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LINDA AND ALI: TWO WORLDS WITHIN FOUR WALLS

A film by Lut Vandekeybus



"REMARKABLE..."

- *Le Monde*

"REVEALING... IMMENSELY LIKEABLE..."

- *Variety*



A WOMEN MAKE MOVIES RELEASE

Women Make Movies • 462 Broadway, 5th Floor • New York, NY 10013
Tel: 212.925.0606 • webinfo@wmm.com • www.wmm.com

SYNOPSIS

Ali Saigal and his wife Linda have been married for 20 years, raising their traditional Islamic family in Doha, Qatar. But their relationship is far from traditional—Linda was brought up Catholic in Arizona and met Ali at college in the 1980's. Shot over two years during the American invasion of Iraq, this poignant doc shows how Linda and Ali struggle to surmount their cultural differences while raising their seven children in a lively, loving home.



Unlike many foreign wives, Linda adopted the Shiite Muslim traditions of her husband, and swathed in black, she looks like any other Qatari woman. Within the four walls of their comfortable home, however, Western and Middle Eastern ideals, ethics and attitudes often collide. The filmmaker hones in on surprising and candid family discussions about issues such as second wives, religion and Qatari society, painting a fascinating portrait of a family living at the complex intersection of gender roles, nationality and religion. This entertaining film is a unique opportunity to view Muslim culture through Linda's eyes, counteracting the often distorted images provided by the mainstream media.



FILMMAKER BIO

Born in Lier, Belgium, Lut Vandekeybus studied Political & Social Sciences at the University of Louvain. She practiced photography in the United States, Spain, Portugal and Mexico. In 1993 she returned to Belgium to work at the Flemish Theatre Institute in Brussels where she developed her film and video skills. She interned with Walter Verdin in Barcelona and at the Stuc Arts Center in Louvain, and then spent a year at the Escuela Internacional de Cine y TV in Cuba. In 1996 she founded the production company Khadouj Films in Brussels.

FILMOGRAPHY

1995, *Heimwee*, 14'
1997, *Bletzi, Bletzi*, 52'
1998, *In Apnee*, 52'
1999, *Not All That 'The World' Does is Good For a Mennonite*, 52' & 56'
2001, *The Chinese Dog*, 14'
2003, *The Dream*, 74'



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CREDITS

Belgium, 2005, 94 minutes

Director/Producer/Writer
Lut Vandekeybus

Camera
Lut Vandekeybus, Annick Bongers, Virginie Surdej

Editor
Nico Leunen

Additional Editing
Ewin Ryckaert, Octavio Iturbe

Sound Editor
Senjan Jansen

Music
Rabih Abou-Khalil



FESTIVALS

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- HotDocs Int'l Film Fest Toronto, World Premiere
- Opendoek Film Festival, Belgium Premiere
- Bangkok International Film Festival
- Chicago International Film Festival
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PRESS QUOTES

“East collides with West in this lighthearted, typical love story with atypical twists... Respectful and appreciative of both cultures, Linda & Ali openly delivers the couple’s differences without making them seem perverse.”

Chicago International Film Festival

“Remarkable... the director shows much intelligence and sensitivity.”

Le Monde

“Succeeds in showing the complexity of characters and situations.”

Telerama

“Revealing... immensely likeable...”

Variety



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VARIETY

March 3, 2006

By **RICHARD KUIPERS**

The first feature-length docu made by Westerners in the Gulf state of Qatar, "Linda & Ali" gets up close and very personal with an American-born woman and her Qatari husband. Shooting over the course of three eventful years, Belgian documaker Lut Vandekeybus has fashioned a revealing look at mixed marriage inside a highly insular society. Further fest travels and quality broadcast sales should follow.

The immensely likeable focus is Linda al-Saigel, a convert to the Shiite Muslim faith of husband Ali. Twenty years on, her marriage is being tested by issues that will soon affect their oldest children and which touch on the American Catholic nerves of her upbringing. With amazing candor, she openly discusses polygamy, marriage between cousins and the long-term effects of living in a society in which the worlds of men and women are strictly divided. Careful not to cast Ali in an unflattering light, Vandekeybus brings him forward as a sensitive man tackling his own set of cross-cultural issues. Nimble lensing inside the al-Saigel house doesn't miss a thing. Rest of tech work is pro.

Camera (color, DV), Vandekeybus, Annick Bongers, Virginie Surdet; editor, Nico Leunen; music, Rabih Abou Khalil. Reviewed at Bangkok Film Festival (International Documentary), Feb. 26, 2006. English, Arabic dialogue. Running time: 95 MIN.



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