

# Viewties

AUG 22

Abdullah  
Khan.



Info.

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# CONTENTS

NO. 125 - AUGUST 2022

## FEATURES

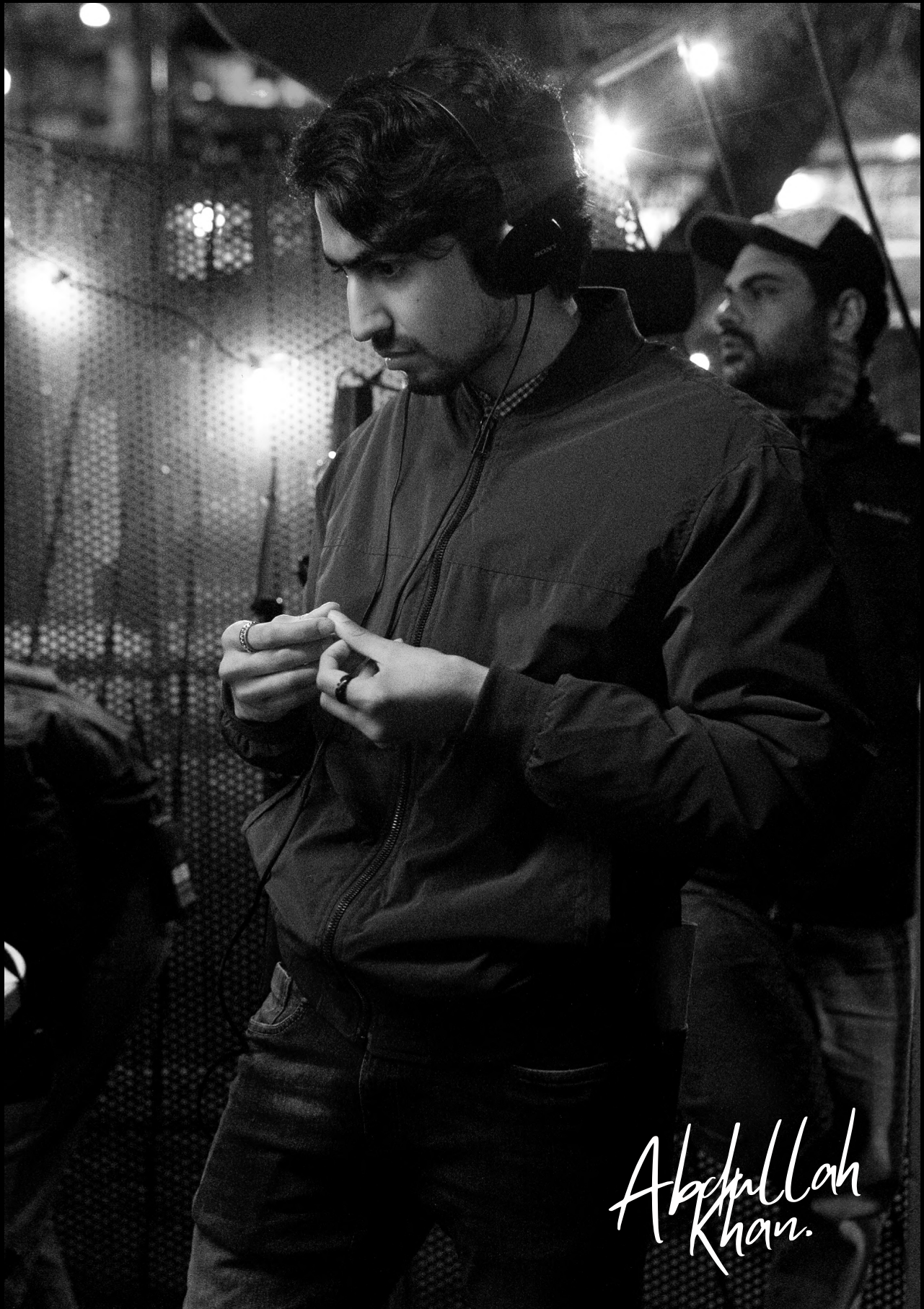


**ON THE COVER**

**ABDULLAH KHAN**

**BY BARNABY BOULTON FOR VIEWTIES**





Abdullah  
Khan.



