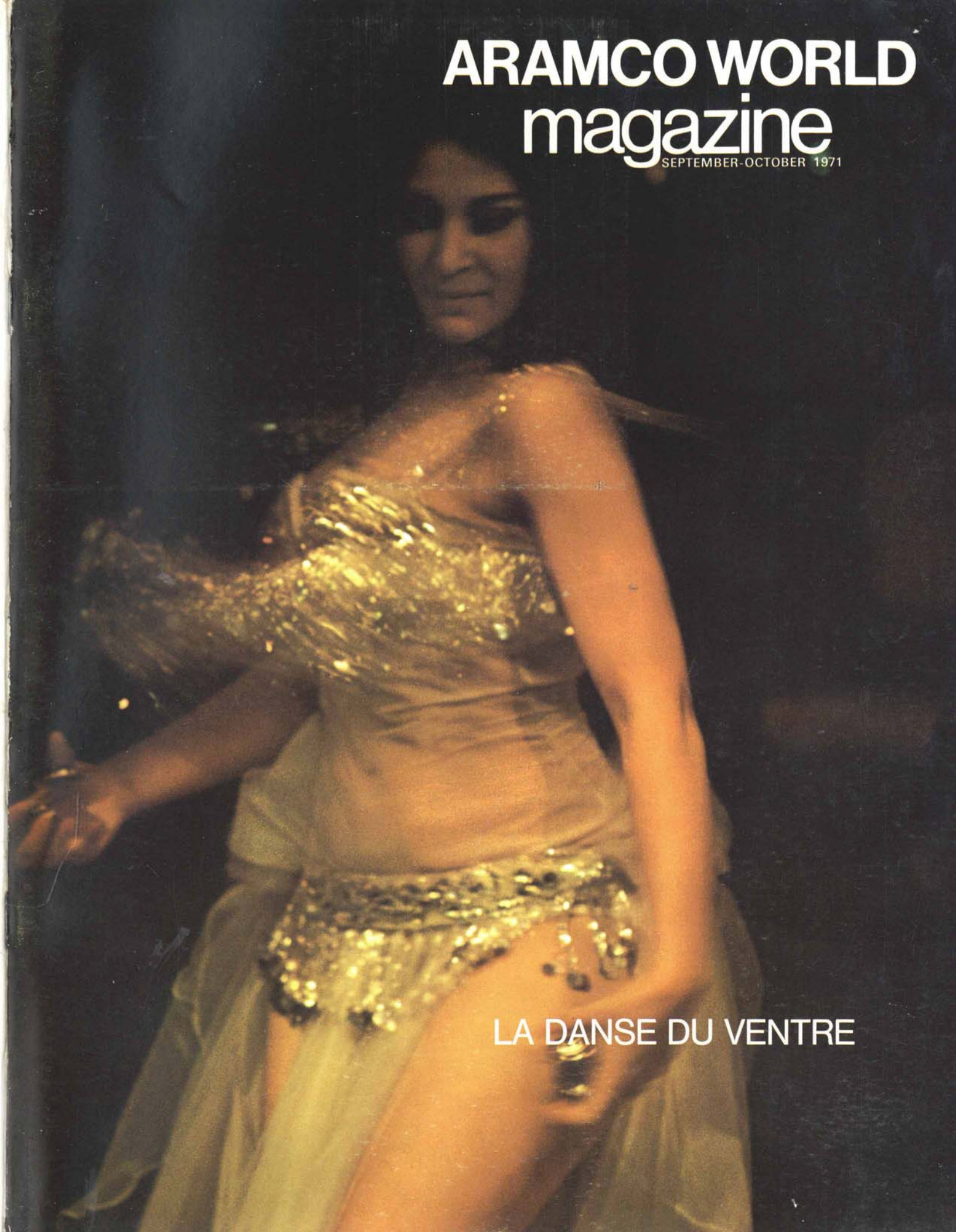


ARAMCO WORLD magazine

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1971



LA DANSE DU VENTRE

ARAMCO WORLD
magazine

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Spread out behind Egyptian Fouad Sa'id in a Southern California meadow is the fully mobile movie "studio" which he designed to help Hollywood survive today's staggering costs spiral. Color story on page 16.

ARAMCO WORLD magazine

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VOL. 22 NO. 5 PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1971

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Cover: Photographer Burnett H. Moody had the enviable assignment of trying to capture the swirling grace and rhythms of the belly dance for the article on that ancient art form beginning on page 4. He did so—admirably, we think—in this photograph of dancer Zizi Moustafa shot at Cairo's Hilton Hotel.

By the people who brought you the Desert Fun Car:

SAND SAILER

PHOTOGRAPHED BY KHALIL ABOU EL-NASR

The bright yellow vision sailing out of the mirage on these pages is one more example of how inventive Trans-Arabian Pipe Line employees at Turaif, a remote pump station in northern Saudi Arabia, can while away their desert weekends (*Aramco World*, January-February 1970). The Rhea Putnam family and a few friends assembled their Sand Sailer "Mark I" in 1967 from discarded aluminum

tubing, bicycle wheels and a used World War II parachute and sailed modified trial-and-error versions across dry lake beds for three years. The total cost through the "Mark V" model was about \$15.

The Sand Sailer was 12 feet long by 8 feet wide, 19 feet to the top of the mast with about two feet of ground clearance. Top speed was clocked at slightly over 30 miles per

hour, but cruising speed was 25 m.p.h. A very light breeze would move the craft with pilot and one passenger; in a moderate breeze the flocks of bicycles usually along on outings quickly fell behind. As with an ice boat, speeds faster than the wind were achieved by moving at right angles to the direction of the wind.

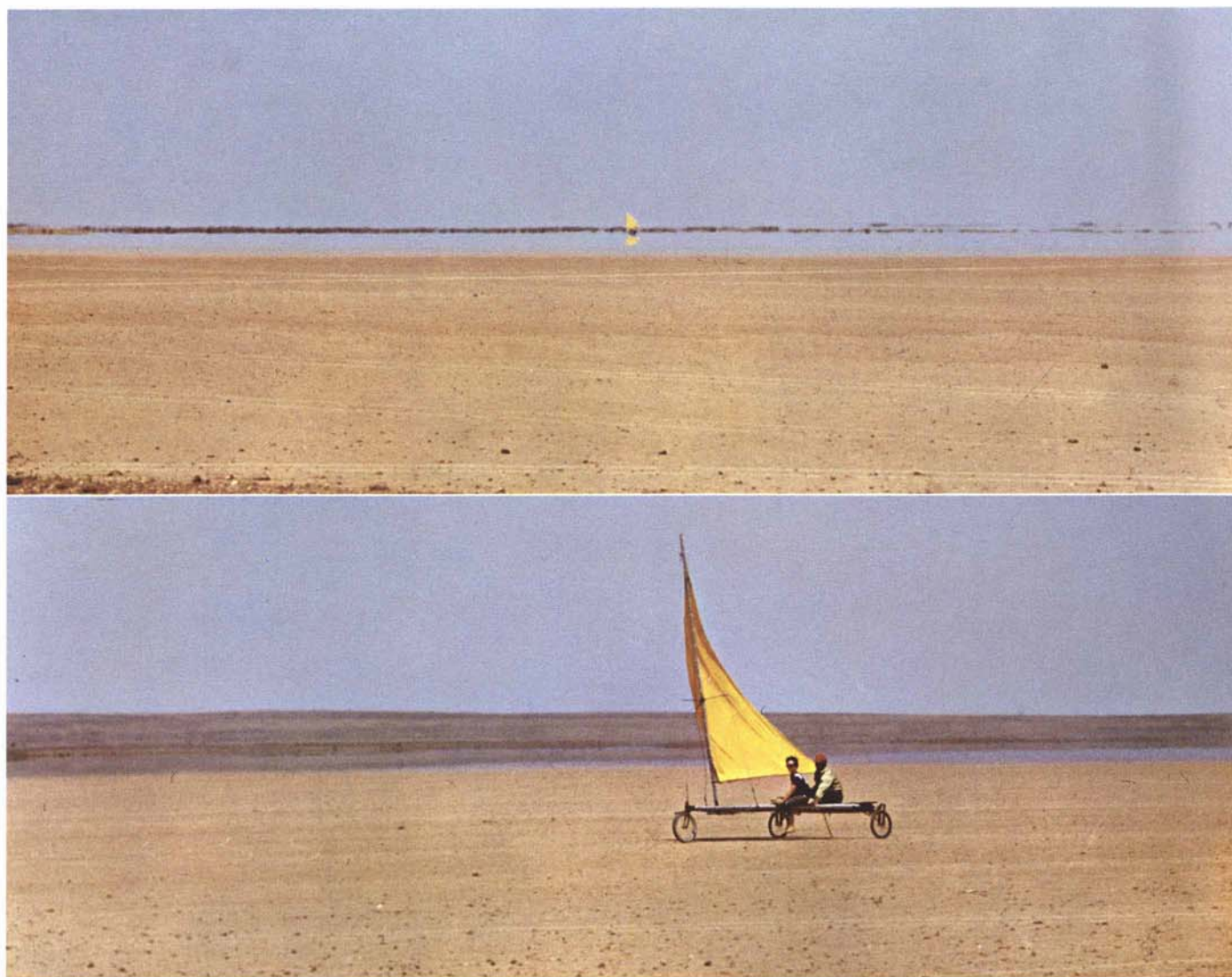
Experience and a few spills eventually taught the Sand Sailer's builders that cable steering with the feet was too sensitive, that bicycle wheels were too high and likely to fold under or go flat, that parachute silk let too much air through, even when folded double. (A beach umbrella was tried out one day and served admirably—but only in one direction.)



By the time these lessons had been learned, the cost overrun was pointing toward a staggering \$40 more for Mark VI. The new model would have had a frame lowered to within a few inches of the ground, tough thick wheels, a steering wheel, and a lateen sail of Dacron. With those changes, the Putnams believed, they could take a crack at shattering the 30-mile-an-hour "speed barrier." Another dream—long put off for lack of a proper braking device—was to take the perfected Sailer on an actual desert highway cruise. Unfortunately the planned "Mark VI" was never built. Putnam was transferred this year to a new job with Aramco at Dhahran in Eastern Saudi Arabia.



There are plenty of imaginative types in Turaif who may yet perfect the art of navigating the dry lake beds near the Tapline but in the meantime Rhea Putnam's Sand Sailer has found a bizarre new life for a creature born of the desert. Its builder has modified the frame once again, this time to serve as two-wheel dolly to help move small sailboats—real saltwater ones—at Half Moon Bay on the Arabian Gulf where Dhahran's weekend sailors weigh anchor in something more substantial than a mirage.



La Danse du Ventre

BY ELIAS ANTAR

PHOTOGRAPHED BY BURNETT H. MOODY



Miss Zizi Moustafa at Cairo's Nile Hilton.



The final blast of a tangle of electric guitars at full volume reverberated through the "Merryland" nightclub, incongruously set in the middle of a children's playground in Cairo. With a crash of cymbals, the lights dimmed and the lead singer of the rock band shuffled forward and muttered laconically into the microphone: "Showtime."

Chairs scraped in the darkness as the Arab orchestra filed in and settled down. The packed room hushed expectantly and the musicians launched into a spirited introduction, the reedy music almost as loud but somehow less aggressive than the assault on the eardrums by the rock group. A spotlight flashed on and caught the curvaceous figure of Soheir Zaki, already a blur of sequined blue veils and long black hair. For the next 40 minutes Miss Zaki delighted the audience with a highly creditable rendition of the belly dance, that ancient and—in the West—much misunderstood Arab art form.

