



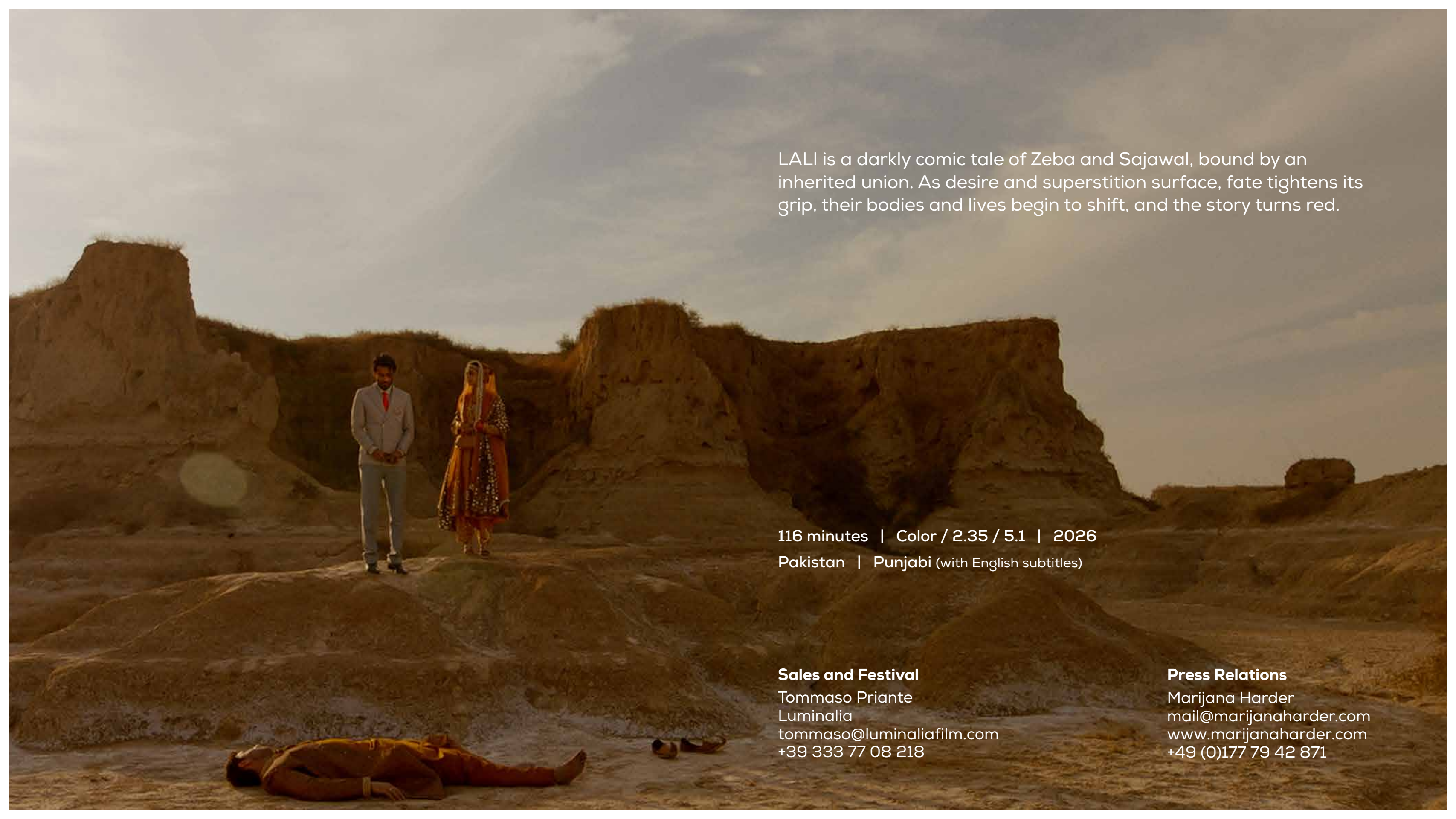
76. Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Berlinale Panorama

KHOOSAT
FILMS

LALI

A FILM BY
SARMAD SULTAN KHOOSAT

WORLD PREMIERE
19 February | 15:30 | Zoo Palast 1



LALI is a darkly comic tale of Zeba and Sajawal, bound by an inherited union. As desire and superstition surface, fate tightens its grip, their bodies and lives begin to shift, and the story turns red.

