

CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An Independent film society based in Chelmsford

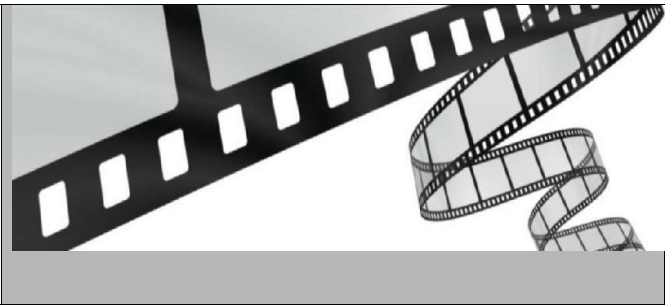
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Monday 21 September 2026

THE PRESIDENT'S CAKE dir Hasan Hadi: Iraq: 105 mins: 2025

There's a terrific charm and sweetness in this debut from Iraqi film-maker Hasan Hadi, a Bake-Off style adventure about a little girl in early '90s Iraq, required by her school to make a birthday cake in Saddam Hussein's honour, despite sanctions and the consequent shortage of every single cake-making ingredient.

Hadi is a former Sundance Lab fellow and his film lists Hollywood heavy-hitters Chris Columbus and Eric Roth among its executive producers - who may just have induced Hadi to sprinkle some old-fashioned Tinseltown sugar into the mix. The moment when the little girl gazes at her own reflection in the river is surely inspired by The Lion King?

The cast is largely unprofessional and Baneen Ahmed Nayyef is excellent as nine-years-old Lamia, whose greedy teacher gobbles the apple she has brought to school for her lunch. The class draw lots to see who must bake the cake. Lamia is the unlucky one, but her pal Saeed, who has a crush on her, has to provide the fruit for this party, on which only the teacher will be gorging himself. With her grandmother and carrying her pet cockerel Hindi - a great animal performance - she sets off to town on a desperate shopping expedition. As a result of the cockerel's unpredictable crowings, do the actors have to improvise some lines around him? Possibly!

Like the bicycle thieves of old, they encounter a succession of vivid characters. Look out for the postman who gives Lamia and Bibi a lift and gets very excited about their mission: "I adore cake! It's the greatest invention in human history!"

Our next film: **OUR LAND** on Monday 19 October. This will be preceded by our **AGM**