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An Iraqi family scattered all over the world

Samir came to Switzerland from Iraq at the age of six. That was in 1961. He is today one of Switzerland's best-known film directors. Around ten years ago he began conducting research into the life stories of his Iraqi relatives, exploring the destinies of siblings, uncles, aunts and cousins who fled their native country and live dispersed all over the world. "Iraqi Odyssey" is the title of the resultant documentary.

Samir contrasts the images we have of Iraq today – of destroyed, dusty areas of land, bearded fighters, bomb terror and women in black chadors – with those of his recollections. These are images of Iraq from the 1950s to the 1970s, images of a vibrant city with women dressed in western clothing, who studied at university and enjoyed the company of gallant men. Samir himself takes us through his film, which is both a family epic and a history lesson, from the off. The eastern flair for narration and the sense of humour displayed by Samir and his uncle Jamal from London produce an uplifting film despite the often hard lives of the exiles.

BARBARA ENGEL

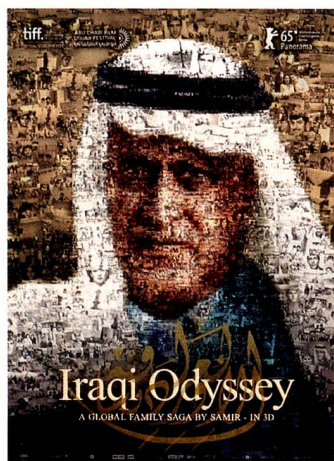


The director Samir with his sister Hayath in 1958 in Iraq in front of their father's car



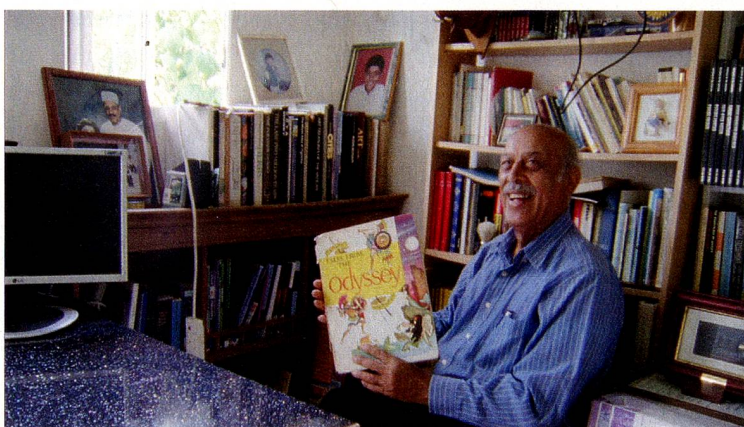
Samir with relatives in 1967 at the ruins of Baalbek in Lebanon

The film will be in cinemas in Germany and Italy from July 2015 and in the former Yugoslavia in early autumn 2015. Screenings in other countries have



not yet been scheduled. It will be available on DVD and VOD from February 2016.

A project is being carried out on the www.iraqiodyssey.ch website enabling other Iraqis to recount their stories.



Sabah Jamal Aldin, Samir's uncle, who today lives in London



Samir's father Riad (at the back, 2nd from the left) with friends and cousins around 1935



A family picnic in 1959 near Baghdad with Samir as a young boy



Rashid Street in Baghdad in 1956



Souhir, Samir's half-sister. In the background a meeting of the Muqtada militia in 2007



Samir with his cousin Jamal al Tahir, who lives in Moscow