116 minutes | Color / 2.35 / 5.1 | 2026

Pakistan | Punjabi (with English subtitles)

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LALI

cast

MAMYA SHAJAFFAR	Zeba
CHANNAN HANIF	Sajawal
RASTI FAROOQ	Bholi
FARAZEH SYED	Sohni Ammi
MEHR BANO	Noor Jahan

key crew

SUNDUS HASHMI & SARMAD SULTAN KHOOSAT	Screenplay
KHIZER IDREES	Director of Photography
SAIM SADIQ	Editor
KANWAL KHOOSAT	Production Design
ABDULLAH SIDDIQUI	Music

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

At forty-five, a brown, single man, and three films old, I find myself constantly pondering and feeling stressed about the next story I want to tell. A paragraph from an old aunt's short story has haunted me for two decades. It describes a man who pretends to be possessed by a jinn to scare his wife because he doubts her fidelity. This story has always made me think of the shadows, fears, secrets, shame, abuse, and scars I've accumulated over the years, especially from my early years. The dots started connecting in Freudian patterns, and I began to see red—lots of reds. Roses, bridal dresses, and blood. And my mother.

Making films in Pakistan, with an almost dead film industry and a minimal to no audience, is already challenging, but it becomes even more complex when one sets out to explore the global audience. While staying true to the setting and nuances of our indigenous microcosm, ensuring the universality and appeal of our storytelling feels like a pressure to reverse-engineer the craft. It seems as if the foreign audience expects to see just certain kinds of themes—societal misery, collective suffering, and controversies. Just as I tried to get rid of my own jinn, I wanted to break free from this stereotype too. Lali is an attempt to bend the genre and identity of our cinema.

Marriage, family, and decay are the most misunderstood and abused concepts in most cultures. While incorporating the elements of exotica from our setting—celebrations, colours, architecture, music, language, humour, and noise—I've made an effort to avoid exoticizing. Instead, I delve deeper into the lives of characters who are scarred and flawed. Social and familial identities pale in comparison to the raw and carnal bonds that unite them. Unions are complex, and adding sex to the mix makes things even messier. With unhealed traumas and the pressure to make it work and last, unions can become toxic and violent. Marriage has failed as a social institution. This is my wish—that I could release the jinn from the abuse and suffocation that many dysfunctional yet till-death-do-us-apart marriages around me, including my mother's.





Sarmad Sultan Khoosat

Director

Sarmad Sultan Khoosat is a Pakistani filmmaker, actor, writer, and producer whose work has defined contemporary South Asian storytelling. Born in Lahore, he holds a master's degree in psychology—a foundation that informs his nuanced exploration of human emotions, identity, and societal complexities across film, television, radio, and theatre.

Khoosat gained national recognition with groundbreaking television projects before bringing a compelling perspective to cinema. His feature film *Joyland* (2022) made history as Pakistan's first official selection at the Cannes Film Festival, where it won the Jury Prize in Un Certain Regard. His films *Zindagi Tamasha* (2019) and *Joyland* have been Pakistan's official selections for the Academy Awards. *Zindagi Tamasha* premiered at the Busan International Film Festival, where it won the Kim Jiseok Award, while *Kamli* (2022) had its world premiere at the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR).

Known for his fearless storytelling, Khoosat's work challenges conventions, engaging with themes of identity, repression, and cultural paradoxes. For his contributions to the arts, he has been honored with Pakistan's Pride of Performance, the country's highest civil award for artistic excellence.

