



Dear Diary

I am going to be in my own music video!

BY TAMARA YOUSRY

When *Carnival Arabia* writer Tamara Yousry won the Nile FM Battle of the Bands competition with her song "Speaking of Colors," little did she know she would soon be shooting her first video clip. Now Yousry lets us in on the early morning starts, crazy temperatures and malfunctioning cranes endured on her route to TV stardom.

FRIDAY
JUNE 25TH

Day 1: Wadi El Rayan



04:00 Alarm clock rang. Smacked my hand down on it hard. Wanted to continue sleeping, but knew I couldn't. I had only gone to bed a couple of hours earlier, but I had to get up, shower, pack a bag and head off to Garden City to meet Omar Khodeir, the director of my debut music video.

05:00 Arrived in Garden City at five on the dot and parked my car. Upstairs in Omar's office I met Wael, the assistant director, and Candy, who came along to help out. We drank coffee as we waited for our phone cue to make a move. As I slowly felt more awake, the excitement began to well up inside. I couldn't believe I was going to make a music video! Hoorah!

06:00 Jumped in a mini-bus and headed to Al Haram to meet the rest of the crew: lighting people, sound engineers and other apprentices with job titles that I hadn't even heard of! There were five vans in total, all full to the brim with cameras, mirrors, cranes, and plenty of unidentifiable objects (to me, anyway). Felt like I was still dreaming ... *who are these people, and what is going on?*



08:30 Arrived in beautiful Wadi El Rayan. Slight breeze, but I could tell it was going to be a hot day. There was a lake with a small bridge connecting one side of the land to an island — the perfect spot for a video shoot.

The crew unloaded the vans, set up the cameras and large mirrors. Why mirrors? I found out later on the playbacks that they use them to reflect the sun's rays for a bit of extra natural lighting — very effective.

Got changed into baggy orange beach trousers and a black tank top. Felt nervous. *What if I am terrible?*

Panic over. Omar was very professional, having shot commercials for Hisham Abbas's latest album and a music video for Wael Abdul Aziz. The first scene was of me opening a large gate. Seemed simple enough. Omar made me do it several times until we were both happy with the take.

Next, me driving an old sixties Toyota Corona through the gate. If this is what making a video entails, then I'm making more!



10:00 Moved to another location, closer to the lake and sat by the tree. But hold on a second, the crane needed to be assembled first. There was some kind of technical difficulty, but luckily nothing to do with me. Members of the crew put up six mirrors around me ... *that was too hot!*





- 10:45 Started shooting again. I pretended to strum my guitar and "feel" the music as the playback system fed "Speaking Of Colors." Sweating profusely, I lip-synched to my song about six times. This wasn't as easy as driving the car. *Can't we have a break? Does anybody else want to do this for me?*
- 11:00 "Do it again!" Omar shouted. *Again?* I thought to myself. *What was wrong with the first take?*
- 12:00 *Still* shooting. Same scene. By now Omar wanted close-ups. Told him I was too hot. He said the heat was making me perform better. This was obviously how directors got their subjects to perform. Somehow it worked: I relaxed and visualized the potentially incredible outcome this video could have.
- 16:00 Filming on the island comes to an end as Omar announced a one hour break for lunch. I now sport a gorgeous tan and have drunk about 6 bottles of water.
- 18:00 Lots of moving props around and getting the lighting right. Have realized that film sets are mostly preparation with only a few seconds of filming. Started to feel more comfortable in front of the camera, easier to let loose during the shots, and the crew of 40 or 50 people blended in with the background. I was also too hot to care what they thought.
- 18:30 Magic Hour. Omar told me this pre-sundown moment was the best time to shoot and the crew were manic trying to get everything ready before sunset.
- 20:00 As the sun dropped down behind the horizon, we finished our final scene with two farmers and myself singing by firelight. With all the footage we needed in hand, it was time to go home and we piled into the vans and headed back to Cairo. I needed a bed!

SUNDAY
JUNE 27TH

Day 2: Tahrir, Downtown Cairo

- 20:00 Arrived at Garden City again, this time ready to hit the streets of Cairo and improvise with our shooting locations. Had a vague idea of what we wanted to do, but we played it by ear to try and get a more natural feeling to contrast with the more staged Wadi Ryan footage.
- 20:30 Ordered some food and drinks in Café Riche. Shots were taken of me as I studied the menu, Omar then instructed me to walk around and look at the pictures on the walls. Who knows? Maybe we could use these shots as inserts?
- 21:15 I was filmed as I left the restaurant and walked across the street towards After Eight. On the way I stopped and looked at some postcards outside a shop. I went in and checked out the silver on display. All this was being recorded. My every move was being watched!
- 21:30 Sat in After Eight and went over the footage. Looked like we had enough. Paid for our drinks and left. We needed some rest because tomorrow was going to be a long day.





Day 3: An apartment in Al Haram

- 16:00 Arrived at the apartment in Al Haram. It was perfect with three columns and white walls. The crew and Omar were already there setting up the equipment. Everything would be shot at night, so there needed to be artificial light, unlike the beach shots. The mirror had been replaced by spot lights. The crew put together something called a Dolly track, so that the cameraman could sit on a wagon-type thing and be rolled back and forth on it to film a smooth, moving shot.
- 16:30 Got changed into my *galabeya* outfit since the shots would all be of me at home doing my thing — singing, painting, making kites, hanging mobiles, and piecing a broken guitar together.
- 17:30 Began the first scene. I was on the floor playing my guitar, rugs hung on the wall behind me.
- 18:00 Ready to shoot the next scene, but *oops!* We had taken the rugs down from the walls and the black tape we had used to pin them up won't come off! *What to do?!* Sent a few people out to buy some petrol to help dissolve the tape. We really needed white walls to shoot the scene.
- 18:45 The boys were back with the gas but we still couldn't get the black stuff off. "We need a back up plan!" I yelled out. We'd wasted 45 minutes already and still had lots of scenes to do. I was sweating like a mad pig by this point and felt very frustrated. *Who's idea was the black stuff anyway?*
- 19:00 The back-up plan was to put something over the tape. We stuck a kite up and got on with the shoot.
- 19:30 Someone managed to get the black stuff off (I'm not sure how) and they painted over the marks. We continued with lots of other shots, which included tipping out shells from a huge, glass container, and painting the kites.
- 22:00 Very tired. We broke for an hour and we ate chicken panée and rice.
- 23:00 I became quieter as the night progressed. It had been a long day and I just wanted my bed again. We did the kite painting scene and I spilt the paints all over the wooden parquet....oh no!
- 00:00 Had to re-shoot a scene because some of the crew were visible in the background. My eyes were slowly closing for the night.
- 01:00 Done with the final scene. Omar had everything he needed and was pleased, so we could pack up and go home. I was so tired, but I felt elated. Now all we have to do is edit our shots and the video clip will be ready to go on air! @

It's make or break time. Wish me luck!