

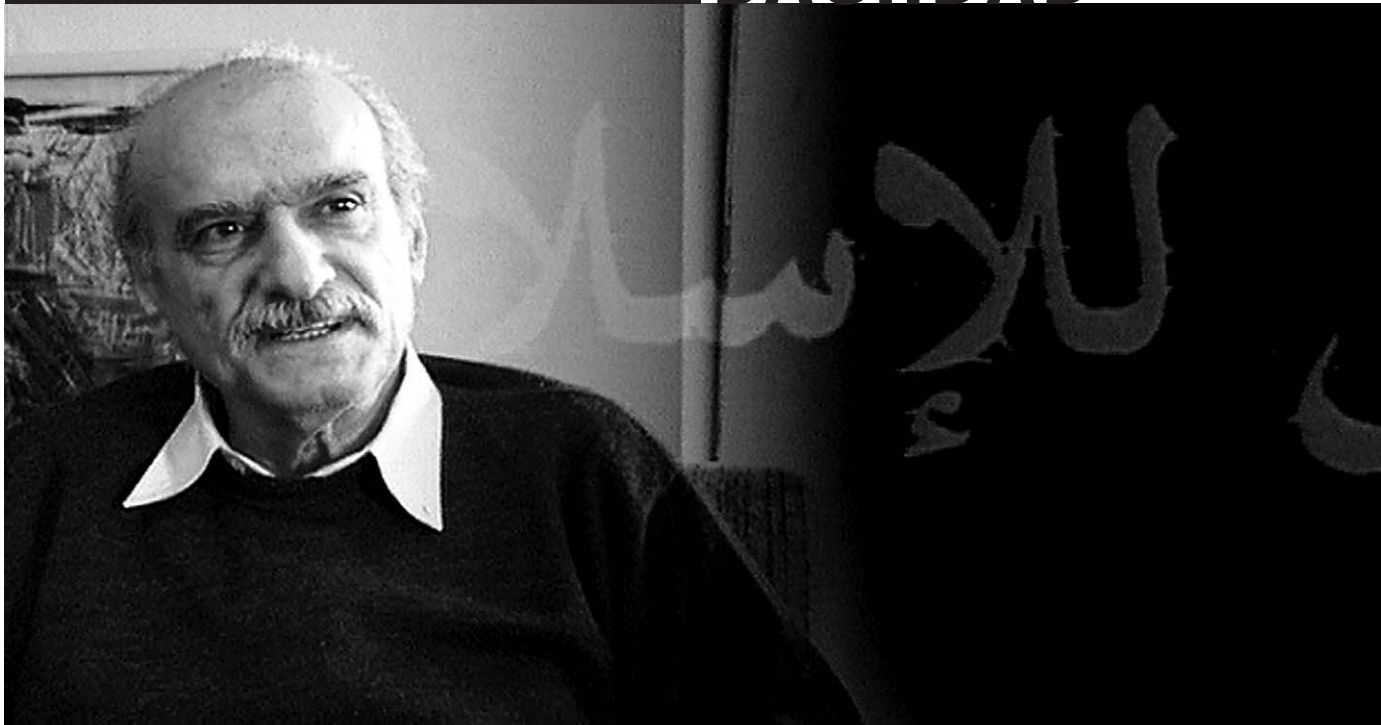
Written by: Samir  
Camera: Nurith Aviv, Philippe Belaiche  
Editing: Nina Schneider, Samir

Sound: Tully Chen, David Powers  
Music: Rabih Abou-Khalil

Production: Dschoint Ventschr AG  
(Zurich), Co-production: Tag/Traum  
Filmproduktion (Cologne)

Awards: Best Film, Locarno Film  
Festival Critics' Week, 2002, Zurich  
Film Prize (2002)

## FORGET BAGHDAD



2002 | Colour | 110' | 35mm | Original version: Arabic/English/Hebrew

Timely and thought-provoking, if a bit rambling, *Forget Baghdad* takes a painfully ironic look at five Arab Jews caught up in a violent cultural identity clash. It casts a cold light on racial intolerance in Iraq, where four of the film's subjects were born, and Israel, where they now live. [...] This eye-opening doc is sure to provoke discussion.

Deborah Young, VARIETY (Aug. 26, 2002)

**J**ews and Arabs: the Iraqi connection. Sami Michael, Moussa Houry, Samir Naqqash and Shimon Ballas were all born in Iraq. They are all Jewish, and were all Communists. In the 1950s their political and religious backgrounds forced them to flee Iraq for Israel. But in their new country they were also suspect, both as Communists and as "Mizrahim," or Oriental Jews, who spoke and wrote in Arabic. Ella Shohat, professor of sociology and film at the City University of New York, was born in Israel as the daughter of Iraqi emigrés. She achieved notoriety in Israel with her critique of the negative image of Mizrahim in Israel culture and cinema.

In **Forget Baghdad** the five share their conflicted feelings about Iraq and Israel, nationality and politics. In a personal voiceover, filmmaker Samir frames their stories with his own: born in Baghdad to a Swiss mother and an Iraqi father, who was also a Communist and also forced to flee with his family – to Zurich. Using his trademark visual style, Samir interweaves these life stories with historical footage and ironically-cited excerpts from fiction films containing stereotypical images of Arabs and Jews.

Samir's fascination with the topic began during the first Gulf War, when Iraqi missiles fell on a Tel Aviv suburb inhabited mostly by former Iraqi Jews. The story of the Mizrahim in Israel allows him to demonstrate the true complexity and contradictions of Arab-Jewish relations.

Written by: Samir  
Camera: Samir, Pierre Mennel  
Editing: Samir, Ronnie Wahli

Sound: Roman Küng  
Music: Felix Haug  
Production: Samir, ARTE, SF DRS, ZDF

World Rights: Dschoint Venschr AG

Awards: Zurich Film Prize, Quality  
Award of the Swiss Federal Office of  
Culture

## BABYLON 2



1993 | Colour | 90' | 35mm blow-up | Original version: Swiss German/French

It was not until the 50s that foreigners were again invited into this land. At first, they were allowed to stay and work for only nine months [...] But this system did not work well for long. Soon, these people and their skills became indispensable in the factories and on the building sites, and they were finally allowed to bring their families with them and stay permanently. Today, every fifth inhabitant of this country is a "foreigner".

Samir, from the voiceover commentary

From the Swiss central plateau – the “great land of the middle” – an essay on emigration, suburbs, racism, language, identity and mass media. In the interminable suburban landscape everyone is a foreigner, whether they come from another continent, another country or another region. But the “Secondos” – the younger generation born of immigrant parents – are beginning, with the help of the media, to develop their own identity. With the documentary essay **Babylon 2** Samir, himself a member of the second generation, puts forward his own view: “It’s my theory that all these rare birds that have been growing up on our continent over the last twenty or so years without knowing exactly where they belong are predestined for the role of mediator.” Born in Jamaica, Tunisia or Turkey, carrying a Spanish or an Italian passport, speaking Swiss-German dialect or the slang of the Lausanne suburbs, the young people portrayed here assemble their own patchwork identities in a world shaped by globalized mass culture and media.

A multilayered montage of photos, films and video recordings, interviews and staged scenes, **Babylon 2** was an innovative example of computer-assisted editing when it was released in 1993, and it has lost none of its freshness or its relevance today.