

AGENDA

LEBANON

FILM

'Fish Tank'
Metropolis Empire Sofil,
Achrafieh
December 4, 5:30 p.m.
+961 1 569 400
Highlights of today's screenings at the European Film Festival include British director Andrea Arnold's tale of a 15-year-old girl and her mum's new boyfriend. For other times and films, visit www.dellbn.ec.europa.eu.

'Taxi Talk'
T-marabouta, Hamra
December 4, 7:30 p.m.
+961 70 178 956
This documentary film from Lens on Lebanon takes a frank look at the concerns and dreams of present-day Beirutis through recorded conversations in service taxis. For other times and venues, visit www.lensonlebanon.org.

MUSIC

Lebanese National Symphony Orchestra
St Joseph's Church,
Achrafieh
December 4, 8:30 p.m.
+961 1 421 000
Celebrated American conductor Charles Ansbacher, who has played with the orchestras of Boston, Moscow and Sarajevo, leads the LNSO through a program of Brahms and Beethoven.

PERFORMANCE

'Speak to Me of Love'
Sunflower Theater,
Tayouneh
December 5, 8:30 p.m.
+961 1 343 128
Christian Gonon of the Comedie Francaise explores the literature of love in a lecture-performance featuring extracts from Verlaine, Vian and Gibran, among others. In French.

'The Return of the Little Fairy'
Casino du Liban,
Maameltein
Opening December 4, At 7 p.m.
+961 9 859 888
Old-school favorite "Ton amie Liliane" returns for the first time in 10 years with a brand new show for children. In French.

PHOTOGRAPHY

'Behind the Doors'
Tourism Ministry,
Hamra
Until December 9, 4 p.m.
+961 3 625 612
As part of the 16 Days campaign of activism against gender violence, this exhibition shows the results of a workshop given by photographer Dalia Khamissy to ten female survivors of domestic violence.

INTERVIEW

Altogether more than a footnote

Joe Sacco's 'Footnotes in Gaza,' strives to fill gaps in the record with the graphic novel

Olivia Snajje
Special to The Daily Star

PARIS: The first thing that comes to mind when holding graphic novelist and journalist Joe Sacco's new book, "Footnotes in Gaza," is the colossal amount of work that went into it.

Not only is this pen-and-ink graphic novel almost 400 pages long, the subject too is heavy: The Israeli military's massacre of Palestinian civilians in Khan Younis and Rafah (Gaza), during the 1956 Suez Crisis. The Malta-born American researched and reported on the subject for seven years, making two extended trips to Gaza - where he was often under fire from weapons paid for with his tax dollars.

Sacco, who has written and illustrated six graphic novels, is best known for his "Palestine," penned after spending two months in the Occupied Territories in 1991 and 1992. It was not an immediate success, selling poorly when it first appeared as a comic series. After the publication of Sacco's subsequent graphic novel - "Safe Area Gorazde," which follows the war in Eastern Bosnia from 1992-95 - the "Palestine" series was compiled into book form in 2002. It went on to attain tremendous success, winning the American Book Award in 1996 and selling 60,000 copies in the US alone.

Edward Said, who wrote the introduction to the complete edition of "Palestine" said: "With the exception of one or two novelists and poets, no one has ever rendered this terrible state of affairs better than Joe Sacco."

"It was a surprise to me," Sacco said in a telephone interview from his home in Portland, Oregon. "If you want to explain its success, I think it's perhaps because it was addressing the occupation on a human level... Slowly there's been a shift in the American perception of what's going on in the Middle East but it's been very slow and probably it hasn't come as far as it needs to. But comic books are an easy entrée into this kind of thing."

It was because he felt frustrated by the lack of objective reporting on the Middle East that Sacco decided to go see for himself in 1991. With a degree in journalism and already established as a cartoonist, Sacco felt his instincts as a reporter kick in once on location. Perhaps this experience cemented his unique blend of punctilious reporting and personal narrative.

Sacco has said he's inspired by George Orwell's "The Road to Wigan Pier" and Michael Herr's "Dispatches" because of their remarkable ability to give the reader a sense of place.

The inspiration for "Footnotes in Gaza" came after Sacco accompanied journalist Chris Hedges to Gaza in 2001, both of them writing and drawing for "Harper's" magazine. He had remembered a brief reference in a Noam Chomsky book to killings in Khan Younis in 1956 and suggested that Hedges follow-up.

Hedges' reference to Khan Younis was cut out of the final "Harper's" story, which galvanized Sacco. "Footnotes in Gaza," he said, isn't about the big picture but more about forgotten events left out of a larger story.