Beyond cinema, Khoosat has made an impact in theatre with projects like *No Time to Sleep*, a 24-hour live performance on capital punishment streamed globally, including in the EU Parliament. His multidisciplinary approach continues to shape narratives from Pakistan, positioning him as one of the most influential voices in contemporary filmmaking.





Kanwal Khoosat

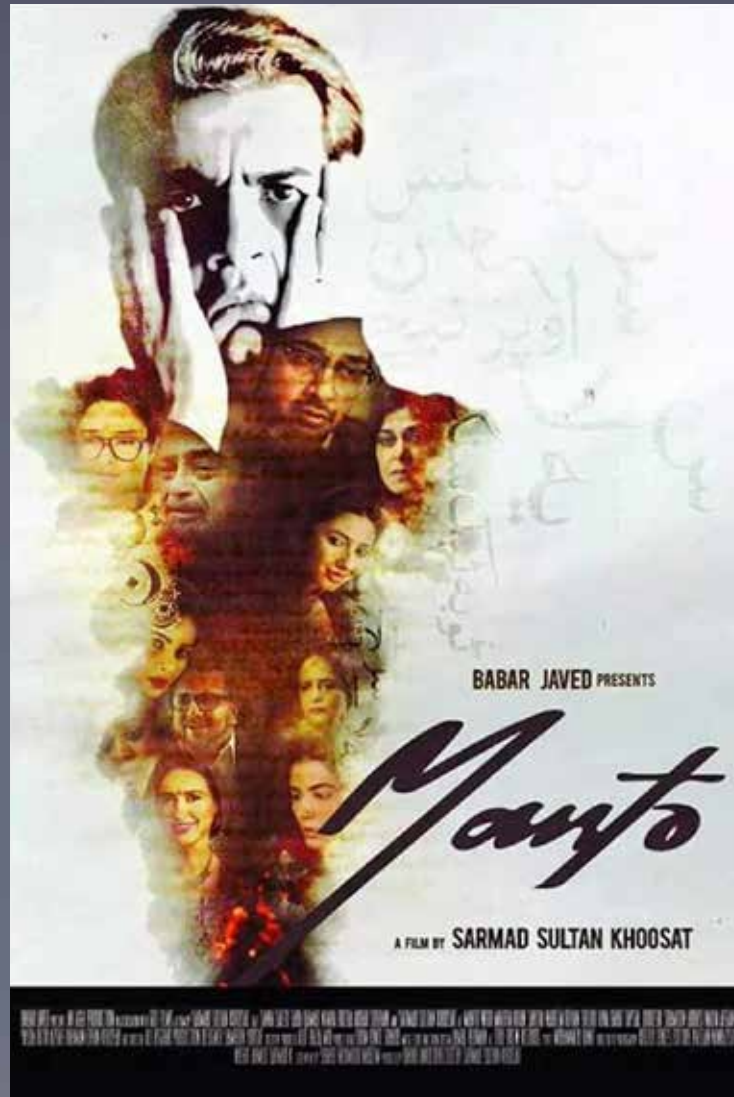
Producer | Production Designer

Kanwal Khoosat is a Pakistani film producer, production designer, and an IFFR Producers Lab Fellow whose work pushes the boundaries of storytelling and visual expression. She is the Executive Director of Olomopolo Media, a multidisciplinary arts organization dedicated to fostering cultural dialogue, artistic expression, and social change through film, theater, and performance arts.

Her films have garnered international acclaim, with *Joyland* (2022) making history as Pakistan's first official selection at the Cannes Film Festival, where it won the Jury Prize in Un Certain Regard and the Queer Palm. She served as the film's production designer, crafting its distinct cinematic world. As a producer, she helmed *Zindagi Tamasha* (2019), which premiered at the Busan International Film Festival and won the prestigious Kim Jiseok Award before becoming Pakistan's official submission to the Academy Awards. Her dual role as producer and production designer on *Kamli* (2022) shaped its haunting, lyrical aesthetic; the film had its world premiere at the International Film Festival Rotterdam.

