



# 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. His second feature *Concrete Valley* had its World Premiere at TIFF Wavelengths (2022).

### **Director's Statement**

This film was initially inspired by my fascination with the East Toronto neighbourhood of Thorncliffe Park. While finishing a previous film, I would drive past these modernist tower blocks looming over the city's verdant Don Valley, and felt drawn to this failed utopian architecture. I wanted to get closer to this place, to understand it.

I began visiting the area and discovered that it functions as an arrival city, a first landing spot for new immigrants to Canada. The diversity of the community makes it quite vibrant, while I also noted a sense of isolation from the rest of the city, both spatial and psychological.

I was granted permission to attend English classes for adults in the neighbourhood, and got along particularly well with the Syrian newcomers. I was interested in their stories and wanted to collaborate with them, to create a feature narrative together. I invited my friend, the Toronto-based Syrian filmmaker Teyama Alkamli, to co-write this film with me, and we began working with a mix of professional and non-professional actors from the neighbourhood through guided improvisations.

What came to interest us in the characters of Rashid and Farah are the difficulties they face in their efforts to maintain both their relationship and sense of self. Couples are the ultimate relationship with the other, and we were fascinated by this idea of authenticity, of finding oneself in a new place while navigating this shared identity. The question then is not how can we stay together, but how can we change together? It felt like this neighborhood offered a particularly evocative site to explore this question.

— 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 Designer .....Amir Kiani  
Sound .....Ian 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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