Miss Zaki, who comes from a town in Egypt renowned for its beautiful women, is one of the Middle East's handful of belly dancers who have risen to the top of their profession. Endowed with all the right physical attributes, Miss Zaki has an extra asset that has helped her widen her following: she has a smile that is not seductive or sexy but just plain sweet. This has made her popular with women, as was obvious on that soft spring night in Cairo. Normally, Arab women watching a belly dancer take on a resigned but faintly disapproving look while their menfolk nod their heads to the rhythm, clap their hands in time with



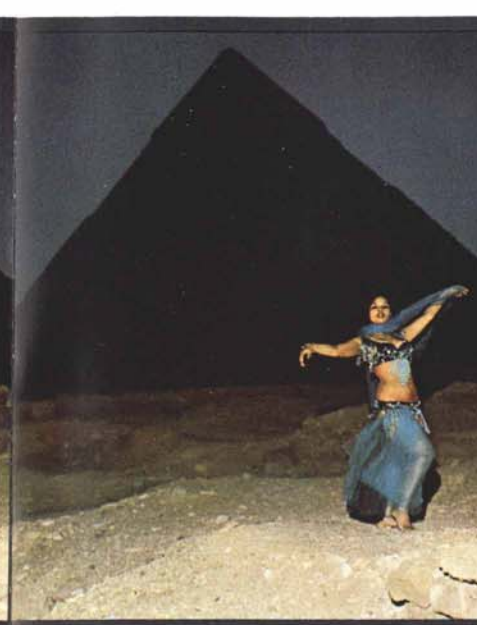
Nadia Gamal



"A good belly dancer must express

life, death, happiness, sorrow, love and anger... but above all she must have dignity."

Left to right: Miss Nagwa Fouad at the Sheraton Hotel in Cairo; Miss Amal Shawkat, now on tour with Hilton in the Far East, photographed at the Pyramids of Giza; dancers and fans at the Sheraton.



the music or indulge in flights of fancy. The women at the "Merryland" were relaxed, responsive and in good humor. They smiled back at Miss Zaki as she shook her breasts, rolled her hips and gyrated her midriff, all with that sweet smile on her face. It was hard to realize this was the "belly dance" that in the West still has strong overtones of vulgarity and licentiousness.

This is not to say that belly dancing is recommended children's entertainment. But neither is it nearly as revealing as the striptease nor, as performed by Miss Zaki, in any way sleazy or degrading. The only thing she took off was a shoulder wrap, dropping it to the floor at the beginning of her act. The rest of the time she wore the traditional costume: a bra and floor-length skirt slit at the sides to allow freedom of movement. In accordance with a somewhat self-defeating Egyptian government regulation, Miss Zaki covered the area between bosom and hips with a filmy gauze that did nothing to hide her figure. The regulation was meant to introduce modesty to the dance, but the girls have gotten around it by making the covering so sheer that it enhances rather than conceals the anatomical feature after which the dance is named.

To the throb of a hand-held drum that is the heartbeat of the belly dance, Miss Zaki swayed, twirled and undulated

around the floor, expressing herself with sinuous movements of arms and legs, rotating her hips upwards, sideways and downwards again. Though the name implies an emphasis on the abdomen, that part of the anatomy is in fact only one element in the dance. A good dancer uses arms, head, legs, breasts and hips to form one pleasing whole, emphasizing each part as the tempo of the music requires. Miss Zaki, who has a fine sense of rhythm, blended well with the music. Halfway during her performance, she put on *sagat*, little brass finger cymbals which she clapped together to counterpoint the rhythm. The performance ended, as it usually does, with a few pirouettes and a bow, and the spotlight went out even before Miss Zaki left the floor.

Not all dancers, of course, perform as pleasurably as Miss Zaki or for the same type of audience, which that night was mostly Egyptian middle class with a sprinkling of tourists. The belly dance, in one form or another, is performed almost everywhere in the Arab world but for a number of reasons is associated mainly with Egypt. Indeed, most of today's dancers come from Egypt, with only a very small minority being native Lebanese or Syrians. Estimates vary, but there are about 500 dancers in Egypt, while Lebanon has perhaps only

a couple of dozen performing in the famous nightclubs of Beirut, and even some of them are Egyptians. The profession has the same pyramidal structure as show business everywhere. At the bottom are vast numbers of beginners or mediocrities who perform in waterfront cafés, one-horse nightspots or native theaters in the boondocks. Higher up are those who by dint of hard work, some talent and a favor or two have managed to work their way to the lesser known cabarets of Cairo, Beirut and Damascus. At the very top are perhaps half a dozen like Miss Zaki, who appear in the best nightclubs, have starred in films and command top fees.

Perhaps number one in the Middle East is Nadia Gamal, a 32-year-old Alexandrian of Greek-Italian parentage who now lives in Beirut. She began her show business career almost 20 years ago and with an impressive single-mindedness has become an internationally-known star. Miss Gamal's approach to her profession is a formidable combination of superb talent, energy, intellect and dedication, and her performance of the "oriental dance," as she insists it be called, is simply beautiful to watch. In Egypt there is Miss Zaki, 25, who comes from a conservative family which at first opposed all her efforts to become a dancer. To shame her into abandoning her ambition, they often beat her and even shaved off her lustrous waist-length

hair. But she broke away and one night in an Alexandria nightclub, when she was 11, a television producer spotted her well-developed figure and offered her a job.

Two other dancers in Egypt have an equal claim to fame. Nagwa Fouad, 30, has been a dancer for almost 15 years. She too ran away from home, and with an attractive figure and considerable talent, worked her way to the top. Right there at the pinnacle alongside Miss Fouad and Miss Zaki is Nahed Sabry, 34. Formerly a secretary, she started relatively late in the game at the age of 26. But Miss Sabry's flashing dark eyes, stunning figure and exuberant dancing style quickly brought her fame.

The nature of their occupation makes belly dancers a particularly catty lot who disagree over everything, including the origins of their art. Indeed, no one really knows how and where the belly dance started. Some people maintain it began with the pharaohs, pointing as proof to tomb paintings showing dancers dressed in transparent veils. Most Egyptian dancers are tempted by this theory, but grudgingly admit the drawings in the pharaonic tombs depict movements and positions that are too stylized to have any relation to the fluid motions of the belly dance. Miss Zaki does not think it began with the pharaohs

but neither does she care very much. "I just like to close my eyes, feel the music and dance," she says with a shrug.

Egyptian officials at the Ministry of Culture and National Guidance prefer to emphasize folk dancing as being more in keeping with Egyptian tradition than belly dancing. Cairo newspapers regularly scold "the belly dancing cult" and one straitlaced columnist, railing against the undiminished popularity of the dance, recently wrote: "There are belly dancers everywhere. Why on earth is that? Are we introducing a new type of art which could be called the navel-shaking civilization? Let us get tough about all this nonsense and clean up our arts."

Reflecting this opinion, belly dancing receives no government encouragement or assistance, is mentioned by officials with a frown, and is attributed to the Turks, who ruled Egypt for 400 years. Turkish officials, less inhibited in such matters, enthusiastically agree. "Of course it started with us," said one emphatically. "Everyone knows that." That is arguable, but there is no doubt that belly dancing is widespread in Turkey today, most dancers coming from Sulukule, the old Gypsy quarter nestling under the walls of Istanbul.

"The Turks have nothing to do with it," insists Miss Gamal. "All they did was to introduce the *sagat*." She says

belly dancing originated with the Phoenicians, the ancestors of present-day Lebanese. It was performed by virgin maidens about to be sacrificed to the gods. Later in Arab history, Miss Gamal says, women in harems, trying to attract their masters' attentions, found the belly dance a most effective way to get their message across. Over-romanticized accounts of this version brought back by western travelers in the 19th century led to the unfortunate reputation that the dance has in the West.

Wherever it originally came from, there is no doubt that the fountainhead of belly dancing in this century was the "Casino Opera" in Cairo, right across the square from the ornate Egyptian state opera house. Casino Opera was founded in 1927 by Badia Massabni, a gifted and enterprising young woman of Lebanese parentage who was then married to Egypt's leading playwright. Using such innovations as an electrically-operated rotating stage, Miss Badia presented vaudeville acts, comedies, and singers. And, of course, dancers. It is fair to say that Miss Badia, now 78 and owner of a dairy farm in Lebanon, started dozens of dancers on their way before she sold the Casino in 1950. In the early days, they did not appear singly but in a kind of chorus line, with Miss Badia in the front singing, clapping the *sagat* and occasionally dancing

herself. Those who had particular talent made it to the front row and eventually stardom. Miss Gamal, as a child, used to perform western dances with her mother at Casino Opera. One night she found herself alone on stage and, overcoming her initial fright, began belly dancing. "Miss Badia was so happy that when I finished she came on stage, kissed me and gave me ten Egyptian pounds, a fortune in those days," Miss Gamal recalls.

The most famous alumna of Casino Opera is Tahia Carioca, the premier belly dancer in the Arab world for almost two decades. Miss Carioca, whose very name has become synonymous with dancer, wore a full-length gown which revealed nothing and danced in the center of the floor. With only the minimum of locomotion, she sent audiences into raptures of delight. "In those days they thought I was sexy because I danced with my mouth slightly open," recalls Miss Carioca. "Truth was, I suffered from asthma and had difficulty breathing, so I kept my mouth open for extra air." Miss Carioca retired in 1956 at the age of 37, went on to a successful career as a movie star and now has her own theater company.

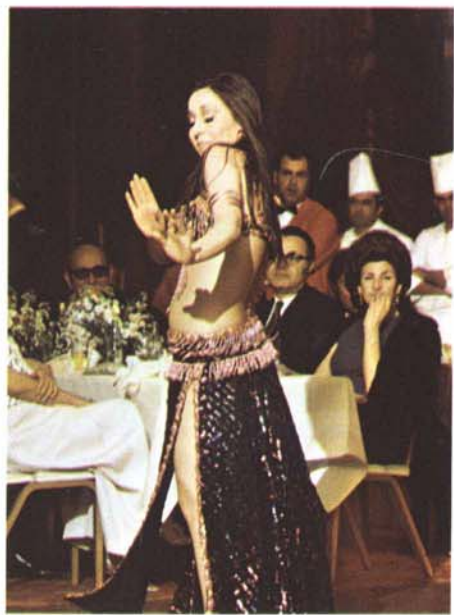
Miss Carioca's dancing style successfully bridged the gap from an older version of the belly dance to the type now practiced by Miss Gamal, Miss Zaki and most cabaret dancers. The old school, which stressed muscular movements while almost standing still, stemmed from the type of dancing practised by the *awalem*, which literally means "those who teach." What the *awalem* taught, to uninformed couples, was what to do on the wedding night. Most weddings were attended by two or three *awalem*, who stimulated the groom and gave rather broad hints to the bride. Education has lessened the demand for *awalem*, but they still appear at weddings in the more populous parts



Miss Nadia Gamal photographed at a private party honoring David Rockefeller at Beirut's Phoenicia Intercontinental Hotel.

of Cairo and other Egyptian cities. Even well-to-do couples have a dancer at their weddings, just to maintain tradition.

The third type is usually seen at local celebrations and feasts. It is generally improvised, a well-endowed woman tying a scarf around her hips to accentuate their movements and dancing in her ordinary ankle-length dress. Men sometimes take part, accompanying the movement of the women by rapping the head of a cane on the floor. The type foreigners usually see is that featured in nightclub acts such as Miss Zaki's, where the accent is equally on muscular control and locomotion.



