

## Cannes 2022: Director of Boy from Heaven Says His Love for Egypt is Unrequited



Boy from Heaven is a critique of how religion and politics are at loggerheads. Director Tarik Saleh says he was not sure whether the film would be screened in Egypt.

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GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN

Tarik Saleh's Egyptian film Boy from Heaven is being screened in competition at the Cannes Film Festival.

**T**arik Saleh's Egyptian work Boy from Heaven in the Cannes Film Festival competition is a no-holds-barred look at the country's deep rooted conflict between the religious elite and men in the higher echelons of political power. In the movie, young Adam (Tawfeek Barhom) becomes a pawn in this ruthless game of one-upmanship.

Son of an impoverished Egyptian fisherman, Adam goes to the prestigious Al-Azhar University in Cairo that is a hotbed of Sunni Islam. To Adam's surprise, his father encourages him, seeing the opportunity as a gift from God. But when Adam arrives, his good fortune soon turns sour. The Grand Imam falls fatally ill, creating a sensitive vacuum in Egyptian fragile power structure.

Saleh told a press conference on Saturday that his movie was inspired by Umberto Eco's novel, The Name of the Roses. At the heart of it all, Boy from Heaven is a critique of how religion and politics are at loggerheads.

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Saleh said his grandfather went to Al-Azhar. "I have always been fascinated by it. So after Nile Hilton, I was thinking about Al-Azhar, and about how little people know about Islam in a way that I think is interesting," he said.

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He averred that he was not sure whether the film would be screened in Egypt. "I think that what's more sensitive than the religious aspects of this movie is how I deal with state security. Because the tension between state security and religious power in Egypt is enormous."

Yet, he does not think Boy from Heaven is a controversial work. "And I'm a half-Swedish, half-Egyptian. Here is

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that I don't like how Islam is portrayed by people that know nothing about it.

He added that his intention was not to provoke and he worked with imams before writing the script. "I see myself as a filmmaker who just wants to tell stories truthfully, and I think that if the truth is going to be painful, which it will be for some people – but it's more for political reasons than for religious reasons – then so be it."

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**GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN** Gautaman Bhaskaran is a movie critic, commentator and an author, who penned the first ever biography of Adoor Gopalakrishnan, and has been covering ma...[Read More](#)



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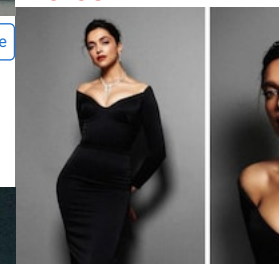


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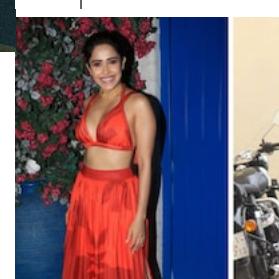


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