

5TH EDITION MIDDLE EAST



WOMEN LEADERS SUMMIT & AWARDS 2025

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Aspire. Inspire. Lead



Empowering
Women

Shaping
Tomorrow

Pioneering
Leadership

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The Palace Entertainment
Group FZE

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Can you share your career journey and what motivated you to pursue a leadership role?

As a teenager, I left Slovakia and was an exchange student in the United States of America, in Washington, and that's where it all started. I was approached in high school to act in a theater. The show was a huge success, the next day there was an article in the newspaper that an exchange student from Slovakia stole the show and a New Star was born. When I was on that stage, I knew immediately that the stage was my other self, my DNA, and that's what I want to do for the rest of my life. To have a connection with the audience, to make people happy, to give them good feelings, emotions, to see a smile on their faces that was a moment when something incredible woke up in me, because in Slovakia these opportunities never existed and I knew that theater, film, having a connection with people, with the audience is something incredible and it fulfills me. Especially the smile on their faces is priceless, and that's when my journey of theater and acting began. I knew this was the only thing I could do, it was the meaning of my life and now here we are a few years later. Although I pursued formal acting studies, I discovered a deeper love for working behind the camera, because in front of the camera I had to speak the scripts I was given.



I was satisfied, but I felt empty. I yearned for a more authentic form of expression. And then came the moment, the global lockdown provided a turning point, inspired by the stories of women around me. I knew I had to help my friends from all over the world, listen to their stories of how they were coping. That's when I said to myself, there is a crisis and what's worse than this crisis is not using it. I felt compelled to create my first film. This directorial debut, which garnered numerous awards, solidified my belief that I had found my true calling. I knew, I had done something beautiful, meaningful, and that I was on the right path. By today I have received more than 37 global awards and the rest, as they say, is history. I am very proud of myself and my team crew because filming is with the people and for the people.

In summary, my heart is my guide, my career journey has been shaped by love for storytelling, being a voice of people with no voice, a desire to break barrier. Lastly and the most important to me is the force of presenting the truth, even though the truth is vital but without love it is unbearable, but must be done. And a commitment to helping shape the future of cinema to be more inclusive and representative of all people.



What legacy do you hope to leave behind as a movie director, and how do you want to be remembered?

I have dedicated my career to creating films with positive impact on the world, aiming to inspire, reveal profound truths and telling stories that matter.

As a female movie director, my hope would be to leave behind a legacy that celebrates both artistic excellence and the empowerment of underrepresented voices in the film industry.



As a filmmaker, my goal is not just to entertain, but to inspire and empower future generations.

I would want to be remembered for breaking barriers, and helping pave the way for future generations of diverse filmmakers. My desire is that my films inspire empathy, give emotions, tell us the truth which is shaping us, and spark conversations around important social and cultural issues. Beyond just making compelling stories, I would like to use the platform of filmmaking to highlight voices and experiences that are often overlooked in mainstream cinema. On a more personal note, I hope to be remembered for fostering an inclusive and supportive creative space on set, where every individual feels valued and heard.

I believe that such an environment can lead to truly special and masterpiece work, and I would want my legacy to be about more than just the films I made, but also the kind of filmmaker and friend I was to others. Ultimately, I would like to be remembered as someone who demonstrate that filmmaking is not just a career or a craft, but a way to contribute to the cultural conversation, provoke meaningful discussions, foster understanding, inspire change and leave a lasting impact on how we see the world and each other



What does success mean to you, both personally and professionally?

Success, both personally and professionally, can take on many different meanings, but here's how I might define it as a filmmaker. Professionally, success as a movie director would be for me about creating stories that resonate deeply with people, sparking conversations, emotions, and reflection. It's not about just making popular films, but it's about telling meaningful stories, whether they shed light on social issues or explore complex characters.

If my films could make people feel seen, heard, or understood, that would be a form of success. Success also means staying true to my artistic vision, even if that means making unconventional choices. Being able to pursue the projects that truly excite me, rather than chasing trends or commercial pressure, is key to professional success. If I can make the films I'm passionate about while maintaining my creative integrity, I would feel fulfilled. While accolades aren't the ultimate measure of success, being recognized for one's work, either through awards, nominations, or simply the respect of peers, can be validating. Professional success might also be about creating a lasting body of work that stands the test of time.






What are some of the biggest opportunities and challenges you see in your industry in the next 5-10 years?


The filmmaking industry is undergoing rapid evolution, presenting several significant opportunities and challenges in the coming years. Technological advancements, such as AI can assist in various aspects of filmmaking, from scriptwriting and editing to visual effects and acting even though I do not like it very much since only human can feel happiness, love or sadness and anger. Filmmaking is becoming increasingly globalized and demand for diverse storytelling create opportunities for filmmakers from various cultures and backgrounds.

This presents opportunities for filmmakers from non-Western countries and marginalized groups to gain international recognition. I believe we can also anticipate a rise in international co-productions, creating cross-border collaborations that bring diverse talent and ideas. High-quality streaming platforms like Netflix and Hulu provide filmmakers with expanded opportunities to reach global audiences. This demand for high-quality original content can benefit both independent filmmakers and new voices in the industry. I'd like to outline some key challenges facing the filmmaking industry today.

Financial and Logistical Challenges for us, independent filmmakers, with the high cost of production, distribution, and marketing, many independent filmmakers will continue to struggle to finance projects. Crowdfunding, grants, and alternative financing options may continue to grow, but these sources will not be enough for every filmmaker. There are so many incredible filmmakers out there and are so limited to make another new wonderful movies, such a sad reality.



AI may assist in filmmaking, but only humans can truly feel love, pain, and the emotions that make a story unforgettable.



I propose that one solution to the lack of funding in the movie industry is to mandate contributions from the public budget to the arts. This could be achieved by allocating a percentage of taxes to art projects, such as movies, in joint ventures with filmmakers. This approach would foster industry development and provide essential financial support. Additionally, with the rise of digital content and the number of platforms available, the competition to stand out will become more intense. Filmmakers will need to find unique ways to capture audience attention in a market flooded with content. And as global tastes evolve, filmmakers will face pressure to balance commercial appeal with maintaining authenticity, creativity and artistic vision. We must also balance technological advancements with creative storytelling. While new technologies offer exciting possibilities, it is important to preserve the artistry and craftsmanship of filmmaking. Striking a harmony between technological innovation and traditional storytelling will be critical.

Lastly, very sad reality, the decline of traditional cinema presents another challenge. The COVID 19 pandemic accelerated the trend of audiences watching films at home rather than in theaters, and this could continue to impact box office sales. The challenge will be finding a sustainable model that supports both traditional cinema and streaming services. One of my favorite directors, Oscar-winner Paolo Sorrentino, beautifully captured the magic of cinema when he spoke at the 2022 Marrakech International Film Festival. He shared, "The Marrakech Film Festival is for me the place where the dream of watching numerous films with Martin Scorsese, and of spending days talking about cinema with him and other talented colleagues, came true." Sorrentino's optimism for the future of film resonated with me. He expressed his belief that "cinemas will fill up again," and that "many wonderful films will be released soon." Despite his recent collaboration with Netflix on "The Hand of God," Sorrentino affirmed his desire to "make (his) next film for theaters." His words inspire hope and excitement for the future of cinema.

Despite these challenges, the future of filmmaking is bright. New technologies and cultural trends offer unprecedented opportunities. However, success will depend on our ability to navigate these challenges, adapt to changing audience habits, and balance innovation with tradition and, as I always say LONG LIVE CINEMA!

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