What qualities should a good belly dancer have? "Dignity," says Miss Carioca with unquestioned authority. "She must express life, death, happiness, sorrow, love and anger, but above all she must have dignity." Miss Carioca concedes that a belly dancer must also be sexy, "but it must not be vulgar or blatant." Miss Gamal, whose approach to the art is perhaps more cerebral than that of her contemporaries, basically



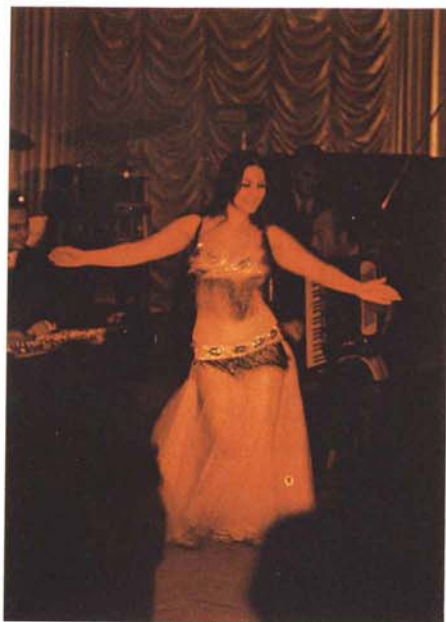
agrees. "Belly dancing is essentially an expression of femininity," she says. "It must, among other things, suggest sex, but it must do so delicately, hinting rather than asserting, and it must always be in good taste. It is definitely not just a matter of exposing the flesh." Miss Zaki is somewhat less articulate. Flashing that sweet smile, she expresses her feeling for the dance simply as a mood to which the music lends rhythm. Miss Fouad's opinion is that sex is in the ears of the beholder. "When the music becomes sinuous, then the dancer seems sexy; when it's not, she is not," declares Miss Fouad, intimating that there is no need for the dancer to worry about it.

Miss Fouad got into belly dancing by escaping from marriage. Her parents wanted her to marry a cousin, she didn't, so she ran away from home in Alexandria and went to Cairo. She tried to become a singer, but Egypt's leading composer told her unequivocally that her voice was terrible. "But your figure is the best I've ever seen in my life," he went on, and she soon became a dancer, appearing first in a film he was producing. Purists now claim that Miss Fouad, 34 films and countless live performances later, has abandoned the true belly dance for something not quite definable. They say she relies on gimmicks such as bells attached to her wrists and a candelabra with 13 candles balanced on her head, the high point of her nightly act in one of Cairo's biggest hotels. Miss Fouad admits she has attempted to introduce "new elements" into belly dancing but maintains that the results are gratifying.

Miss Gamal argues that there is no need for such accessories as a candelabra and her opinion seems valid if only because of her impressive professional background. While going to school in Alexandria and later in Cairo, she studied classical ballet for 11 years. An American tap dancer taught her acrobatics. She studied the piano for three years and choreography for two years. "Any woman can shake her body and call it belly dancing. But I know what I am talking about when I say it takes a lot of work and dedication to be a top oriental dancer," she declares. Apart from her accidental performance at Casino Opera, Miss Gamal did not start out as a belly dancer. She performed Russian or Hungarian folk dances. One night in a cabaret in Lebanon, however, the belly dancer on the bill became ill and Miss Gamal was more or less pushed onto the stage to replace her. She gave such an expert performance that the audience went wild, and she soon switched to oriental dancing.

Her decision was wise. In the years since, she has become perhaps the only internationally-known belly dancer from the Middle East. She has performed all over Europe, including Austria, Finland, Spain, Portugal, Italy, West Germany, France, Switzerland, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. She has also appeared in Iran, India and Ceylon and earlier this year made a highly successful tour of Venezuela. (Language for her is no problem; she speaks, reads and writes seven.) And at home, one of the high points of her career was when she danced at the Baalbeck International Festival in 1968, a month-long annual event which that year also featured such artistic luminaries as Herbert von Karajan directing the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.

Miss Gamal is so self-confident that she asserts that she can perform a belly dance to non-Arab music, such as Latin-American rhythms. But she concedes that only Arab music and instruments can give oriental dancing its full breadth of expression. She has mastered the ten kinds of tempos for oriental dancing, rhythms with such tongue-twisting names as *mouwashah*, *makloubah*, *oughrouk*, and *masmoudeh*. Some are fast, requiring nimble footwork and enormous energy; others are slow and seductive, highlighting muscle control and liquidity of movement. "The change of pace and sequence depends on the audience and their reaction, and also on the mood of the particular time and place." Even in the cold atmosphere of a television recording studio, Miss Gamal is outstanding. At one recent taping session, the crew broke into spontaneous applause after her nine-minute dance, a performance in which she shook everything from her hair to her fingertips and which left her bathed in sweat—and her face radiant with pleasure at the tribute from those hard-bitten professionals.



Miss Soheir Zaki, at Cairo's Merryland.

Miss Gamal's current ambition is to write a kind of "teach-yourself-oriental-dancing" book, in which each step and each sequence would be set down and clearly explained as in other dance instruction books. If that is successful, she may open a school when she retires. There is no formal instruction available for belly dancers at present. Most pick up the art by watching established dancers and take it from there. Ibrahim Akef, an Egyptian who comes from a famous family of acrobats, runs a dancing class in Cairo in which he gives instruction to a few aspiring dancers but it is not a school in the formal sense and certainly cannot match the experience provided by the old Casino Opera.

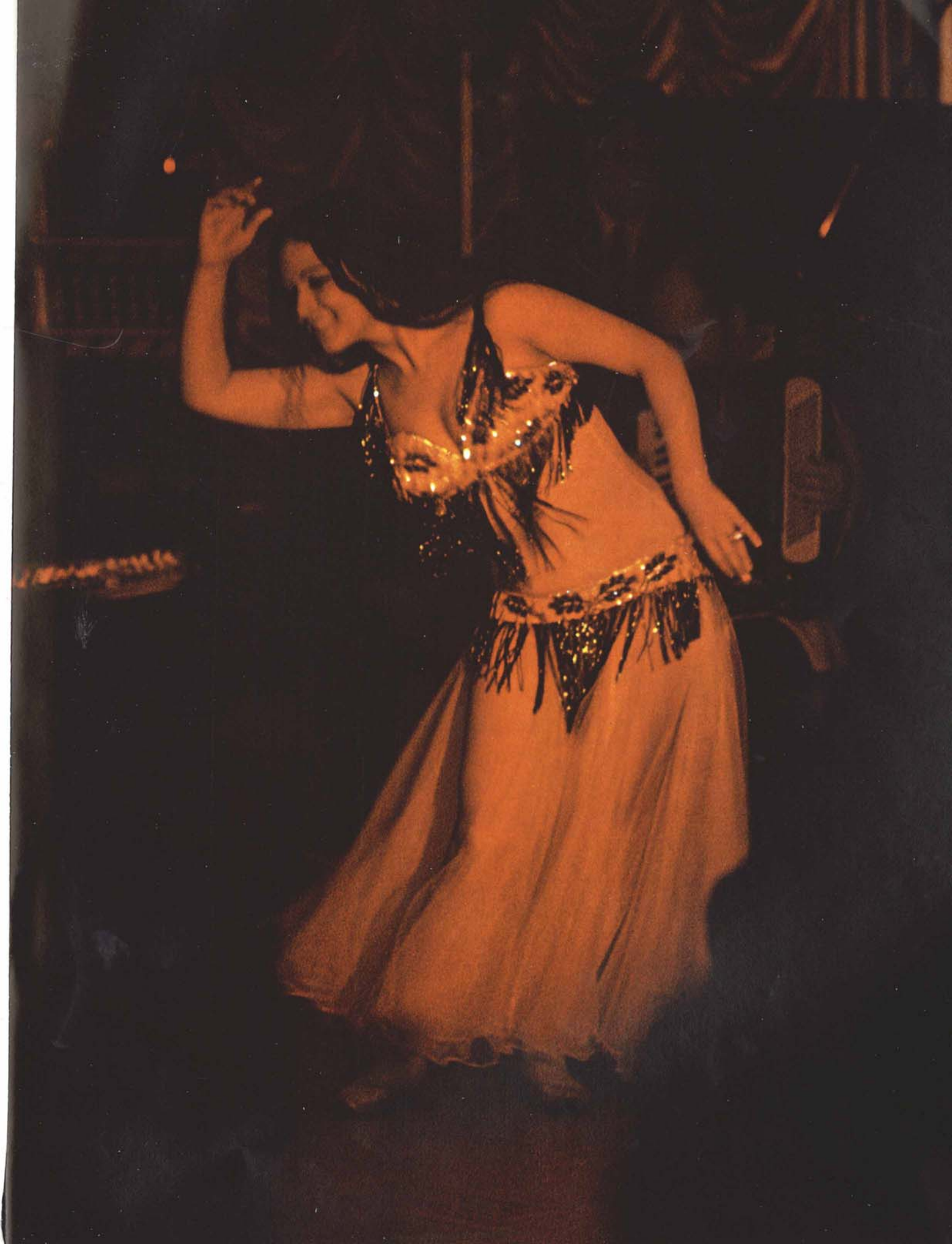
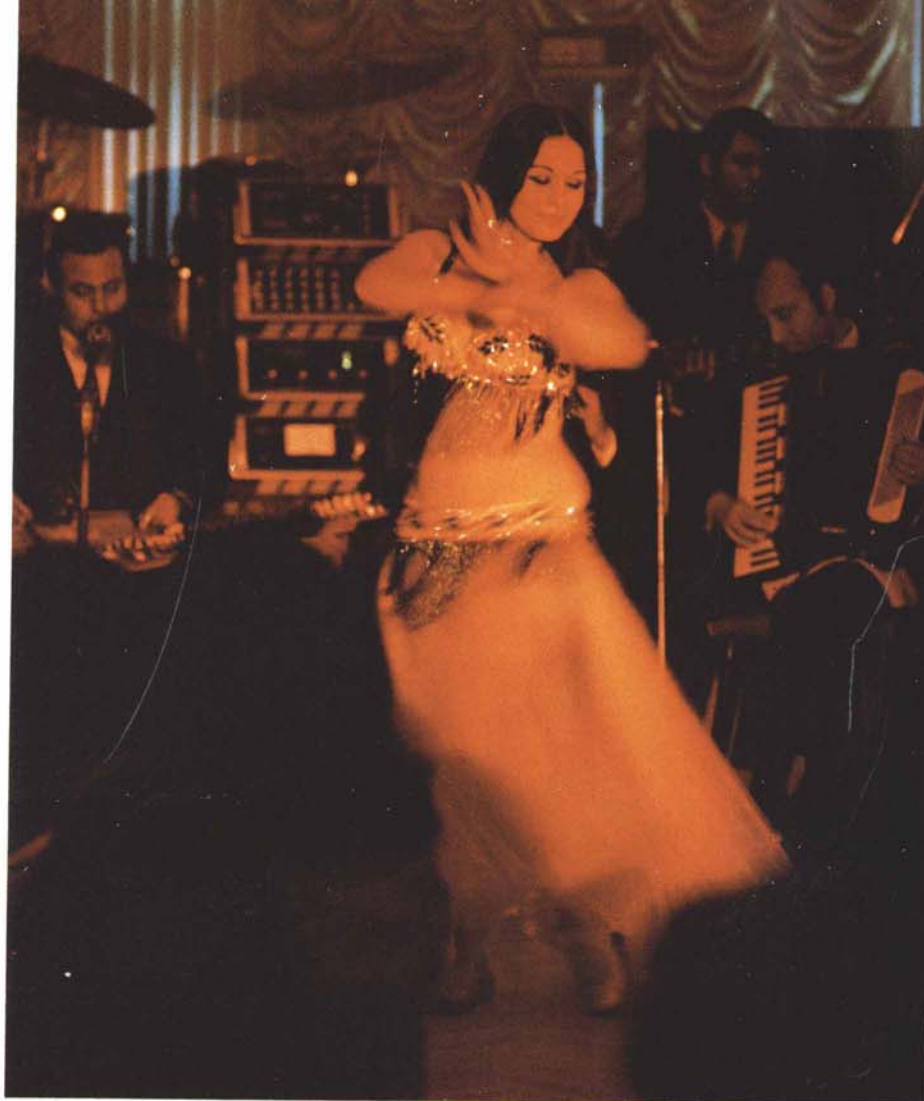
Belly dancing demands a certain amount of self-sacrifice, especially where marriage and children are concerned. Many dancers have unhappy married lives because, in a society that prizes child-bearing, they refuse to have children for fear of spoiling their figures. For this and other reasons, there is a high divorce rate among belly dancers. Another burden is the need to constantly watch diet and the scales for signs of flabbiness or overweight. Miss Zaki, in fact, drinks a small glass of pure lemon juice every day. "It keeps my weight down," she explains, a grimace replacing her sweet smile. Miss Gamal loves to ride horses and swim, but cannot find the time in her busy career.

