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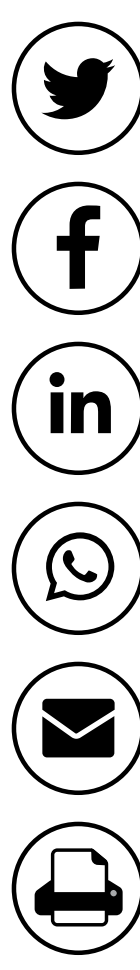
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OSN's first feature film 'Yellow Bus' hopes to heal through its tragic premise

Shot around the UAE, the drama tells the story of a community dealing with the tragic death of young girl left in a school bus



Director Wendy Bednarz with lead actress Tannishtha Chatterjee on the set of 'Yellow Bus'. Photo: OSN

Chris Newbould

Apr 21, 2022

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It has been more than 10 years since the 2011 launch of OSN's Arabic content channel OSN Ya Hala, a move that would see the leading regional broadcaster increase its in-house production.

It started with OSN's first original, the [Ramadan comedy favourite Hindistani](#).

As streaming has increasingly become the norm for global entertainment, and ownership of your own content has become key to financial and critical success, OSN has continued to bring more of its originals to the region and even launched Ya Hala to viewers in the US and Canada.

But the broadcaster had not produced its own feature film ... until now.

Yellow Bus, shooting for which was recently completed in the UAE, will make its debut on the OSN+ streaming service, alongside a planned cinema release this year.

It is the work of New York University Abu Dhabi media tutor and writer-director Wendy Bednarz, who makes her feature debut alongside experienced Jordanian producer [Nadia Eliewat](#) (*Solitaire*, *When Monaliza Smiled*).

The film tells the tragic story of a young girl who dies from heat exhaustion after being accidentally left behind in a school bus, and the ordeal her grieving mother goes through after the event.

It is a story that will be all too familiar to residents of the region, with similar tragedies having taken place in real life all across the Middle East and Indian subcontinent.

Bednarz insists that she does not want to focus on specific events as much as the universal nature of grief.



Director Wendy Bednarz says she hopes her debut feature will touch the hearts of anyone who is grieving. Photo: OSN

"This type of tragedy, children being left behind in locked vehicles, happens all over the world and is not limited to a geographic area or to the journey of a particular person," she says. "The only reality is the sad one."

"These characters could be of any cultural background, though what makes *Yellow Bus* especially compelling is that the story takes place in an unspecified city in the Gulf where the complex societal structures challenge the status quo."

"Given the current geopolitical climate, I hope that *Yellow Bus* will remind viewers that, as humans, we share a lot of commonalities."

"We justify our actions, both the good and the bad, that's how we live with ourselves. My hope is that *Yellow Bus* will touch the hearts of anyone who is grieving, and perhaps act as a catharsis for relief from their pain."

The story may be fictionalised, and the location unspecified, but one thing that will surely be familiar to residents of the UAE is the cultural melting pot in which events take place.



'Yellow Bus' is OSN's first original feature film. Photo: OSN

"The film is a reflection of the world in which we live. A diversity of people, cultures, and languages," says Bednarz. "It's primarily in Hindi, English and Arabic, but also includes Urdu and Tagalog."

"Although English is my mother tongue, I've lived for over a decade outside the US."

"During this time, through the knowledge shared with me by my local collaborators, and through my own imagination, I've aspired to step over the boundaries of my own experience and enter the lives of others."

Those collaborators, in particular Bednarz's producer Eliewat, were crucial to getting *Yellow Bus* to the screen.

"Nadia made the leap from script doctor to producer, and without her belief and drive, *Yellow Bus* would have remained on the page, forever probably," Bednarz says.

"Selling a feature film set in the Arab world, told in five languages, with a first-time American writer-director was not an easy sell."

"Nadia built an incredible team, one that was multicultural, to mirror the project. The rest is history in the making."



Wendy Bednarz with producer Nadia Eliewat. Photo: OSN

Bednarz also praises her main cast — Indian actress Tannishtha Chatterjee as grieving mother Ananda, Syrian actress Kinda Alloush as widowed single mother Mira, and Indian actor Amit Sial's grieving father Gagan — in bringing this multicultural story to the screen successfully.

"Some things just don't translate between languages," she says. "Instead, the dialogue became an intense collaborative process and often meant rewriting on set, and sometimes heated debates about how to speak the words most authentically, while maintaining the integrity of what I had written."

"Even though I lived with the character for a long time during the writing process, Tannishtha knew Ananda better than anyone and was able to breathe life into the dialogue in ways that positively cracked open the story."

"I'm incredibly grateful to all the actors for their steadfast commitment to telling the story as powerfully and truthfully as possible."

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[What the success of 'Dune' at the Oscars means for Abu Dhabi](#)

On a broader level, Bednarz says she hopes to be able to achieve at least two more ambitions when her film is released this year.

First is to pave the way for more independent, character-driven films to be made in the region, and for those stories to become accessible to a wider audience with the support of a major player like OSN.

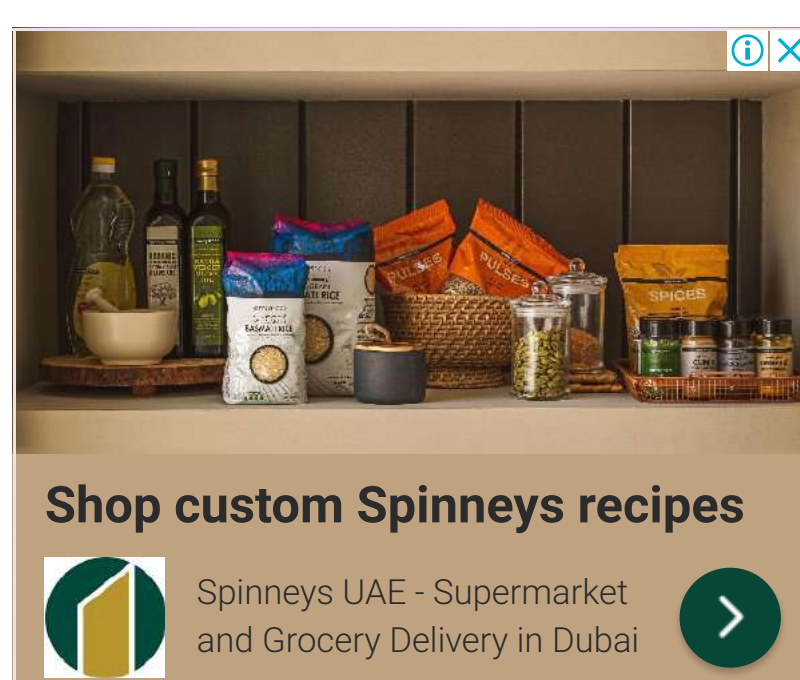
Second, the director lives in the hope that perhaps her film could save just a single child's life some day.

"There are thousands of children across the globe who are left in locked vehicles with tragic consequences," Bednarz says.

"If a single life can be saved by raising awareness of such situations, I would say the film was worth making."

Yellow Bus will be available on OSN+ and in cinemas later in 2022

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