"No one has written about these incidents in English. Or when they do, they all quote the same UN document from 1956. I also wanted to show the con-



Joe Sacco in "Footsteps in Gaza" is more seasoned and purposeful.

text behind the situation." Part of Sacco's genius lies in how his documentation of the smaller, human-scale events constantly brings us back to the bigger picture.

The layout of "Footnotes in Gaza" is reminiscent of Mike Figgis' film "Timecode," in which the screen is divided into quarters and the four shots are shown simultaneously.

Sacco's drawings are tighter and more sophisticated than in "Palestine." As references, he used his own photographs of refugee camps and pictures from UNRWA archives in Gaza City from the 1950s, 60s and 70s. He then drew each panel by hand, including all the crosshatching.

As usual in Sacco's books, we follow the author, a bag slung over his shoulder, eyes hidden behind his round glasses, in his painstaking search for information. Abed, Sacco's guide and friend, is a solid and reassuring presence who becomes as involved in the research as Sacco. The past and present are juxtaposed in panels as Sacco records how he goes after the story, tracking down witnesses and survivors of the 1956 massacres, then recording their accounts.

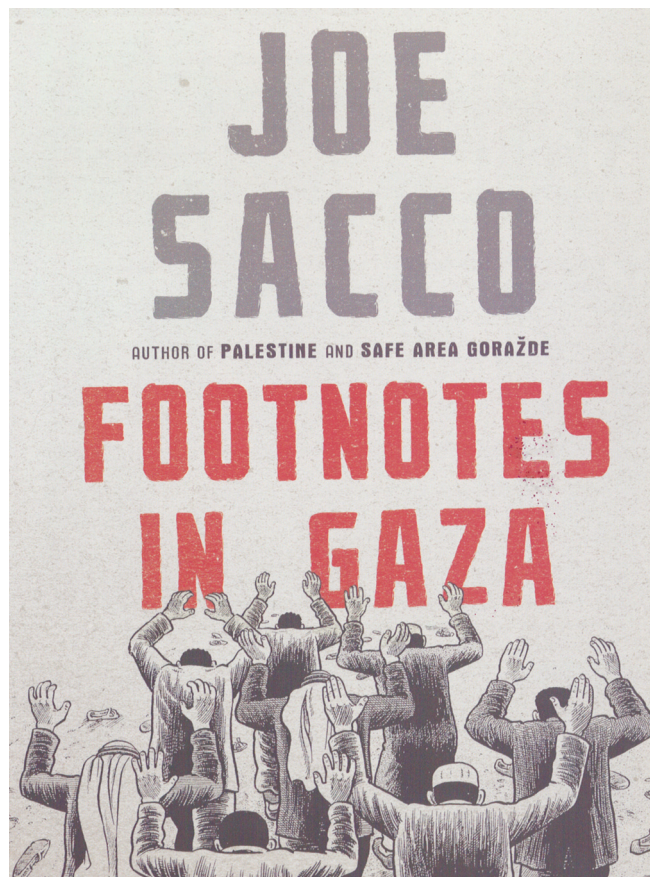
Life in Gaza is far from calm. Sacco observes demolitions of

homes, Caterpillars collapsing tunnels. He brings mortar fire, checkpoints and suicide bombers to the story. Throughout, the gaunt, red-eyed Khaled, a fighter on the run from the Israelis, pops in and out of Sacco's life, desperate for a few hours of sleep.

"This is one of the first cases when I stuck to the story," he remarked. "As I weave in the present with the past it's to show that this is ongoing."

It all seems a lot to absorb, but Sacco digests the information to make it palatable, spicing with comic relief where necessary, interjecting his own frustration with his rambling witnesses and cynical Western journalists, often poking fun at himself. One witness, a former *fedai* (resistance fighter) runs him ragged with interminable accounts about his life between 1948 and 1967. "That old fedayee, he's a piece of work," Sacco writes. "He's marinated in ruminations of political betrayals and stewed for decades in remembrances of military ineptitudes. He loses track of the catastrophe at hand, '56, which he abandons in mid-sentence to tug at some other dagger in his heart..."

Sacco the historian doggedly sifts through this information,



STAR SCENE



Jorge Alvarez, Khaled Irani, Najib and Maria Saab and Diana Rhyem



Gabriel Checchia and Berj Hatjian



Rahma Alzaabi, Hiels Pultz and Jan Top Christensen



Samar and Jamal Saidi



Lurin Atwi

Environmentally aware greats turn out for dinner at Bourj al-Hamam

BROUMANA: The glitter had a vague tinge of green about it on November 19, when some 500 of the great and the good's more environmentally aware turned out for dinner at Bourj al-Hamam restaurant, there to sup with participants of the Arab Forum for Environmental Development. Among the transcontinental contingent in attendance were **Jorge Alvarez, Hero De Boer, Berj Hatjian, Khaled Irani** and, of course, **Jan Top Christensen**. A grand time was had by all.

