and paradoxically, the Island is nothing but Beirut itself, if we dare to see it that way.

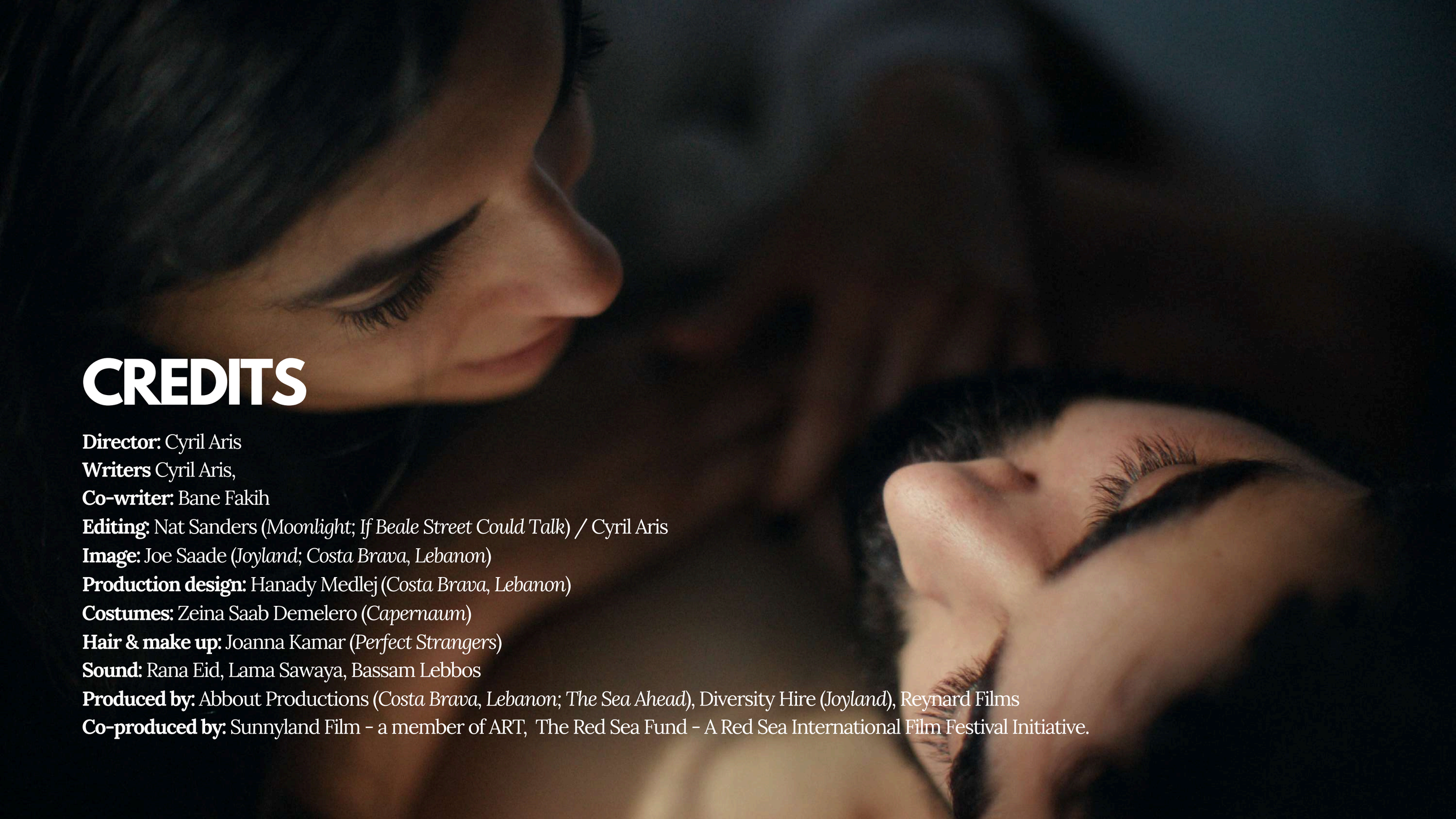
Q&A WITH DIRECTOR CYRIL ARIS

The casting is spot-on, Mounia Akl and Hasan Akil share a beautiful on-screen chemistry. How did you work with them to bring that connection to life?

Casting for this film was the most crucial decision. Yasmina needed someone who could project distance and maturity, yet still carry a childlike sparkle in her eye. Nino had to be joyful, magnetic, funny, yet capable of deep vulnerability. Mounia and Hasan were perfect opposites and complements. Before shooting, we built their entire relationship in rehearsal and in off-camera exercises, so that by the time we filmed, we could forget the script, and have them improvise, surprise each other, and simply be. They both brought a lot of their own personality into the parts, blending their own selves into the characters. Their generosity toward one another was immense. This was Mounia's first main acting role, and Hasan knew exactly how to play with her. Mounia's background as a director also enriched the process, helping bring out new layers in Hasan. It was a perfect harmony between Mounia, Hasan and me. And later, working with editor Nat Sanders allowed me to shape their chemistry with nuance, weaving the spontaneous and the scripted into something alive.

Lebanon is a central theme in your work. How do you see your first foray into fiction features fitting into your already rich filmography?

Lebanon is where my heart is, and it felt inevitable that my first fiction feature would spring from that soil. Whether in documentary or fiction, I am always chasing sincerity and truth, and reflecting that through images and sounds. For me, form is secondary to that emotional authenticity. And as Kiarostami said: "In order to be universal, you have to be very specific." This film is as specific as it gets, born out of my own questioning and contradictions.



CREDITS

Director: Cyril Aris
Writers Cyril Aris,
Co-writer: Bane Fakih
Editing: Nat Sanders (*Moonlight*; *If Beale Street Could Talk*) / Cyril Aris
Image: Joe Saade (*Joyland*; *Costa Brava, Lebanon*)
Production design: Hanady Medlej (*Costa Brava, Lebanon*)
Costumes: Zeina Saab Demelero (*Capernaum*)
Hair & make up: Joanna Kamar (*Perfect Strangers*)
Sound: Rana Eid, Lama Sawaya, Bassam Lebbos
Produced by: Abbout Productions (*Costa Brava, Lebanon; The Sea Ahead*), Diversity Hire (*Joyland*), Reynard Films
Co-produced by: Sunnyland Film - a member of ART, The Red Sea Fund - A Red Sea International Film Festival Initiative.