

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Haifa</b>
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Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1996 May 20
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Haifa, Masharawi, Rashid, 1996

## HAIFA

(PALESTINIAN-DUTCH-GERMAN-FRENCH)

An Argus Film Produktie (Amsterdam)/Ayloul Film Production (Gaza)/WDR (Germany)/Arte (France) co-production. (International sales: Fortissimo Film Sales.) Produced by Peter van Vogelpoel, Erik Schut, Henri Kuipers, Rashid Masharawi. Executive producers, Areen Omari, Ayoub Akhrass.

Directed, written by Rashid Masharawi. Camera (color), Edwin Verstegen; editor, Hadara Oren; music, Said Morad-Sabrin; art direction, Jamal Afghani; sound, Roberto van Eijden; costumes, Diana van Gorp, Gress Abdo. Reviewed at Cannes Film Festival (Un Certain Regard), May 10, 1996. Running time: 96 MIN.

Haifa .....	Mohammad Bakri
Oum Said .....	Hiyam Abbas
Abu Said .....	Ahmed Abu Sal'oum
Siad .....	Fadi el-Ghoul
Said .....	Mahmoud Qadah
Sabah .....	Nawal Zaquot
Abbas .....	Khalid Awad
Samira .....	Areen Omari
Old aunt .....	Mariam el-Hin

**R**ather disappointing after "Curfew," Rashid Masharawi's much-prized first feature set in a refugee camp for Palestinians, "Haifa" nonetheless furnishes an on-the-scene update of the mood in Palestine. It could almost be viewed as a slightly fictionalized documentary, a chronicle of the days leading up to the peace agreement signed by Arafat and Rabin in Washington and the mixed emotions that followed that historic event. Lack of narrative punch is likely to limit auds to those with a special interest in the region.



**WAGES OF PEACE:** "Haifa" centers on the residents of a town in the Gaza Strip during the days before the signing of a peace treaty.

Everyday people go about their business in a poor, dusty little town somewhere in the Gaza Strip. There is the optimistic Abu Said (Ahmed Abu Sal'oum), who was once a police officer and now ekes out a living for his family as a cotton candy vendor. His sons — Siad (Fadi el-Ghoul), arrested in a local sweep-up by the Israeli authorities, and jobless Said (Mahmoud Qadah) — are cynical about the peace talks and humiliated over their lost land. Anxious mothers like Oum Said (Hiyam Abbas) urge their sons to settle down with a family as a way of giving them a life and maybe preempting their political unrest, while talented young girls like Sabah (Nawal Zaquot) dream of what the future holds for them. Old women long for their children who have emigrated to Jordan, Syria and Canada.

The one unusual character is the crazed Haifa (Mohammad Bakri), nicknamed for the birthplace he loves, now an Israeli city. Leading Palestinian actor Bakri creates a

warmly human soul whose aching, unfulfilled longing is a symbol for all of Palestine. The role would have been even more significant in the context of a strong story.

There is a natural solidarity linking the lives of these ordinary, agreeable people despite their different political views. The signing of the peace agreement, watched on an old TV set, causes great excitement: A joyful parade springs up, with dancing and singing through the streets. Abu Said is recalled to his job on the police force, but it is too late — he has been paralyzed in an accident. In a wheelchair, he chooses to follow the funeral procession for Haifa's old aunt rather than the posters exalting Arafat.

Co-produced by Palestine, Holland, Germany and France, film boasts good tech work. Edwin Verstegen's camera plays up the bright colors of stores and clothes against the village's beautifully austere bleached sand walls. Local music by Said Morad-Sabrin creates a pleasant atmosphere. —Deborah Young