Beyond filmmaking, Kanwal has played a significant role in curating cultural festivals in Pakistan. She has been the curator for the WOW (Women of the World) Festival and serves as the lead curator and director of the European Union Film Festival (EUFF) in Pakistan, helping to bring diverse global narratives to local audiences.

With a sharp curatorial instinct and a deep understanding of cinematic form, Kanwal brings stories to life with both creative and logistical precision. Her work balances artistic depth with cultural resonance, challenging norms and expanding the scope of contemporary South Asian cinema. She is committed to crafting bold, visually striking films that resonate on both personal and universal levels.



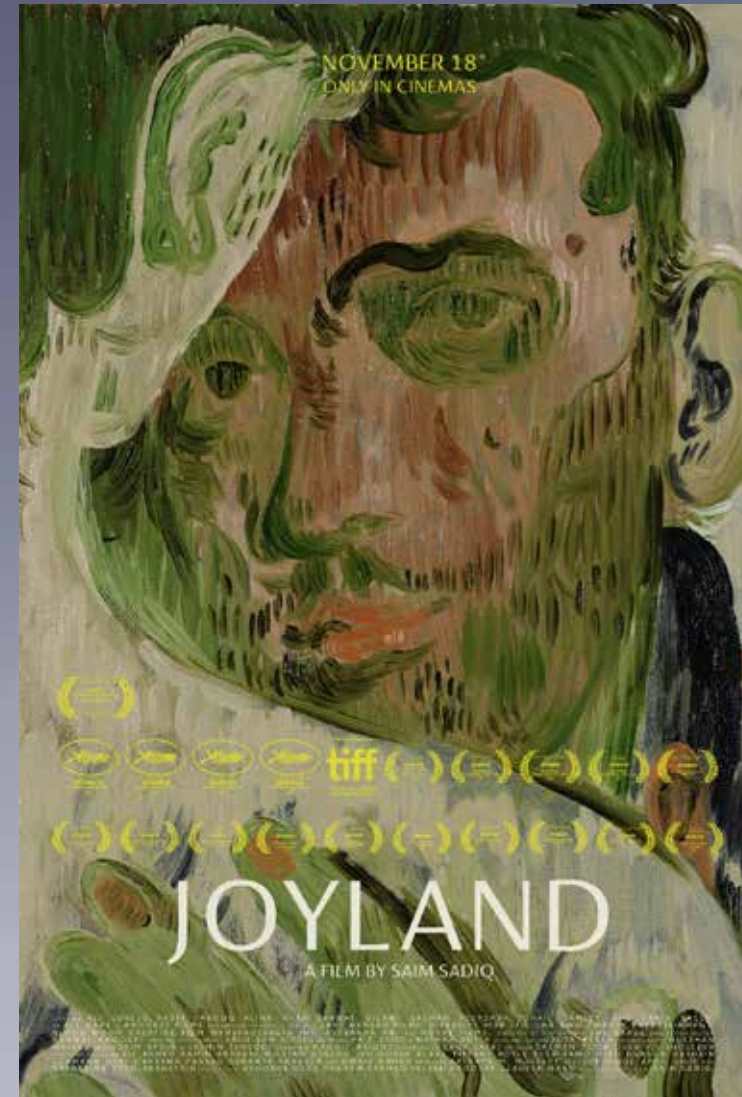
MANTO (2015)

CLICK TO VIEW



ZINDAGI TAMASHA (2020)

CLICK TO VIEW



JOYLAND (2022)

CLICK TO VIEW



KAMLI (2022)

CLICK TO VIEW



Instagram lalibykhoosatfilms

Instagram khoosatfilmsofficial

www.khoosatfilms.com

Berlinale Screening Schedule

14 February | 08:30 | Cubix 7 **(PRESS & INDUSTRY SCREENING)**

20 February | 21:30 | Cubix 9

21 February | 13:00 | Bluemax Theater

22 February | 21:45 | Filmtheater am Friedrichshain