

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Nayla Al Khaja
Film Director/Producer
Born: March 07, 1978



Nayla Al Khaja is the founder and CEO of D-Seven FZ LLC, a marketing and design agency that offers full media campaign services and corporate branding services. D-Seven was established in 2005 and in this short span of time, has secured a host of prestigious projects such as:

- Special Olympics – Abu Dhabi 2008
- UAE Football Association
- Special Olympics – Dubai 2006
- Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Award for Medical Sciences
- Global Village
- Annie Leibovitz Studio, Men's Vogue Magazine – Condénast
- Tanmia – National Human Resource Development and Employment Authority
- Tatweer – Member of Dubai Holding

Alternately, Nayla is also the founder of D-Seven Motion Pictures, previously known as Dessart Productions founded in 2002, a Dubai based production company which produces commercial material, independent documentaries and films.



Nayla graduated from Dubai Women's College with a degree in Mass Communication in 1999 and had a stint with Arabian Radio Network where she hosted her own travel show. It turned out to be a great success, her ratings being second to only the managing director's show. However, Nayla realized her true calling lay in film-production which



Nayla next to Hon Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum & Shaikha Khawla Al Thani

prompted her to apply to Ryerson University in Canada, well known for its Film making program. She graduated in 2005 with a Bachelor in Image studies – Film making.

On her return to Dubai, Nayla recognized a lack of financial resources would create significant obstacles in realizing her dream of pioneering a film industry in the UAE. Instead of losing hope, she went out and found the resources to direct and produce her first documentary film, *Unveiling Dubai* (2004), which was premiered at Dubai International Film Festival. There was no looking back after that. Given a lack of regional film industry and Nayla being the first UAE national woman to embark on such a career, she received media attention and accolades from as far away as the Washington Post, NHK and the BBC World.

In 2006, she produced and directed a movie called Arabana which deals with the disturbing issue of a child abuse, a subject which is taboo in the Middle East. Although it was very difficult to fit such an intense subject in a span of six minutes, Nayla managed to do so quite efficiently and not without effect. The movie is hard hitting and makes you sit back and take notice. The movie was premiered at the Dubai International Film Festival and received special recognition for its content.



In recognition of her achievements, Nayla has received numerous awards. A few of them with a brief description are mentioned below:

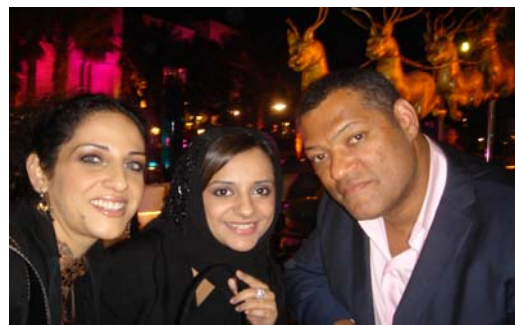
- Best Female Filmmaker at Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) 2007
- Won the Young Woman Entrepreneur of the year 2007 at the 6th Middle East Businesswomen and Leaders Achievement Awards
- Won the Lloyds TSB Bank Inspirational Leadership Award (2006)
- Was named “Emirates Woman of the Year, 2005” by Emirates Woman. Nayla and another 7 UAE national Women were nominated for their contribution in fashion, entertainment and the arts in the region (2005)
- Won the Emirates Woman Best Local Artist Award (2005)
- Featured on Ahlan’s Hot 100 as leading personality to watch out for 2005. This magazine was issued in 2005 and featured the top 100 personalities of UAE
- Won a Kodak Grant to produce a super 16mm film. This grant was used to produce the movie The Loss, which was released in Canada (2004)
- Won the Action Cut AWARD IN New Jersey, USA (2003)



Nayla receiving the prize from Binazir Bhutto

In a short period, Nayla has achieved quite a lot. A brief list of some of her other achievements includes:

- Being the first independent woman director/producer in the UAE
- Being named Dubai Women’s College’s Alumnus of the Year (2006)
- Being the first UAE national Woman to produce a film shot on super 35mm (2006)
- Founding D-Seven FZ LLC and D-Seven Motion Pictures (2005)
- Delivering the inaugural address opening the first Dubai International Film Festival (2004)



Nayla between Labiba Laith & Laurence Fishburn

Nayla has absolute faith in her dreams although she realizes that she still has a long way to go. She believes in the mind-altering and life-changing ability of films and wants to use this medium to change the way people in the West view the Middle East. She aspires to produce commercially viable, yet thought-provoking, feature films and to establish an image arts university in the UAE.

In her spare time, Nayla enjoys painting and writing stories.