But the sacrifices are, for dancers in the top category, more than amply rewarded, something that is important in a profession where few women can continue beyond the mid-thirties. Dancers on contract with fashionable nightclubs

make between \$100 and \$200 a night. For appearing at private parties, a star can demand—and get—as much as \$1,000 for a 20-minute performance. With additional income from movies and television, most good dancers lead comfortable lives, complete with fashionable homes, sports cars and all that goes with them.

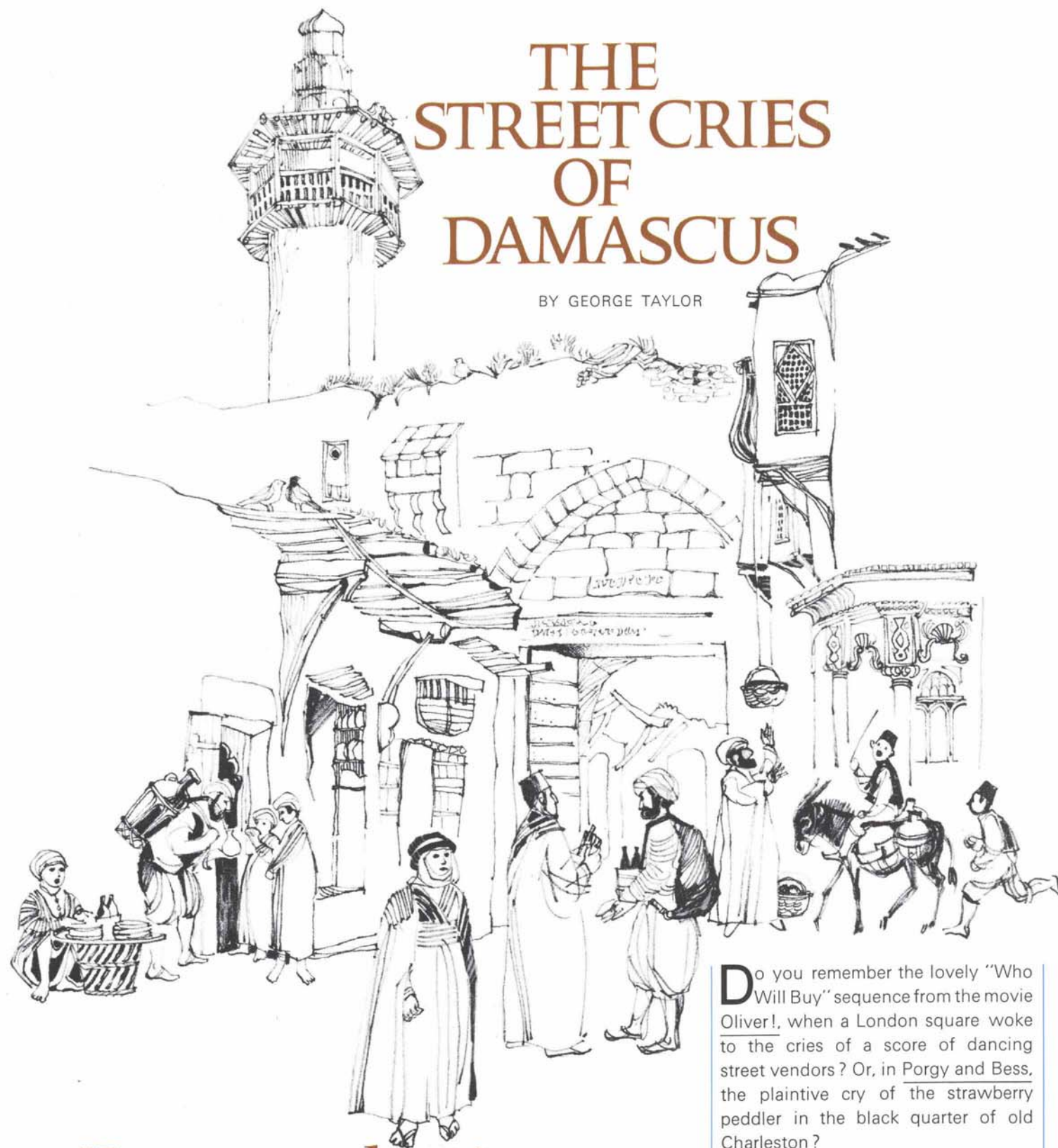
Which perhaps explains why another graduate of Casino Opera, after more than a decade out of show business, is preparing to make a comeback—at age 47. "She'll never make it even if it kills her," said one prima donna, with questionable logic but unmistakable venom.

Elias Antar, an Associated Press correspondent based in Beirut, is a regular contributor to Aramco World.



THE STREET CRIES OF DAMASCUS

BY GEORGE TAYLOR



“Let none despise,
the merry, merry cries...”

DRAWINGS BY PENNY WILLIAMS

Do you remember the lovely “Who Will Buy” sequence from the movie *Oliver!*, when a London square woke to the cries of a score of dancing street vendors? Or, in *Porgy and Bess*, the plaintive cry of the strawberry peddler in the black quarter of old Charleston?

There was a time when such colorful street vendors shouted their calls in the streets of cities throughout Europe and America. And although satirists from Juvenal in 1st-century Rome to Steele in 18th-century London inveighed against peace-

shattering hawkers seeking to mend old china, grind knives, tinker kettles or buy old clothes, we of the 20th century, having swept the hawkers from our streets, are now nostalgically blending their cries into the scores of our most popular musicals.

In the Middle East too, nostalgia may soon set in, for even in the crowded byways of the Damascus suq, the traditional cries are fading. A few of the old cries are still heard, but to me it seems fairly certain that most of them will have vanished—even from memory—by the end of this decade. I collected well over one hundred street cries while I was living in Damascus in the 1940’s, but life there, as in almost every Arab city, has changed dramatically in the past 25 years. Women no longer stay indoors, and the once-ubiquitous sallah, the basket lowered to a hawker on a string from an upper lattice, is less often seen. There are far fewer itinerant peddlers in the streets today, and those who remain are changing their style. The seller of the thin, long cucumber, for example, who once would have shouted, “In the moonlight she stretched; she is cold!” now contents himself with, “Cucumbers! Cucumbers!”

Because England has a long tradition of street vendors, English travelers have long been fascinated by the cries of old Damascus. Sir Ronald Storrs, British diplomat and orientalist, wrote after a particularly tiresome stay there

in 1908, “Street cries were my compensation.” By that time the traditional peripatetic hawker (as distinct from the street trader with a fixed pitch) had become rare in British cities, and most Englishmen probably knew hawkers chiefly from Francis Wheatley’s *Cries of London*, an immensely popular set of prints. Wheatley, an exhibitor at the Royal Academy from 1792 to 1795, first issued the series under the title *The Itinerant Traders of London*. He was not the first in the field; the most important collection, Tempest’s *Cries of Old London*, was published in 1668, and printed collections of London street cries have an ancestry dating back to 14th-century poems. John Payne Collier drew upon these poems when he edited the *Roxburghe Ballads* in 1845, for he included several verses of “The Cries of Old London,” with the refrain, “Let none despise, the merry, merry cries of famous London town.”

Many of the old cries—both their words and tunes—are still known. Among early examples are these:

*From the bottom to the top
Swepe chimney swepe
Then shall no soote
Fall in your poridge pot.*

*A good sausage, a good,
And it be roasted . . .*

*Twelve o’clocke,
Looke well to your locke
Your fier, and your light
And so good-night.*



In Damascus, it was not merely the continuing presence of street hawkers which fascinated British travelers, nor was it just their costumes, exotic as they sometimes were. The real fascination lay in the lyrical and picturesque quality of the cries themselves—many of them reminiscent of those illustrated by Wheatley. “From under the dew I gathered them!” shouted the man selling plump black grapes. “Like a Bedouin, this dark one!” sang a man with a sack of earthy-brown truffles. The foreigners were enchanted.



The 2nd edition of Karl Baedeker’s guide book for travelers to Palestine and Syria, published in Leipzig in 1894, commented at length on the shouts to be heard in the Damascus suq. Based mainly on the experiences of Dr. Immanuel Benzinger, the book contained a number of street cries translated and interpreted for the English-speaking traveler.

The vendor of Refreshments, carrying on his back a wide two-handled jar with a narrow neck or a vessel made of glass, rattles with the brazen cups he holds in his hands shouting “Refresh thy heart!” or “Allay the heat!” The seller of jullab, or raisin-water, shouts, “Well-cleared, my child!” while the purveyor of khushaf, a beverage prepared from raisins, oranges and apricots, extols its coolness in the words “Take care of your teeth!” Liquorice water and plain water are carried about in goat-



skins by other itinerant dealers. An interesting custom is the so-called *sebil*; that is, when anyone is desirous of doing a charitable deed, he pays for the contents of a water-skin and desires the carrier to dispense it gratuitously to all comers. Water-bearers with good voices are selected for the purpose, and they loudly invite applicants with "O thirsty one, the distribution."

