2016

KAWERGOSK: Home Made of Cloth

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Kawergosk
Home Made of Cloth

A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY
SADDAM AL-ZUBAIDI, ELIZABETH WUERFFEL, SARHANG SHERWANY

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KAWERGO SK
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AND SARHANG SHERWANY

2016
KURDISTAN, IRAQ, USA
31 MINUTES
SYNOPSIS

SHORT
After fleeing war in Syria and crossing the border into Kurdistan Region, Iraq, Syrian Kurds attempt to build a life in Kawergosk Refugee Camp. From a rap artist creating songs of resistance to a young woman who understands the power of education, *Kawergosk: Home Made of Cloth* is a powerful account of perseverance in the face of hardship.

LONG
After fleeing war in Syria and crossing the border into Kurdistan Region, Iraq, Syrian Kurds attempt to build a life in Kawergosk Refugee Camp. Music, food, and education provide families some comfort and meaning while they struggle with camp conditions and the persistence of waiting. *Kawergosk: Home Made of Cloth* gives entrance to the struggles facing many of the 250,000 Syrian refugees in the Kurdish Region of Iraq. Poignant refugee stories and depiction of camp life illustrate both the specific history of Syrian Kurds and common needs of refugees. From a rap artist creating songs of resistance to a young woman who understands the power of education, *Kawergosk: Home Made of Cloth* is a powerful account of perseverance in the face of hardship.
Boys playing soccer in socks or sandals under the noonday sun.

Young refugee waits in 115°F heat while filling a water jug.
Co-director and cinematographer, Saddam Al-Zubaidi, with curious children.

Kawergosk Refugee Camp
Daughter of Sabat, a Syrian Kurdish refugee.

Omar, a young rap artist in the refugee camp.
Perimeter of Kawergosk Refugee Camp
DIRECTOR BIOS

SADDAM AL-ZUBAIDI is a Fulbright scholar from Iraq with ten years of media production experience. Al-Zubaidi’s passion for photography, videography, and storytelling brought him to the United States and has kept him exploring cities and towns across the country. He holds a Master of Science in Digital Media from Valparaiso University. Al-Zubaidi directed *Kawergosk: Home Made of Cloth*, a short documentary about Syrian refugees in a Kurdish refugee camp, alongside Elizabeth Wuerffel.

ELIZABETH WUERFFEL is a filmmaker and interdisciplinary artist. Her artwork has been shown near and far, from Chicago’s Woman’s Made Gallery to Java Arts in Phnom Penh and Hannover’s konnektor – Forum für Künste. Wuerffel currently teaches digital media art at Valparaiso University where she also co-directs the Welcome Project (welcomeproject.valpo.edu), a first-person video and audio story collection about inclusion. Wuerffel received her M.F.A. from Columbia College Chicago in Interdisciplinary Arts and Media. She has most recently produced and directed a short documentary about Syrian refugees in the Kurdish Region of Iraq, *Kawergosk: Home Made of Cloth*.

SARHANG SHERWANY graduated from the Salahaddin University-Erbil’s media department. While studying there, he worked as a reporter for Rudaw newspaper, one of the most popular local newspapers in Kurdistan. Sherwany worked at Kurdistan TV as a staff writer, gaining practical experience writing news stories. He currently resides in the U.S.A., collaborating as assistant director with filmmakers Elizabeth Wuerffel and Saddam Al-Zubaidi on *Kawergosk: Home Made of Cloth*. He will graduate from Valparaiso University’s Master of Science in Digital Media program in May 2016.
PRODUCTION NOTES

FUEL CRISIS

We began filming in Erbil, Kurdish Region, Iraq, in mid June of 2014, just days after ISIS (ISIL) stormed Mosul. By the end of our first week of filming, ISIS had launched an attack to gain control of the Baiji oil refinery, causing an immediate fuel crisis in the Erbil region.

We had rented a car to travel daily from Erbil to Kawergosk Refugee Camp, about 30 minutes away. There were several gas stations along the route, and by the first weekend, the lines at the station began to grow. Our half tank dwindled to a quarter tank, and we knew we’d need to refuel or we’d run into trouble with the fuel pump (local gas carries a lot of debris). Saddam decided to wake up early the next day to queue. After three hours, when he finally had his turn at the pump, the attendant told him he had the wrong license plate number. Just that morning, the city had switched to a rationing plan: even numbers one day, odd the next.

We needed to get back to the camp to film, so Saddam decided to return our rental car in the hopes that he could swap it out for a car with a fuller tank. Success! We were able to change rental cars, although we were hit with a $120 “refueling fee.” The second car came with a half tank of gas, which allowed us to finish filming. By the time I flew out, taxi drivers were lining up the night before their shift, sleeping in the taxi overnight to secure a better spot in line. Gas, which had been $1.75/gallon (45 cents/liter) when I arrived, spiked to more than $11/gallon ($3/liter) by my departure in late June.
CREDITS

Director
Saddam Al-Zubaidi
Elizabeth Wuerffel

Assistant Director
Sarhang Sherwany

Production Manager
Sarhang Sherwany

Cinematography
Saddam Al-Zubaidi
Elizabeth Wuerffel

In Order of Appearance
Viain, Shereen, Suzanne, Anonymous, Simav, Rodi, Anonymous, Sabat, Anonymous, Peti,
Omar, Riadh, Kawesar, Doctor Imad, Sheikha, Governor Nawzad Hadi Mawlood,
Mohammed, Anonymous, Hatav

Music
“Shifting Sand”
Peter J. Storms

“War” (Hometown)
Riadh

“Gossip”
Omar

“Qurbat”
Hatav

Translators
Saddam Al-Zubaidi
Sarhang Sherwany
Saad Salim
Fakher Al Zibari

Sound Mixer
Jingren Lu

Design and Web Advisor
Yeohyun Ahn
Equipment provided in part by:
Majeed Alzaide / Artistic Vision Axis AVA Media Production

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Valparaiso University Graduate School

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