

## APPENDIX I

Interview with Nasser Hussein by Mostafa Yasseen about the Arab Cinema. (Adapted and translated from the Fann Arts Magazine)

MY From where did the term "contractor's film" which has become the type of film you usually produce originate?

NH You might be surprised to know that I am the first to use this term. When asked about the Cinema Industry in an interview, I say that in the Egyptian Cinema industry, there are no producers. What is really funny is that the contract is made with the movie star manager. It is termed "An art contract" whether the film cost is five million or one hundred fifty five thousand pounds.

MY How do you then explain your title as a "Contractor Director" which is linked with you and the films you direct?

NH It began when I started to contract second-rate actors in my films and the superstars then began to fear that these actors would steal their fame. In addition, the producers appreciate the low-cost films since they are more profitable.

MY Does a small budget and on-hands production conditions spoil your cinematic thought?

I Not at all. It is I who choose the film and its cost. I am rather "devoted" to my work. I work from ten to twelve hours a day, whereas other directors talk for eight hours and work for only two. With little calculation, it would be clear that though I shoot a film in two weeks and another director may shoot a film in fifteen weeks, we both work the same number of hours.

Y How long does it usually take you to shoot a film?

H From a fortnight to twenty days at the most. This rate is quite reasonable. Hassan Emam, for example, finished his films in only eighteen days, and Emeetab Betshan once declared in an interview that he agrees with the director and the producer not to work for more than fifteen days.

MY What is the average budget of your films?

NH Usually between 130 to 170 thousand pounds. By the way, I am good practitioner of directing low costs films and I know how to manage them well. The attack on my films and me is actually due to jealousy towards my capabilities in this kind of industry. I am proud to say that I am the only one who has corrected the artistic equation, which usually are: the actors fees constitute seventy percent of the costs; and thirty percent goes to the technicians and materials. I have reversed this percentage to make it work better. The actor is nothing but a tool used by the director as he wishes. In my films, I am always eager to include the largest number of actors for I love crowds and I am also capable for making a star out of

any actors who will then be successful and bring profit to the producers. Believe me, the main factor that guarantees success of any work is the good publicity, not the director, or the producer or the costs.

MY Is there an "ideal" budget for any film?

NH Certainly not, it depends on circumstances, but generally it must not be less than a hundred-twenty-five thousand or exceed a hundred seventy-five, or else it would incur financial loss.

MY How much is usually the financial profit of your films?

NH Look, the profit of any of my films is less than two hundred thousand pounds. Anyway, it is a calculated business. Moderate-costs film sold in Saudi Arabia costs at least twenty thousand dollars, while a high-cost film, like those of Adel Imam, is sold for sixty thousand dollars. By the way, my name carries as much weight as that of any producers such as Adel Imam. I am a star whose name means profit for any producers. That's why producers never question me about the actors I choose for my films. For instance, in *Naughty Girls in Neweba*, a film that I directed, the producer was Medhat Sherrif. I found out that in the film advertisements, it was only written, "a film by Nasser Hussein" while none of the actors was mentioned. The film nevertheless was a success. This proves the success of my own invented artistic "recipe".

MY Which of your films was a failure?

NH None, and by the way, I am the only director who does not go to the producers, they come to me.

MY Are you optimistic about the future of the Egyptian Cinema Industry?

NH I shall be, only when the Egyptian capital participate in the production business. Looking backwards, you'd find out that the Egyptian cinema was a success and made good financial profit. For Medhat Sherrif, he told me that he gained seventy five thousand.

MY You have been accused that you never like to reshoot any scene, even if it is necessary as not to waste any more animatographic film and thus reduce the cost.

NH Every director has his own style. As for me, I prefer impressionism in directing films. So, I always take the first shot which is, I believe, more natural.

MY Who are your audiences?

NH I address eighty percent of the Egyptian audience.

MY Why do the intellectuals always refuse to watch your films?

1H These are a minority, which I do not care!

1Y How do you explain the stars refusal to work with you?

1H I understand the economies of cinematography quite well, I don't take realities and I choose the actors who suit the work and its cost, for the producer is merely a merchant and I help him to make profit. And as for those stars, I refuse to have them and I appose their false allegations and principles.

MY An artistic merchant or merchant artist?

NH No, an artistic merchant: I shall fool you with false principles and rhetoric. Business, for me, comes before art. At the beginning of my carrier, art had the priority, and I did present good works but they were not successful. So, I decided to change my style. My films, which were of a high intellectual quality, and standard, started with a film of Aziz Amin titled *Laila* and the producer was a bank-owner. Probably you do not know that the majority of Anwar Wagdy's films wee produced by his partner, Mahmoud Atleya, who worked as a tile-contractor, and the owner of "Mass Al Gadida" Film Company was a cloth merchant, while Ibrahim Shaky was an accessories merchant. I am not against any producers. What matters for me is the capital and at the same time, if those working in the cinema participated with their own money, the conditions may improve a lot.

MY Who are your most important friends in the show-business?

NH Nobody. You may be surprised to know that I have no friends in the show business, for social relations in this business are only a matter of mutual interest. I was a journalist before I became a director and due to this, they may be afraid of me because I understand the chemistry of relationship quite well.

MY Do you watch your own films?

NH Yes, and I criticize myself harshly.

MY What mistake do you believe Nasser Hussein has committed?

NH Joining the cinema business!