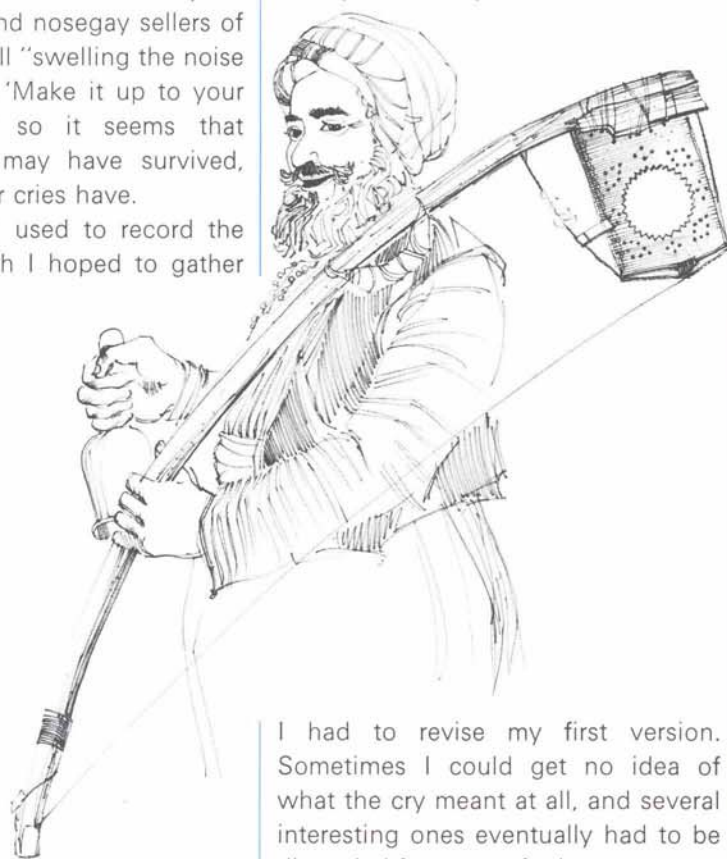
Fruit of all kinds is sold in a similar manner, being generally described by some quaint periphrasis instead of being called by its name. Many kinds of vegetables are pickled in vinegar or brine and carried through the streets for sale in wooden tubs on the backs of donkeys. The commonest are beetroot (*shawender*), turnips (*lift*), and cucumbers (*khiyar*) ... The cry of the sellers is: "O father of a family, buy a load; for thirty paras a rotl of cucumbers!" The cress is praised somewhat as follows: "Tender cresses from the spring of Ed-Duiyeh; if an old woman eats them she will be young again next morning!" ... Along with pistachios ("Fresh pistachios!"), roasted peas are also frequently purveyed, with the cry "Mother of two fires!", which means that they are well roasted, or "Here is something too hard for the teeth to bite!" Hawkers of nosegays cry *Salih hamatak!* ("Appease your mother-in-law!", that is, by presenting her with a bouquet.)

"Appease your mother-in-law" is a much-quoted gem from the Baedeker article. Its appeal has been universal; it has been the starting point for most searchers for the picturesque in street cries. But in 1944, hardly 30 years after

Storrs had given "Propitiate your mother-in-law" as his version of the cry, I found not a single flower seller still using it, and after much searching, only one man who even remembered using it in the past. To humor me he began to shout it again, and *Salih hamatak!* was re-established—temporarily, at least—as a Damascus street cry. According to Colin Thubron, the most recent British chronicler of Syrian life, the flower and nosegay sellers of Damascus are still "swelling the noise with their shout 'Make it up to your mother-in-law!'" so it seems that *Salih hamatak!* may have survived, though few other cries have.

The method I used to record the street cries which I hoped to gather

and thus preserve will, I am afraid, shock and dismay Arabic scholars, but there are times when enthusiasm alone has to serve. When I heard a hawker I followed him until I had memorized his cry, and then wrote it down phonetically. To confirm the accuracy of what I had written, I stopped the hawker and persuaded him to repeat the words slowly and clearly. On most occasions



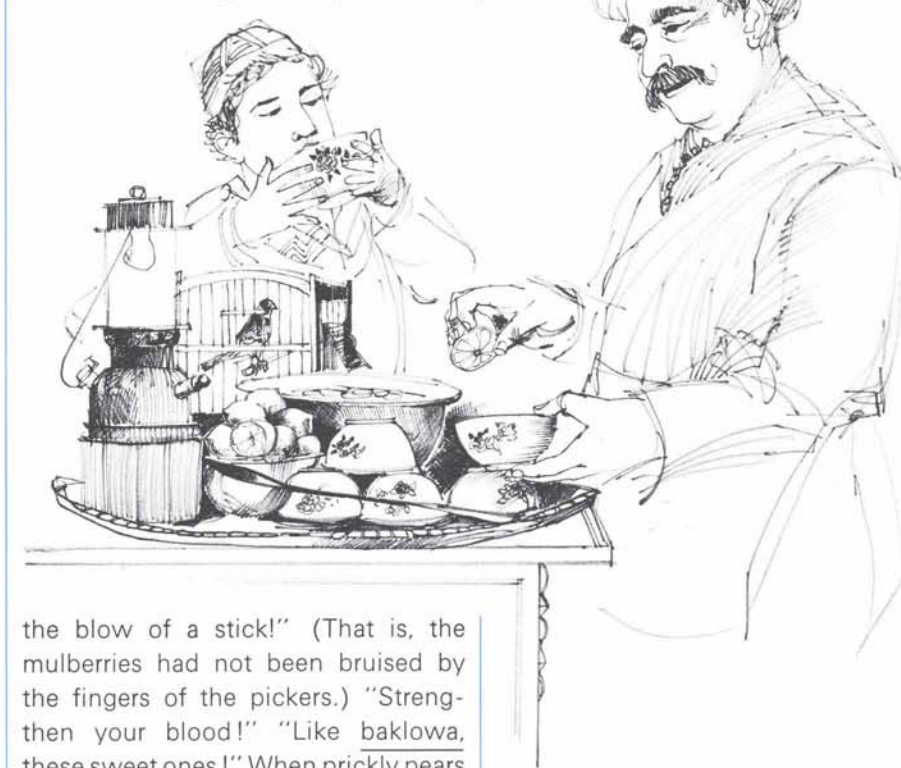
I had to revise my first version. Sometimes I could get no idea of what the cry meant at all, and several interesting ones eventually had to be discarded for want of adequate translation. None of the cries which I listed was from hearsay, for although I noted down some which friends assured me were well known, it was only when I had personally seen and heard the hawker that I added the cry to my collection.

Not all the hawkers were co-operative. Some of them, suspicious of the strange foreigner who tracked them, notepad in hand, suspended the shouting of the traditional cry to shout abuse; a few urged xenophobic bystanders to help them destroy the sinister pad before it was used against them. Once a notepad containing the fruit of many weeks' work was wrenched from my hands and ripped



to pieces. But, on the whole, I must say, the Damascus hawkers were both patient and helpful.

The cries I was able to collect fell into three main groups: fruits and vegetables, sweets, and trades. Of the fruits, the cries for the mulberry, the apricot, and the prickly pear or cactus fruit outnumbered all others. Mulberry syrup is a Damascus specialty, and cries relating to it were particularly interesting. "At midnight on the ladder I gathered you!" "On



the blow of a stick!" (That is, the mulberries had not been bruised by the fingers of the pickers.) "Strengthen your blood!" "Like *baklowa*, these sweet ones!" When prickly pears were most succulent, the vendor would cry "Food for the aristocracy!" and "Every one is a loss to me!" or "Don't search elsewhere—the lovely one is here!"

The cries for broad beans were the most numerous among the vegetables, but garlic from Yabroud and eggplants from Kafr Suss provided the most pithy expressions. Small fat cucumbers were sold to the cry "Fingers of the baby!" and pumpkins, "Eating them is a cure!" When broad beans were boiled in water and sold at night from barrows lit by kerosene lamps, they were "O you who light up the night!" Chick peas, also boiled in water, and served with salt and onion, were sold to the cry

"O you on the boil, seven servants have prepared you!"

The vendors of ice cream cooled by the snow of Mount Hermon begged children to "Cry (for ice cream) and don't be hushed!" and *halowee* pastry was offered particularly to pregnant ladies, for whom



vantage point he could see further into the future than his clients.

The tradition of street crying dies hard. The tinsmith, the wool comber, the melon seller, the fishmonger, the shoe polish boy, the man with the lottery ticket can still be heard in the street. But for the most part, the poetry has gone from their cries. In this era of busy cities and curt, prosaic speech, where is there a street hawker who will still invite you to buy prickly pears to the cry "Comfort yourself—that old woman makes the house full of strife!"?

George Taylor, who teaches English at the American University of Beirut, is the author of The Roman Temples of Lebanon, a book on little-known ancient sites.



BY BART SHERIDAN
PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROBERT AZZI

FOUAD SA'ID:

The Man Who Showed Hollywood How



In the often curious business of making motion pictures, at least the ones made in once-immortal Hollywood, an amorphous grapevine of alert and warning interlinks everybody who is anybody. Lately that grapevine has been pulsing both in awe and apprehension with a name that does not fit any precedented niche in the Hollywood firmament. The man it belongs to is not an actor, a director, a writer, an agent or any other character heretofore familiar in the performing arts. You might say he is a man without a category. He is a fiery young Egyptian who grew up in his uncle's movie studio in Cairo, and who came to the University of Southern California at the age of 18 to study cinematography. He is also an irresistible force that almost literally is turning the Hollywood studios inside out.

Fouad Sa'id is now 36, and the cause of all the talk is a revolutionary system he has developed for making movies on location at bargain costs. Sa'id started working on the system shortly after becoming chief cameraman on the *I Spy* television show in 1964. Since then he has shown Hollywood in effect how to take a complete studio, compress it into a single mobile van and drive it or ferry it by cargo plane to any location anywhere, ready for use on arrival. For reasons that much of the film industry is only beginning to recognize, the economies in this are substantial. And in addition to netting Sa'id a personal fortune in the millions of dollars, and winning an Academy Award for technical excellence as well, the system is creating sweeping changes. As president of the

company that runs the system, Fouad Sa'id all but singlehandedly is forcing the most drastic alterations moviemaking has seen since the silver screen started to talk.

Sa'id's breakthrough in costs comes in what may or may not be the nick of time for an industry that is ailing, and for a town that is uneasy. American movie companies are shooting fewer major pictures than at any time in recent memory. On a given day this past spring, *Hollywood Reporter's* weekly "Barometer" listed only 45 movies in actual production against 57 a year ago and 76 the year before. And of the current 45 only 26 were being shot in the United States, a mere handful in Hollywood proper.

One of many reasons for the decline, and the one that makes Sa'id's influence so timely, is that movies cost significantly more to shoot in the United States, particularly in Hollywood, than they do in other countries. Today's audiences are too varied and too selective, and therefore too small, to pay for Hollywood's imbedded lavishness, its enormous studio overhead, its astronomically high wage scales and its endemic addiction to featherbedding. Hence producers are seeking to partially offset these costs—and at the same time cater to the "new" audience's demand for real-life action in real-life backgrounds—by going more and more on location rather than building expensive sets and shooting on studio sound stages.

Before Sa'id hit town the trouble with this solution was that it changed only the locale of a shooting. The

Cinemobiles may put Hollywood back on the map—all over the map.

methods remained the same. A company went on location exactly as companies have done for decades. Caravans of trucks spent days toting cumbersome studio equipment. Tradition-oriented crews held stubbornly to the time-consuming, in-studio procedures developed in the cost-be-damned era of the sound stage extravaganzas. Thus while a company might save on set construction and studio overhead by going on location, it paid as much if not more for the commodities that are costliest of all in any movie making: time and manpower. That key problem is what Sa'id is attacking with such dramatic results.

Making movies this way, the young Egyptian reasoned a few years ago, was like trying to manufacture a new product in an old factory. The thing to do instead was to start a new factory from scratch. Read "studio" for "factory" and you have exactly what Sa'id did. He began designing some "studios" of his own. He engineered them specifically to make location shooting fast, efficient and cheap. Then he put them on wheels, ready to go anywhere on instant notice. Today he has 18 such "studios." He calls them Cinemobiles, and he rents them out for prices ranging from \$225 to \$1500 per day, the rate depending on their size and equipment.

