



CONCRETE VALLEY

a film by Antoine Bourges

90 min / 2022 / 1.66:1 / 2K
In English and Arabic with English subtitles

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[High-Res Stills](#)

Synopsis

Rashid (Hussam Douhna), a doctor from Syria, struggles to adjust to his life in Canada after five years in Toronto's Thorncliffe Park with his wife Farah (Amani Ibrahim) and son Ammar (Abdullah Nadaf). He tries to hold on to his old identity by working as an unlicensed doctor for his neighbours. While Farah becomes more involved in their local community, tensions between her and Rashid begin to take their toll on their fragile marriage. Concrete Valley mixes fact and fiction in this intimate snapshot of Toronto's Thorncliffe Park, and the domestic realities of its residents, by director Antoine Bourges (*Fail to Appear*, 2017, *East Hastings Pharmacy*, 2012).



Antoine Bourges – Writer & Director

Antoine Bourges is a Paris-born filmmaker currently based between Toronto and Vancouver. He is an alumnus of Berlinale Talents, TIFF Filmmaker lab, and the New York Film Festival's Artist Academy. His films navigate the intersection of documentary and fiction cinema, with an emphasis on human relations within institutional systems. His shorts, *Woman Waiting* (2010) and *William in White Shirt* (2015), along with his mid-length film *East Hastings Pharmacy* (2012), have screened in festivals across North America and Europe, including the Berlinale, TIFF, Viennale, Ann Arbor and NY Museum of Moving Images. His first feature, *Fail to Appear* (2017), was presented at Art of the Real, Cinéma du Réel and BAFICI, among other festivals. It was released theatrically in Canada in 2018.

Director's Statement

Concrete Valley is inspired by my fascination for the neighbourhood of Thorncliffe Park, a densely populated modernist apartment complex in East Toronto. Also known as 'Arrival City', the area is a first landing spot for many new immigrants in Canada and, in many ways, operates as a self-contained multi-cultural community separated from the city by the Don River Valley.

Spending time in Thorncliffe Park and meeting with residents helped my co-writer Teyama and myself guide the writing of this film. We were particularly drawn to the stories of some of the more high-skilled workers who, unable to continue their old professional activity, have to start their lives from scratch, learn a new language and acquire new skills. Their experiences often gave me a strange combination of hope for the opportunities their sacrifices offer their children and sadness for their own potential often not being fulfilled.

What interests me in Rashid and Farah, the main characters, is that they find their own ways to resist this condition and recapture a feeling of worth. While their actions may seem misguided, I am fascinated by this force that pushes them regardless. Cinema as a medium allows us to question others without giving answers, and I am curious to explore characters whose pains and desires are not only inscrutable to us but also to themselves.

Their struggle also intrigues me because it brings into question certain existential uncertainties. Does adjusting to a new culture mean losing a part of one's identity? Are our identities fixed?

— Antoine Bourges

Director's Filmography

Fail to Appear (2017) 70'

William in White Shirt (2014) 12'

East Hastings Pharmacy (2012) 47'

Woman Waiting (2010) 15'

Cast

Hussam Douhna.....Rashid
Amani Ibrahim.....Farah
Abdullah Nadaf.....Ammar
Lynn Nantume..... Yanah/Neighbour

Crew

Directed by.....Antoine Bourges
Produced by..... Shehrezade Mian
Written by.....Antoine Bourges & Teyama Alkamli
Cinematography by.....Nikolay Michaylov
Production DesignerAmir Kiani
SoundIan Reynold, Ogo Eze
Edited by.....Lindsay Allikas
Associate Producer..... Meelad Moaphi



Shehrezade Mian – Producer

Shehrezade Mian is a Pakistani producer currently based in Toronto, Canada. In 2021, Mian was selected for the TIFF-Netflix Talent Accelerator Fellowship, as well as the European Audio-Visual Entrepreneurs (EAVE) On Demand Access Program for producers presented by the National Screen Institute and Canada Media Fund. In addition, Mian was also selected for the Women in Film and Television Connect mentorship program with the SVP of VICE Media in 2020. Her films have also been awarded funding by the Canada, Ontario and Toronto Arts Council. Mian also executive produced Meelad Moaphi's short *Worth* (2019), which won the Air Canada Short Film Award at the ReelAsian International Film Festival.

Teyama Alkamli - Co-Writer

Born in Aleppo and raised in Dubai, Teyama Alkamli currently lives in Toronto, Canada. Her visually tender and deeply human work deals predominantly with issues of identity, sexuality, displacement and migration. She is an alumna of DocNomads, the European Mobile Film School, Hot Docs Emerging Filmmaker Lab, and the Canadian Film Centre's Director Lab. Her latest work *Hockey Mom* (2020), is a mid-length documentary and winner of Best Documentary Program at the 2021 Canadian Screen Awards, currently available to watch in Canada on CBC Gem.

Production Company

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