Sundance unveils lineup for 2010 festival

Bob Tourtellotte
Reuters

LOS ANGELES: The Sundance Film Festival has listed the 64 films that will compete for awards at the 2010 edition of America's premier event for independent films, the first since the departure of perennial artistic director Geoff Gilmore.

Backed by Robert Redford's

Sundance Institute in Utah, Sundance has long been a launch pad for first-time filmmakers and some of the best low-budget movies shown in art houses, including current Oscar hopeful "Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire."

The selection for Sundance 2010 (January 21-31) hasn't changed greatly under new director John Cooper, featuring a typical mix of offbeat dramas such as "Holy Rollers," about a drug-dealing Hasidic Jew, and serious-minded documentaries like "Casino Jack & The United States of Money" by Oscar-winner Alex Gibney.

"My job is to stay on point," said Cooper, "stay on focus and show the best and most original content we can find."

While new in the festival's top job, Cooper has long been one of its key programmers and executives. "We looked at pretty much everything, and asked 'Why do we do this?'" Cooper added. "And a lot of things got put back in place because they work."

The festival will feature 113 feature-length films overall from 31 countries, selected from more than 9800 submissions. Cooper said festival programmers looked for work that took risks and had a fully realized story to tell.

Sundance puts 16 films into competition from each of four categories - US documentaries and dramas and world documentaries and dramas. Among this year's dramas are "Howl," depicting the early career of poet Allen Ginsberg, and "happythankyoumoreplease," about the lives of six young New Yorkers.

Davis Guggenheim, director of Oscar-winning global warming film "An Inconvenient Truth," hits the 2010 documentary competition with "Waiting for Superman," about US public education. Other nonfiction films to watch will likely be "I'm _____ Pat Tillman," about the football player and US soldier who died from friendly fire in Afghanistan, and "Benazir Bhutto."

HOROSCOPE

Aries (Mar. 21 - April 19)	Taurus (April 20 - May 20)	Gemini (May 21 - June 21)
You need someone to hear you out soon - things are close to boiling point. You may have to corner a friend or family member who is reluctant to bear the brunt.	Put off anything that requires a signature - well, anything but a rent or mortgage check. You need more time to consider all the ramifications of your engagements before you can commit.	You're busy in all the right ways today, and should be able to keep up with every last project and person on your calendar. In fact, you may want to take on a few new plans just to show you can.
Cancer (June 22 - July 22)	Leo (July 23 - Aug. 22)	Virgo (Aug. 23 - Sept. 22)
Work is really difficult today, no matter what you're doing. It's harder than ever to keep all the different aspects clear in your head, and you may need to take a long break to figure it all out.	Even if you're neck-deep in work or exhausted from a busy month, you need to get out there and socialize. You need the energy of others to recharge, so won't get far on your own.	You have to make a tough decision today, but it's one that is just right for your mindset. Coolly work through all the variables and then settle on something that you know you can live with.
Libra (Sept. 23 - Oct. 22)	Scorpio (Oct. 23 - Nov. 21)	Sagittarius (Nov. 22 - Dec. 21)
You find something new to do today, though you may have despaired of that happening any time soon. Your amazing personal energy draws interesting experiences your way effortlessly.	A small detail distracts you from today's work. It's important; don't let it go. You may need to draw on help from an outside force if you want to make sure that nothing like this pops up again.	You're feeling much more thoughtful than usual, though you may not be able to hit the depths of whatever intellectual problems have been bothering you. Still, you need to think everything through.
Capricorn (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19)	Aquarius (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18)	Pisces (Feb. 19 - Mar. 20)
Now is the perfect time to review your plans and revisit any brainstorming you've had lately - your thinking is unusually clear. For you, that means an almost robotic level of efficiency.	An unexpected connection turns into something far more interesting today. Maybe fall for someone at work or in an unusual context, or maybe you find a new shared interest with your mate.	Your creative solutions to difficult problems can be legendary, and today, you come up with a new one. Others might take longer than usual to accept or even to understand your forward thinking.

Just a thought

Death... It's the only thing we haven't succeeded in completely vulgarizing.

Aldous Huxley
(1894 - 1963)
British essayist and author of "Eyeless in Gaza," among other novels

MID GROUP
interior concept creation

Interior Decoration
Design & Concept
Interior Projects Execution
Sites Supervision

Tel: **70 - 57 99 09**
group.mid@gmail.com