This is a fraction of what a producer might pay for a day's shooting with conventional methods either in-studio or on location. Sa'id insists he's offering a bargain, and apparently enough producing companies agree with him: in 1970 producers of more than 70 feature films and scores of TV segments used Cinemobiles. That's nearly three out of four of all American feature films made during the year for standard release. By March of this year a two-page trade paper ad placed by Sa'id pictured Cinemobiles on

14 locations simultaneously, and "Locations by Cinemobile" will be credited on at least two of the year's most heralded productions. One is the New York-filmed production of the best-selling *The Godfather*, with Marlon Brando, the other the newest John Wayne blockbuster, *The Cowboys*, to be shot throughout the Pacific Southwest.

This much acceptance of radical change is a clear indication that Fouad Sa'id has done a good deal more than merely build his better mousetrap. For it's an aphorism in Hollywood that nothing is resisted as steadfastly as the idea whose time has come. Especially when the idea is one that cuts down on jobs and diverts money from old channels to new. For these reasons I was fully prepared to meet an unorthodox personality when I sought out Sa'id for this report, and he did not disappoint me.

We had agreed to talk after office hours at the sumptuous Cinemobile headquarters on Hollywood's Sunset Strip, directly down the street from the Playboy Club. There was no sign of Sa'id at first and after waiting more than an hour, I started for my car. Hearing my name called I turned to see this trimly tailored, jockey-sized man sprinting up the hill, hand outstretched, his coal-black hair slightly disheveled, his face wreathed in a concerned smile. He was not even breathing hard after what must have been a considerable exertion. He clapped my shoulder in apology as he explained, with only a touch of non-American accent:

"I am so terribly sorry. I will tell you about it as we go. There was a very big deal for Cinemobile, the biggest ever. A John Wayne location that will run 21 weeks. But it is late now. My wife will be waiting. You will come home for a fast dinner and we will talk? OK?"



The principle behind the Cinemobile: one van with one driver should

I said OK and tucked myself into the passenger seat of Sa'id's powerful little sports car, an orange-red Lamborghini. He gunned the car out of the parking lot like a rocket, streaked across teeming Sunset Boulevard and powered up into the Hollywood hills overlooking the Strip. We cornered one or two fast curves and we were there.

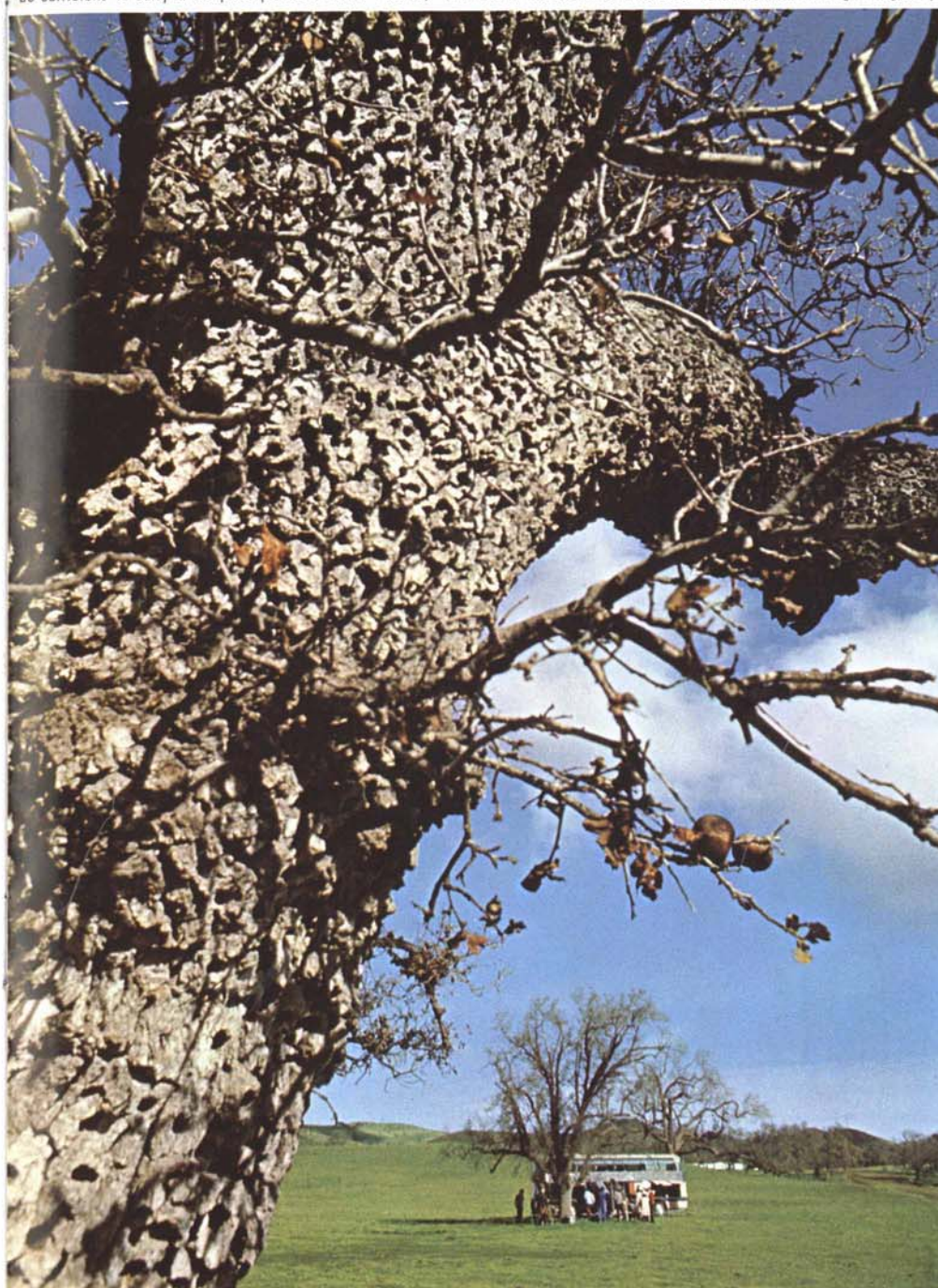
The Sa'id hillside home is so set out that you step directly from the car to the front door. The landscaping, a semi-Oriental terraced effect, is mostly in the rear, where it sets off the symmetrically curving, shimmeringly blue-lit swimming pool. But the view from within, seen through an enormous floor-to-ceiling picture window, provides a stupendous panorama of the Los Angeles basin even in smog season. When the skies clear the Sa'ids can see not only the basin but a huge slice of the Pacific Ocean as well, including, inevitably, Catalina Island.

The decor within is no less spectacular: a floor-to-ceiling mirrored wall to complement the view; huge sofas and club chairs grouped for conversation before a wood-burning fireplace; futuristic cobalt-blue guest chairs copied after those in the Pan American ticket lobby in Brussels; a space-age window lounge, brilliant scarlet, that Sa'id had flown from Paris after spotting it in a shop window; a prize-winning, two-ton marble sculpture by Montoya Escobedo, a figure of a kneeling woman, that Sa'id brought from the sculptor's native Mexico after filming there on location.

Such prizes were not the only treasures brought home from Sa'id's travels.



be sufficient to carry a complete portable movie "studio," and one or two crewmen should be able to unload the lightweight equipment quickly from individual, readily accessible compartments.



With everything needed to make a film loaded aboard this bus—including the cast—producers can roam far from costly studio lots.

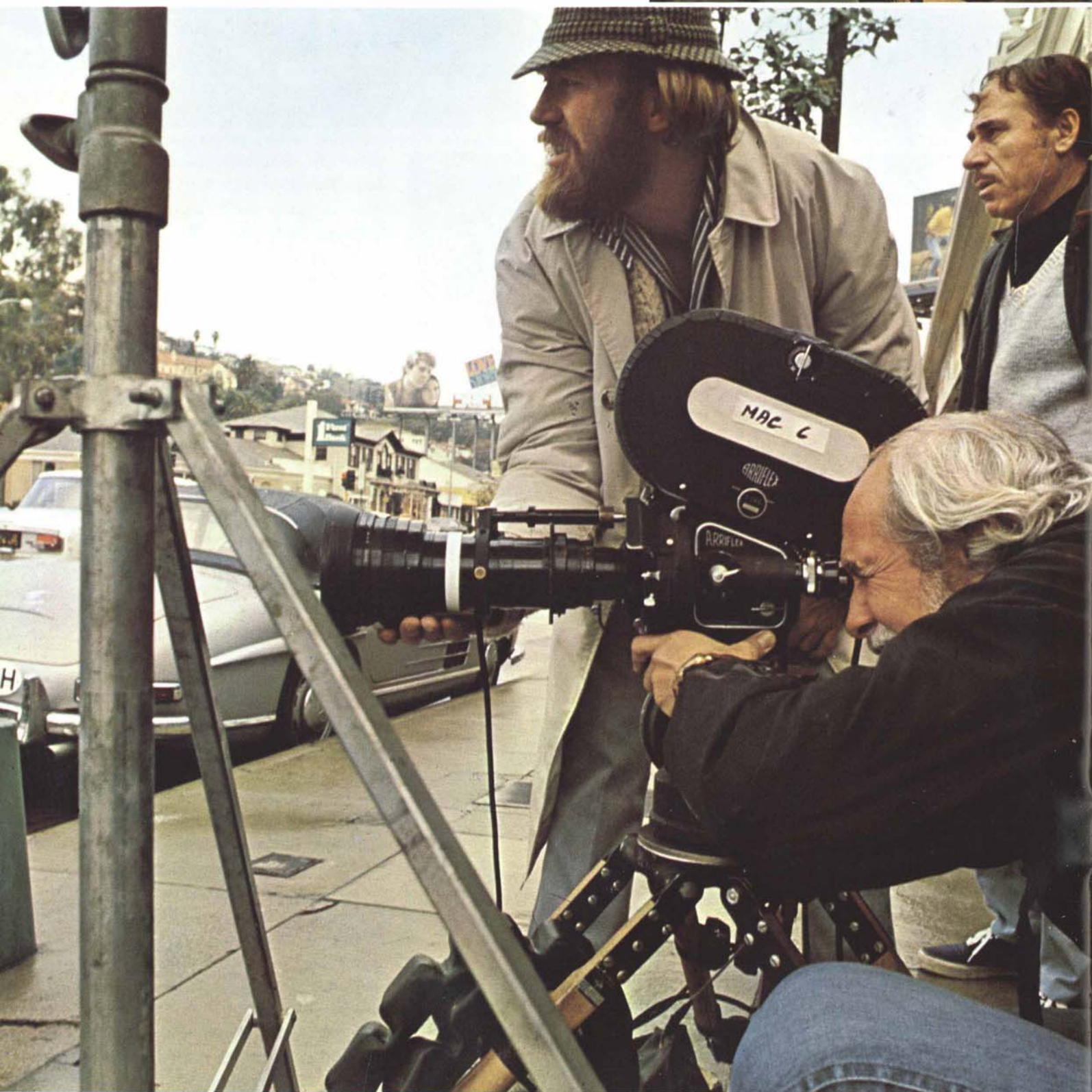
When his vivaciously blond Viennese wife, Henny, came in to greet us and to show off one-year-old Soona, I learned that Henny and Fouad Sa'id met three years ago in Greece, where Sa'id was filming an *I Spy* episode and where both were attending the wedding of a crew member. Henny is a non-professional, but her startling good looks and her lightly accented English seem made to order for the dark-complexioned, intensely active, strongly masculine man, a driving activist who already was getting out various technical data about the Cinemobiles to explain to me.