## *Editor's letter*

Welcome to **VIEWTIES**, a digital magazine written for the fans, the talent, and the art lovers who loyally read every issue. Each month, we select and organize features that will resonate with you and will inspire your self-welling journey. We hope to facilitate the connection between you and your favourite artists, find the beauty behind the lens and hope that you will enjoy the experience as you read the pages of our magazine. Remember this is a fast-read digital publication to celebrate art and value the talent, to know the other side of the story, one artist at a time.

Don't miss any of our issues, as **Viewties** goes on bringing you the latest on film and television, introducing artists whose passion is to make you feel something with their work and dedication that brings a project / character to life requires. As I always say, If I can take something from my job, I believe you will take something from it too. Enjoy the ride and prepare your heart for being touched by our content.

Happy month!

*Vanessa Miraglia*

Founding editor-in-chief  
@vanmiraglia











# Abdullah Khan

While **Abdullah Khan** was telling me about his introduction to the world of cinema, he mentioned something that I found very interesting. He said that he wasn't allowed to see a lot of films in his youth as he came from a very religious background. As our conversation flows, he proudly describes his passion for this job and shares the experiences that led him to become a filmmaker.

The Forbes "30 Under 30" Honoree, **Abdullah** began his career as an assistant, gaining experience in various aspects of the production process. He has worked on the sets of some of the biggest films of the last few years, including "1917," "*Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*," and "*Fast & Furious: Hobbs and Shaw*." He is also the founder of his own production company, **Rosebud Films**.

At age 21, he made his short directorial debut with "*Find the Light*," starring **George MacKay** (1917, *Captain Fantastic*), which premiered at the **Manchester Film Festival**. **Abdullah** talks about these experiences and the people he worked with that taught him the importance of respect and being nice to each other. All these experiences created a philosophy he applies in his work, and that is so easy to see reflected.

The future is bright for the innovative and talented filmmaker, who continues to explore stories that feel honest and unseen by the modern audience. Currently, he is in post-production with his second short, "*Path to Ecstasy*," starring **Olivier Winner Michael Jibson** (*Hamilton*), **Laura Main** (*Call the Midwife*), and **Louis Ashbourne Serkis** (*The Kid Who Would Be King*).







**V: Before we dig into your career, I want you to tell us about your introduction to the cinema. How did you discover your passion for this world; did you get it from a particular experience or a movie?**

**ABDULLAH:** Cinema has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. I was a very lively, energetic child, so I think my parents realized quite early on that movies were the perfect way to contain that energy and keep me busy. Overtime, that escapism grew into something much deeper, and I think some of my first primal emotions were experienced through the screen, whether it be loss in "Finding Nemo," or betrayal in "The Lion King." I grew up with "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy for example, and those stories became a part of my DNA in some ways and to this day Peter Jackson's films continue to have a significant influence on my work. "The Dark Knight" was a big moment as that was the first time my entire family sat together on our cold floor at home and stared into this little 22" TV, and we were all collectively astonished by what we had just experienced.

For the longest time, I wasn't allowed to see a lot of films, or go to the cinema as I came from a very religious background, but in many ways that fuelled a greater desire to see them. When I was around 13, I was having a tough time settling into this new state school in Windsor, and didn't have any friends, so I remember coming home at the end of the day and obsessively watching films. They filled a void for me. I remember seeing "The Silence of the Lambs," "Goodfellas," "Psycho," "It's A Wonderful Life," "Se7en," "The Notebook," "12 Angry Men," all in a space of a few weeks, and they remain some of my favourite films. But the picture that truly changed my life was the mythic masterpiece "Once Upon a ...

Time in America," by Sergio Leone. It genuinely transcended me into the world of the story, I fell in love with so many aspects of it. This was the film that made think I had to contribute to cinema and become a filmmaker.

**V: Then you started working on sets, gaining experience from the people you have worked with and who were part of the production process of films like "1917," "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker," and "Fast & Furious: Hobbs and Shaw." Looking back, was there at any point in your youth that you thought you wouldn't achieve this?**

**ABDULLAH:** When I was growing up as a kid, cinema was always this distant, intangible thing and given my family's humble background it wasn't something that I thought would ever be within my reach. The industry is also not respected in the culture I come from so it was never something that was encouraged by anyone in my immediate circle. In fact, it was considered "evil" by many people, including my own father. So, this journey, of breaking through, and forging my own path, has not been easy and in fact quite isolating in many ways. When I first started out, I was told that "they" wouldn't let someone like me, with my ethnic background, succeed in this industry, and I hope to continue proving that wrong.

