



HORSES & CELEBRITIES

INTERVIEW WITH

AMR WAKED

By Nada H. Abdelmoniem

HORSE TIMES:

Is keen to offer what is different; this time with the aspiring and very much outspoken and charismatic Egyptian movie star Amr Waked.

AMR WAKED:

Not like any other celebrity that was interviewed by the magazine, Waked is a very charismatic individual with a lot of vision and sparkle. He is at a disposition as being an actor to influence a lot of the young generation. Waked adopts a lot of honourable traits; he seems to be a man of society and his efforts in the field of social development highlightens his moral values. It is quite interesting what we will see of him in the future.

Brief profile:

Born in August the 7th 1972 (star sign Leo), and known in the Hollywood movie 'Syriana' as the Blue Eyed Egyptian, Waked is a graduate of the American University in Cairo. His acting break came in 2001 in the movie 'Ashab walla Business' (Friends or Business) and being unfamiliar to audiences up to that point, Waked portrayed the role so well that many viewers left the theatre believing he was a Palestinian actor. Since then, his reputation as one of Egypt's most serious and devoted character actors went from strength to strength. Waked became interested in acting at a very young age. However, his undeniable talent crushed all the hesitancy, and his performance in his first major film solidified his belief that he could become a major actor in the region. His first lead role came in 'Deil el Samaka' (The Fish's Tail). However, his most acclaimed performance came in the short film 'Lilly'. Although it was a short film, Waked received excellent reviews for his portrayal of a Muslim cleric. Awards include Best supporting actor award in 1997, from Alexandria Film Festival for his role in 'Ganet el Shayateen' (Paradise of Devils), and Best Actor award in 2001 for his role in 'Deil el Samak

Horses and riding:

Horses represent a companionship that is blended with a very unique, reliable, and kind friendship. As riding is one of my favourite sports, a horse to me is one of the most graceful animals I have ever seen; they are very intelligent and one of a few animals that have loyalty. I was 6 years old when I first rode a horse, and was very scared, but throughout time, I saw a symbol of chivalry and knighthood that comes with being on a horse. Somehow, one can see a lot of animals that are evil, but horses are very difficult to depict as evil. They are super kind.

Career profile:

Share holder and partner in Zad Communication & Production Ltd. Company. Some of the company's clients are NGO's; development companies which recycle funds from certain areas to present a better future, such as our work with the United Nations' office on Drugs & Crime. By investing in such fields, Zad occasionally has communication tools that are needed in order to implement NGO projects accurately. Zad C & P Ltd supplies these tools. Zad started 7 years ago as Kayan Production Services. The company's desire was to carry out public service announcements concerning many daily factors which can improve by very small



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contributions; we started to pitch our ideas until we managed to find a private sector owner 'Mansour Manufacturing and Distribution Group' that was interested in financing the educational and environmental spots that Kayan Production Services had covered. Zad has also worked with the Unicef's programme 'Unite for Children Against AIDS' which is a global campaign as well as the UNAids on publications.

Given the power to change something in the world, Waked would change:

I would eliminate greed; greed is what leads to corruption, which unfortunately, is what humans are soaked in today.

Controversial roles:

I think there is always a point to any script...I like picking out different scripts. Usually, negative criticism about the role comes before the film is released, and after, ironically, the praise comes along (smiling). Once they watch the movie, the negativity dies off and then comes the truth...the reality. In the movie 'Ashab walla Business' I played a role of a Palestinian who ends up being a suicide bomber; the controversy was quite political & diplomatic for a few weeks; how could I "be-hero" what is termed as a terrorist?! Just as in Syriana, I played the role of an Islamist, but what do the viewers end up realising from the role? They sympathise or maybe understand the concept behind sacrificing oneself for a cause. What they term as a terrorist, is basically a believer of an issue who reached that stage of sacrifice through the human dramatical and tragical curve that he has witnessed. And on top, they accept this stage and make a choice. Having said this, it is a big problem! How

can one accept a Islamist, and not label him as a terrorist? Everyone needs to understand where their ideas derive from. Scripts usually come my way, and for Syriana, they chose me of course. But out of all the scripts, I choose what I think is controversial, yet worth while because it conveys a good intention as well as a strong statement. Why would you want to make a film? Is it to collect cash, or to view nudity or to laugh? To me, it is to compel people to think and realise something within themselves. It's about the relationship between the film maker and the audience; some film makers prefer to entertain their audience and some like to challenge them.

Sports (Physical and Ethical education vs. Professionalism):

Sports are like the film industry; it's a "play". The first element in our industry is to have fun...to play...to educate people. It's the same with sports; we enjoy playing sports. Its fun and is the one of the best forms of education! It would be fantastic if the business perspective involved in sports gets upgraded not dictated; otherwise we lose the ethical value of the sport. I believe it's the balance between the ethics and values behind sports vs. the business and professionalism that would be of added value to the sports industry.

A different scenario for Amr Waked besides acting:

I really don't know. I was a stock broker once and I think I would have continued because I liked it so much; I enjoyed the vast opportunities that continued to come everyday. **HT**