As for secure little Soona, she goes right along with the scene. The distinctive blend of her Nordic-Arabic features seems to say "today" and "the future" just as much as her home, her daddy's jet-propelled, imported automobile and his revolutionary concept of mobilizing movie making with his Cinemobiles.

* * *

You don't have to be with Sa'id long to perceive how totally he is engulfed not only by those Cinemobiles themselves but by a crusading zeal for the radical methodology they represent. The latter dedication all but obsesses him. He is frustrated to the point of despair at seeing waste and inefficiency still being tolerated in Hollywood despite the lessons of what he considers his own better way.

"They don't want to change!" he explodes, teeth gritting, black-brown eyes vivid, his arms sweeping the Hollywood panorama before him in defiance. "The people out there had it too good for too long. They learned to



Fast film, portable equipment enable movie makers to shoot street scenes and locations at low cost. Expensive set construction is reduced when any room, even Sa'id's office (top), can be rented for less.



do things a certain way. Now if something new comes they fight you every inch of the way. Even when you save them money. They look at your figures, then look you in the eye and say 'We don't want to experiment.' They are afraid!

"My company is successful, yes. What people don't know is how hard we have to sell. It is not easy for one man like myself to take on a whole industry and say 'I am going to change this industry.' The workmen and their little bosses say my system cuts jobs. Sure it does. What the guys won't see is that saving money with my system eventually will mean more pictures and therefore more jobs in the long run. It's a one-man crusade."

In a way Sa'id has been organizing his crusade since childhood. At the time of his birth in Cairo in 1935 his maternal uncle, the late Joseph Aziz, owned and operated what then was known as the Pyramid Studio in Cairo. Fouad's father died shortly after his son's birth, and Fouad and Mrs. Sa'id went to live at the Aziz home next door to the studio. Young Fouad had free run of the sets during his growing years. Inquisitive and aggressive even then, the mechanically adept little boy soon had a man's technical understanding of cameras, lights, sound, film and movie-making in general. By the time he was at high school level in Cairo's public schools he was working after hours and during vacations at his uncle's and other studios, usually as an assistant cameraman.

The jump to American moviemaking came when U.S. director Robert Surtees brought stars Robert Taylor and Eleanor Parker to Cairo in 1953 to film a picture called *Valley of the Kings* for M.G.M. Surtees planned to use an Egyptian crew, and you may be sure

young Sa'id, then not quite 18, was at the head of the line when hiring started. He got a job keeping the cameras loaded with film ("The unions were not very strong there," he grins). As anyone who knows him today might suspect, he was all over the place when shooting began, just as he had been at his uncle's studio. By the time *Valley of the Kings* was wrapped up he had caught Surtees' eye and obtained the director's assistance in emigrating to America and enrolling in the U.S.C. cinematography program.

Like other cinematography students Sa'id helped meet his expenses by working in Hollywood studios, for pay and credit, as part of the university's work-study program. Unlike those students, however, he carried his explorations still further through summer-long work-visits to the studios of Europe and Japan. He got into those studios by the simple device of writing letters ahead, stating that he was a student of cinematography and wanted to observe foreign techniques.

Sa'id first sensed what he calls the "progress gap" in American movie-making when he returned from his studies abroad. Instead of interest in the innovations he had noted, Hollywood mentors were indifferent and even contemptuous. He still winces from the sting of those brushoffs.

"I was just another 'punk kid,'" he reminisces, the hurt and the incredulity still not erased. "They laughed at me. They were using heavy lights you don't need with today's fast film, and the ponderous old Mitchell cameras instead of the light, compact models the Europeans were getting fantastic results with. Things like that. And when I asked why, they answered, 'Because that's the way it's done here.' 'But the new way is so much better,' I would point out. 'Couldn't we at least try?' And they

would laugh again. 'Look, son, you can't beat 30 years of experience,' they would say. 'You can't throw all that away for something nobody knows anything about.' So I had to do it their way or shut up."

The full impact of this middle-aged methodology struck Sa'id when he left U.S.C. in 1957 to become a full-time cinematographer for TV films and documentaries such as CBS's sports spectacles, and later for Sheldon Leonard's *I Spy* TV series.

"I was absolutely shocked at how backward we were in Hollywood compared with the Europeans and the Japanese," he says now. "For instance, we were still building expensive sets, like say a duplicate of this living room, instead of just coming in here and shooting the real thing. Well, a set like this would cost \$30,000 to create on a sound stage. Yet I have rented the actual room out as a set for \$100 per day. And why were we not doing that in the late 50's and early 60's? Because the studios were still clinging to the bulky old equipment of the 1930's, cumbersome gear you couldn't get through the door."

By 1964, when Sa'id took the *I Spy* job, a swing to locations was getting under way, but not with any noticeable change from the old way of setting up and photographing.

"Eight, nine, ten trucks in a caravan, each adding another driver to the payroll" is the way he remembers this. "All that stuff ... it took hours every time you moved. And every hour's time cost thousands and thousands of dollars while everybody stood around. I thought to myself no wonder this country can't compete with European movies."

Enabling Hollywood to compete after all was what Sa'id had in mind when, in 1964, he finally synthesized his ideas for what became the first Cinemobile, and

A Drive-It-Yourself Movie Studio? Ask The Man Who Owns One

with his own money built an experimental model. Unfortunately, engineering problems proved insurmountable, and the project was on the verge of failure when producer Sheldon Leonard came to the rescue with a personal loan to help finance a replacement, a 16-foot van that Sa'id called his Mark I model. The new Cinemobile worked and Leonard promptly rented it for the next several *I Spy* episodes.

The results were sensational. Leonard reduced his crews from 18 men to 11, cut on-location costs by a third and got through 13 pages of script per day instead of the customary five. As the word about that got around, and as Sa'id hammered home his new gospel to other TV and low-budget movie producers, the Cinemobile family of trucks enlarged to meet the growing demand. By 1968 "Fouad Sa'id Productions" vans were being used on a dozen low-budget TV feature films and on the *Felony Squad* and *Ironsides* TV series as well as on *I Spy*. The Big Change was on its way.

At this point Sa'id decided it was time to go major league, and to woo producers of the high-budgeted Hollywood feature movies his facilities are working for today. For this he needed more and more elaborate Cinemobiles. To get them he merged Fouad Sa'id Productions with Taft Broadcasting Company, an entertainment conglomerate whose holdings include TV and radio stations in medium-sized U.S. cities, a television syndication company and Hanna Barbera Productions, a Hollywood production company. The deal gave Sa'id \$5.1 million in Taft stock and made him Taft's chief shareholder. It also made him president of Cinemobile Systems, which replaced Fouad Sa'id Productions as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Taft.

Today Sa'id and 60 employees run the Cinemobile show from a Sunset Strip headquarters with walls covered with gray flannel suiting cut from tailors' bolts and an elaborate stand-up Eames desk around which Sa'id paces restlessly as he talks or telephones or dictates whenever he is in Hollywood.

This is not often. Much of Sa'id's time as company president he spends with his Cinemobiles on actual locations. He flies or drives to those sites at least once on every rental, wherever in the world they might be. He insists on seeing with his own eyes how they are doing, what can be improved, how the production crews are reacting to the facilities.

"This is the only way I can stay on top of what we have done so far," he explains. "Remember, I am still trying to convert people to a system some of them don't want. They are looking for things to go wrong. I want to beat them to the draw. That's why I go out and talk, myself, with the guys who are doing the work—the grips, the gaffers (electricians), the assistant directors, the cameramen. Always we are looking for ways to change, to modernize, to improve."

"On a location we did for Stanley Kramer's *RPM* somebody grumbled that one of our 10-K lights was too hard to get out of its compartment and too heavy for one man to load onto a Molevator, which is a kind of tripod with big legs that nests next to the 10-K. All right, that's what we want to know. When the electrician told me that we set to work. We figured out a way to make both the 10-K and the Molevator smaller. Now one man can do the job in one minute where it used to take two men two minutes. That way we stay ahead of complaints."

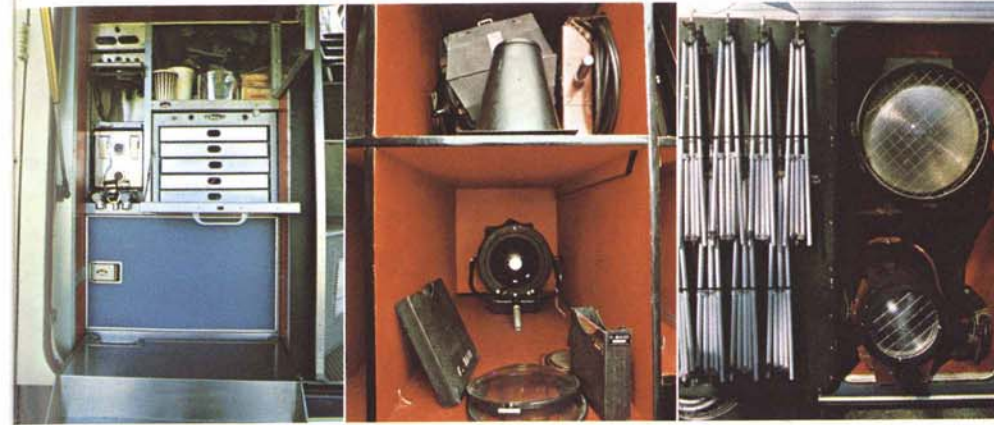
Nor is that the only way. From the

At first glance Fouad Sa'id's enterprise sounds expensive. His Cinemobiles cost from \$250,000 to \$750,000 each to build and to equip with such sophisticated items as lightweight Arriflex cameras, generators capable of illuminating three city blocks and hydraulically-lifted platforms for high-angle shots. But when you consider that the fleet of 18 trucks last year shot more feature films than M.G.M., Paramount or any other major Hollywood studio, the investments look a little more earth-bound.

A Cinemobile for all practical purposes is a movie studio, housed in a moving van that's anywhere from 16 feet to 40 feet long, 6½ to 7½ feet wide and 7 to 13 feet high. The smaller units look like panel trucks, the larger ones like huge sightseeing buses. Aside from being mobile, a Cinemobile differs from an actual studio in that it has no sound stages, which Fouad Sa'id considers obsolete in their present format and unnecessary in most cases anyhow. In other words, you don't go into a Cinemobile studio to shoot pictures. You take whatever you need out of the Cinemobile, use it and put it back. In the largest vehicles "whatever you need" can include not only movie hardware such as cameras and lights but also actors (there are dressing rooms and lavatories), crew (there are seats for 40 passengers) and instant meals for all hands (there are airplane-style electronic kitchens.)

Despite the expensive equipment, the Cinemobiles' big sell is the economy they make possible through reduced manpower and faster operation. Manpower is cut because one Cinemobile eliminates the old need for eight or more trucks and drivers, and because fewer men are needed to handle Sa'id's lightweight equipment. Lights weighing 28 pounds, for example, do the job that 400-pounders formerly were used for.

As for speed, the whole Cine-



The electronic kitchen (top left) and storage compartments for equipment are all designed for convenient access in the field.

mobile design is aimed at getting up to 32,000 pieces of equipment in or out of the van in a hurry. In the larger vehicles a dozen storage compartments are engineered to house specific items in specific combinations, with each compartment being accessible independently from outside the van through its own door. When all doors are open a visitor can see an overwhelming variety of lights, cables, tripods, cameras, complete soundtrack systems and other movie-making material, all pieces snuggled cozily into assigned niches without benefit of lashing or stacking.