Over the last few years, working on the big-scale productions, has also been some of the most rewarding years of my life. Meeting the people who created the images and told the stories that have meant so much to me, has been totally surreal. It has never felt like work to me, and I actually tried to be on set 7 days a week when I was first starting out.



**V: Have you taken some qualities from the people you have worked with to emulate your work? How do you feel these experiences working on sets have shaped your identity in your craft?**

**ABDULLAH:** The people I have worked with have had a huge influence on me. I remember being on set, incredibly naïve but totally passionate about the industry and I think most people responded well to that. But film sets are a place full of artists and egos, so it can be difficult to navigate through them. I think the most important thing I learned was that you are never too important to be nice to people. JJ Abrams, George MacKay, Andrew Rowlands, Pippa Harris are just some of the individuals who have inspired me to think like that. I was drawn to these people, as they were professionals with a lot of power, but the way they used it and the energy that they projected, was different from others in the industry, and this made them quite special to me.

Whilst working on short films over the last few years, I've treated my projects like they were being filmed on the feature sets where I started out. The set etiquette, professionalism, and craft work that I observed, has very much shaped the way I tell stories and work with people. I've also learned a lot from my close collaborator and friend, Lucas A. Ferrara, whose wisdom, and insight always shines through on our projects.

**V: Also, being so young in the industry, have you ever had to claim respect, or do you think that respect comes with the quality of your job more than an age thing?**

**ABDULLAH:** As I mentioned, film sets are full...

of egos, but the best work is created when collaborators respect each other. I have also worked on some big sets where the director was not respected by the crew, and it really brought down the entire production. I think, as long as you care about the work and treat people well, you will be able to get the best out of them. If you do your job at the best level, and turn up to set with a smile, people will respect you and want to be around you. It's that simple, you can have forty years of experience in the business, but if you treat people like rubbish, and the hearts of the crew are filled with dislike or hate, then they won't give you their best.

I think it's important to stand up for yourself, and not let anyone disrespect you. That's a principle that now guides me in my everyday life, and one that I had to learn through multiple experiences on sets where individuals had crossed the line. I also noticed as a non-creative that there was a passive aggressive dismissiveness to my department's contribution to the films and this really bothered me and was one of the things that fuelled my desire to transition my role from crew member to a creative in the industry.

**V: Tell us about Rosebud Films that you founded; What made you start it up, and which are the stories you are keen to explore under this firm?**

**ABDULLAH:** After working in the industry for a few years, I wanted to start creating my own work and setup Rosebud Films to do just that. I want it to be a place where future filmmakers can create work that is bold, provocative, and highly cinematic. I am drawn to true stories that are told in an innovative way, so I'm really excited to start working with other creatives and get more projects off the ground, in the very near future.









Fun fact: Abdullah ended up directing both actors (George MacKay and Michael Jibson) in two separate shorts





*Find the Light* starring **George MacKay** (photo credit: **David Kemiki**)





**V: Let's talk about your short directorial debut now, "Find the Light," starring George MacKay, which premiered at the Manchester Film Festival. How did you come up with the idea for this film, and why was it important to you to tell this story?**

**ABDULLAH:** "Find the Light" was my first time writing and directing a film and it may be the most educating experience to date. I had been working on sets for a few years and was feeling quite inspired, and during the downtime, I'd start to daydream about personal experiences including one incident at a swimming centre, a few years back, where I was seconds away from dying, and my life had flashed before my eyes, and then just in the nick of time a lifeguard saved me. Someone had told me that the best way to learn how to swim was to jump into the deep end, let's just say they lied! During that time, I was also experiencing a lot of racism, and bullying at school and parental neglect at home. So, I reflected on all those elements and put them into a single narrative and the project became a form of catharsis in a way. I hadn't been reading or travelling much, so I had to look into my own life for the story's inspiration. I also intend for the film to be seen by more people, as bullying is a key issue which I don't think schools today are tackling well enough.

