

Horses & Celebrities

By Khaled Assem
Photos by Karim Osman



One of the most important rising talents in Egyptian Cinema and an avid lover of horses met with Horse Times to share his passion and views on how horses have influenced him, both as an actor and human being. His cynical sense of humour and depth of speech helped add lots of zing to the meeting, making it dynamic and too good to end. Ahmed El Sakka says that he is not even close to becoming the next 'Knight In Shining Armour' of the Egyptian Cinema.

On his passion for horses, the talented actor told *Horse Times* that he started riding when he was 5 years old in El Mansoorah, Egypt, where he lived with his parents. His riding skills back then were random and basic, and he was certainly no knight. He was not acquainted with any trainers so he started teaching himself by going to the Haram riding area a lot. He also learned by occasionally standing on 6th of October Bridge that overlooks Ferousia Club, watching riders for hours, which he still enjoys doing due to the harmony it brings. As a teenager, he met professional riders and was very intrigued. The first book he read about horses was called 'Osool El Kheil' by a trainer named Ibrahim Abdallah. The book is old and out of print, but would do lots of good for beginners if it came to their paths. He then found himself on a track making him more and more intrigued by horses, leading him to get documentaries about horses, from the era of Caucasian

until the Irish, Dutch and Hanoverian horses. He never thought of it as a business, stating that some others do, but only as a passion, especially Arabian horses with their beauty, calling for him to buy them. He has 3 stallions, and it's only recently that he started to learn more about their bloodlines.

On how horses influence him as an actor and human being, the actor went on to explain that: 'At first I only rode, but didn't really take care of horses. I saw the movie *The Horse Whisperer* 6 years ago, and I started learning more about horses, Spanish riding schools, and started to go to the Ferousia Club to ride. I taught myself, and the basics were randomly acquired, but the most basic lesson I learned from riding was that one should have novelty and respect. I was an extremely naughty kid, and horses taught me how to be respectful. No matter how one is naughty, rude or macho, when dealing with the power of a

horse, all this will have to be put aside whether one likes it or not. There is a certain way of dealing with this power indeed, and its not violence, but patience and love. It also comes down to control, manners and easy riding'.

Going on, Ahmed was very keen on explaining how it's important to be able to combine riding and acting, saying that: 'My ambition is to become a really good actor, a star. I am 32 years old, and what I am now, at this age, is a blessing from God. Everything I know and learned about horses really helped me a lot when it came to movies that required riding or jumping. I reached a maybe, nutty imaginary stage, where I talk to my horses, and go to the desert and the silence would make me imagine that I can hear them, hence listen more and more. I became more mature. However, one of the things that really embarrasses me is that the tabloids name me 'The Knight of the Egyptian Cinema'! I am way beneath that! There is only one knight and that's the late

Ahmed Mazhar. The legendry late actor influenced me a lot. I remember I was once sitting with him and he told me such a bizarre story about a horse, and whilst discussing with him my knowledge about horses, I felt that I was a complete fool who doesn't know much. He encouraged me to read more. I am no knight, but I may have the conduct of one, However, I am considering doing either the role of 'Tariq bin Ziad', or 'Khaled bin Waleed' both of whom were knights. Those are difficult roles, but I know exactly what to do when acting them, and being an Arabian Knight in a movie is different than being an actor on a horse in a movie, so to speak. But being a good rider will help show that.