**V: What was it like getting to work with the brilliant George MacKay?**

**ABDULLAH:** I first worked with George on "1917." He may be the nicest person I've ever met on a film set. He would come up to every single member of the cast and crew and shake their hands. He'd remember people's names ...

from a single conversation and there I was, this trainee, who'd forget people's names after multiple encounters! So, he was already quite an inspirational individual.

For me, working with George has been one of my favourite experiences as a filmmaker. He is a true professional. There is a complete absence of ego, and he will dedicate time to prepare and understand the script and work with you to further grow the film into the best version it can be. On "Find the Light" he was with us for only half a day, but he genuinely brought the entire set to life. The crew worked much harder, and the cast were much more focused. Having an individual like that on set can be a game changer for those in front and behind the camera. He is a special collaborator, and one I hope to re-connect with on other projects in the future.

**V: In what way do you feel your creativity as a filmmaker has grown over this experience?**

**ABDULLAH:** Before "Find the Light" everything was theory, there was nothing concrete to prove to myself that I had what it takes to lead a team as a director and tell a story. So, it was genuinely a life-changing experience. From the very first moment I walked on set, I felt completely in my element and had discovered my true passion in life. There were also a lot of mistakes made on that first project. I came close to my vision, but not completely and I learned that no one will ever love your movie as much as you do. I also realised how crucial storyboarding, location scouting, and workshopping with actors were to my process. In the end, the experience gave me enormous confidence in my ideas and in myself which has been crucial in my personal development and growth as a creative.








**V: Your second short, “Path to Ecstasy,” is in post-production; How would you describe the cinematics of this one, anything that will surprise the audience in comparison to the first?**

ABDULLAH: With “Path to Ecstasy” I wanted to do the opposite of “Find the Light,” in many ways. While both films are very visual in the way they tell the story, “Path to Ecstasy” is dialogue heavy and character driven. It also follows two protagonists rather than one, which was something I wanted to experiment with. With “Find the Light,” by the end of the film, the aim was to give the viewer a ray of hope, whilst “Path to Ecstasy” takes a more nihilistic tonal approach to its story. I’m looking forward to completing the later project and sharing it with audiences soon.


**V: You’re also developing multiple feature film projects at the time; the future is promising; what do you hope to achieve in your journey as a filmmaker?**

ABDULLAH: It all comes down to stories. There are a lot of people making films, but there aren’t a lot of films that are really saying anything about the world. I’ve had quite the wild upbringing and believe that I do offer a unique artistic voice. Filmmaking for me is the only way I am able to express myself, and in some ways even more than in words. For me, it’s not a job, or a hobby, it’s my passion, and I take it very seriously. A lot of people look at my age and say, “oh your only 22” and think you need to be in your 30’s to make movies, I always reply by noting that Orson Welles made “Citizen Kane” at the age of 25, so anything is possible and one’s age should never be a barrier.

I’m really looking forward to working with other writers on projects so that I can visualise someone else’s script and focus solely on the directing. Aaron Sorkin and David Fincher’s collaboration on “The Social Network” is truly inspirational, two craftsmen at the top of their game. That’s the level of collaboration I hope to achieve one day.



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**V: What is the piece of advice or a phrase that has been important and helpful during your career?**

ABDULLAH: I think over the last few years it’s been that Martin Scorsese quote which Bong Joon-ho mentioned at the 2020 Academy Awards: “the most personal is the most creative.” I remind myself of that every day, and it really helps me find the right approach into any character or story.

**V: This last question is a little bit personal to me, as my nationality is Argentinian; I like to ask the people I interview what they know about the country, you know, its art and culture. So, I was wondering, have you ever seen or experienced any type of art/culture from Argentina?**

ABDULLAH: I have yet to visit Argentina and cannot wait to do so, because I hear such wonderful things about the country. But what immediately springs to mind, is the incredible football culture and the players such as Lionel Messi, Sergio Aguero, Diego Maradona, and what they have contributed to the world. Also, two of my favourite films, “Wild Tales,” and “The Secret in their Eyes,” are from your country. And one of my favourite living filmmakers, Gaspar Noe is also Argentinian however his films are generally considered a part of extreme French cinema. But those are just a few things that currently inspire me when I think of the culture and arts of the country.







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