With equipment so accessible a production crew needs a maximum of ten minutes to "set up" a typical scene—i.e., unload the van and get cameras, lights and props ready for shooting. "Wrapping up," or putting the equipment back, takes not more than another ten minutes. These times represent a saving of one to three hours, or more, off that required when a company uses the conventional truckloads of regular studio equipment on location. The saving becomes especially significant in situations where several on-site changes of scene are required on the same location.

Most Cinemobiles fit readily into the belly of a cargo plane for transport to distant locations. Such a shipment from Los Angeles to New York City would cost a producer about \$2,000 for a middle-sized vehicle.

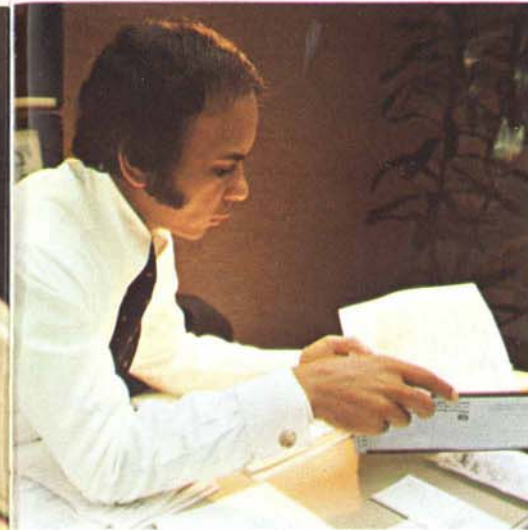
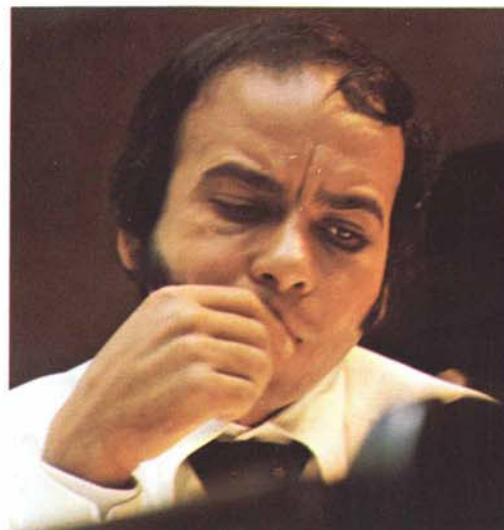
When a producer uses a Cinemobile he usually brings his own crew, paying Sa'id's company only the rental charge plus the wages of Sa'id's driver, whom the producer carries on his own payroll. In such cases Sa'id has no part in story, script, casting or other aspects of the production other than to supply the Cinemobile. Occasionally, however, he participates as co-producer, in which capacity he does have a voice in these matters and supplies equipment and crew without charge in return for a percentage of the picture's profits.

dinner hour on each evening the multi-line telephone at the Sa'id home buzzes with call after call as the driver-operators of the various distant Cinemobiles report in. You can practically see each Cinemobile come alive in Sa'id's mind as he takes these calls. He leans forward intently, glued to the driver's every nuance, eventually bursts into some outburst of approval, reassurance, instruction or criticism. "How are things going with the cameraman? You are sure? There are no gripes? The unit is setting up and wrapping up without delays? Hah. Now you listen. You tell that cameraman Sa'id says he must be pleased. Sa'id will do anything he wants, anything. What he wants he gets. But you tell him Sa'id says so. OK?"

Or: "You are washing the Cinemobile? Everything clean and neat the way I like it? I am not so sure. I hear today the production manager is saying we gave him an old model. It is not so. It is practically new. Wash it!"

Or: "Wipe 'em out, Chuck!" (i.e. do a fantastic job of getting the set wrapped up). "We've got to get them finished on time so we can move the Cinemobile to Utah. You've got to be the best crewman on the whole set."

This extent of Sa'id's involvement with operations is made no less necessary by the emergence of competing location services, several of which inevitably followed in the wake of Cinemobile's success. Universal Studios has three "UniVan" production coaches, although the studio and its independent producers also remain customers of Cinemobile Systems. TV producer Sidney Sheldon, best known for his *I Dream of Jeannie* series some years ago, has 12 mobile units operating under the name "Hollywood Mobile Studios." He undercuts Sa'id's prices approximately 25 percent.



In a rare quiet moment (top) 36-year-old Sa'id ponders the future of his booming Cinemobile Systems. His largest mobile "studio" to date (bottom) includes seating for a production crew or cast of 40.



Only time will determine whether his and other systems are as dependable and efficient as Cinemobile Systems, which has a six-year track record and a head start in experience. Sa'id himself doubts the present competitors will ever cut his lead. "Most of the units are still just trucks with equipment loaded into them," he shrugs. "There's so much more to this business than that. It's like bread. If you want good bread, you give the flour to the baker, not the shoemaker."

If one were to surmise that social life for the Sa'ids is somewhat subordinated to this intense preoccupation with Cinemobiles, the surmise would be generally correct.

Such recreation time as he does have is generally devoted to technical books, taped recordings of informational broadcasts and interviews having to do with business administration. He keeps cassettes in his car at all times, plays them on the car's tape system while driving to locations or negotiating the Los Angeles freeways. "I am immodest enough to say that I am already well informed on the techniques of shooting pictures," Sa'id explains. Even the odd cocktail and dinner party which Fouad and Henny give periodically is usually attended by directors, assistant directors, cameramen and production managers.

Despite the considerable success he already has attained, Sa'id has no plans either for retiring or for returning to Egypt to live. To the contrary he is planning to expand his ventures in co-production, in which he occasionally participates in the financing and producing of movies, contributing Cinemobile facilities plus crew in return for a share of the picture's profits. (He would like eventually to co-produce in this manner with filmmakers in the Arab nations,

where he thinks co-production with nations outside the Middle East would be mutually productive.) But most of all he is looking forward to introducing still more startling innovations to the movie business. On the drawing boards are plans for flying Cinemobiles—"Cinecopters" and "Cinesaucers"—and for a "mother ship" Cinemobile from which lesser mobile units can be dispatched to sub-locations from one central location site.

In perhaps the most far-out fantasy of all, Sa'id is also weighing the possibility of building a new kind of in-shooting studio for scenes not suitable for locations. This will be a system of computer-controlled sound stages designed to rise vertically, one atop the other, instead of being scattered out horizontally over hundreds of acres as they are at existing studio lots. Programmed properly—to revolve, rise and accept deliveries by elevator—such stages could effect fantastic savings in time and motion.

Although projects such as these would themselves seem to be props for a space-age scenario, Sa'id says they conceivably could all be in use as early as two years hence. And then what? Sa'id has no doubts on this point. "The Hollywood studios as we know them will go out of business, close their doors and sell off the rest of their real estate," he says, matter-of-factly.

Any studio that thinks he's kidding, he might have added, had better stop wasting its time.

Bart Sheridan is a former Managing Editor of Good Housekeeping and associate editor of Life, has written for the Washington Post and Los Angeles Times, and spent six years with the Selznick and RKO studios in Hollywood. He now lives in Southern California where he writes for the physicians' magazine Medical Economics.

To help oil keep its cool... ANOTHER KIND OF WHITEWASH JOB

BY BRAINERD S. BATES / PHOTOGRAPH BY S. M. AMIN

Eastern Saudi Arabia is not Hannibal, Missouri by a long shot, but until just recently Tom Sawyer would have felt right at home there. He would have reveled at the sight of hundreds of workers applying whitewash with brushes to a surface which continued out to the edge of the horizon.

Running over Aramco's widespread area of operations in Eastern Saudi Arabia are more than 1,500 miles of pipelines, ranging from 10 to 42 inches in diameter, which transport crude oil from source to delivery points. The oil inside the pipelines gets so warm in that part of the world during the lengthy hot-weather season that it tends to foam. Foam in oil not only occupies unwanted space inside a pipeline but has a deleterious effect when the crude is stored in huge, floating-roof tanks. Oilmen long ago discovered that the heat problem can be minimized by covering pipelines with whitewash that deflects some of the heat from the scorching sunlight.

Application of that whitewash had always been carried out by the traditional, immensely time-consuming hand method. To cover one 30-mile length of 42-inch pipeline running from Khursaniyah to Ras Tanura, for instance, took 158 men about three months. A veteran machinist named Larry Norton began wondering why this essential chore could not be carried out by mechanical means. After pondering the possibility for a while and consulting with Equipment Services Superintendent Ahmed Humaid, he went quietly to work.

The result of Norton's tinkering and experimentation is a contrivance in the Rube Goldberg tradition which

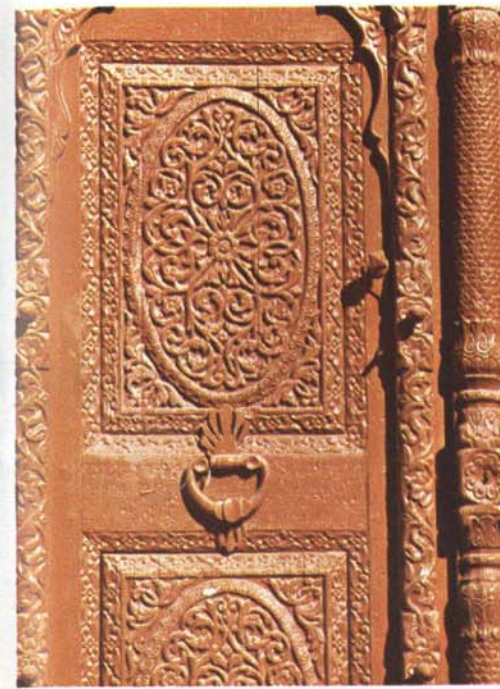
he has dubbed a "spider sprayer." It consists of a metal frame bent into the shape of an arc to conform to the contour of the pipe itself. The frame rides on top of the pipe on small rubber-tired wheels in the manner of a railroad handcar. A sideboom operating alongside the pipeline at about the speed a man can walk supports the weight of the spider sprayer and provides its means of movement above the top of the pipe.

Over the rear component of the frame Norton welded a small pipe to which are attached at intervals five ordinary lawn sprinklers of a type available in the local market for about 80 cents. Whitewash is pumped through a hose to the sprinklers, which spray every area of the pipeline needing covering. As the sideboom crawls along beside the pipeline it tows a small trailer carrying a supply of whitewash in a 600-gallon tank. An agitating mechanism keeps the whitewash in necessary suspension until it is sprayed on.

The main challenge has been finding some means of providing sufficient amounts of whitewash to keep up with the speed of the machine putting it on. But when that problem is licked Norton figures that the same 30-mile stretch of KRT line which has been requiring so many man-hours and time to cover can be whitewashed by two men in about two weeks. Putting it another way, a smoothly functioning spider-sprayer has the potential of saving 99 percent in manpower and cutting the time required to accomplish its objective by 83 percent.

Brainerd S. Bates is a regular contributor to Aramco World Magazine.





Saudi Arabia's chief Red Sea port has a distinctive
—and disappearing—architectural style...

Jiddah's Balconies: “Splendid, Bright”

BY HARRY ALTER/PHOTOGRAPHED BY KHALIL ABOU EL-NASR

Like London with its row houses and New York with its brownstones, Jiddah, Saudi Arabia's chief Red Sea port, has a distinctive architectural style of its own: lofty town houses heavy with ornate, semi-enclosed wooden balconies.

In some sections of the old town, often not far from new concrete office blocks or high-rise apartments, crowded clusters of these multi-storied dwellings are still standing. Built of coral blocks quarried from the nearby shore, they are covered with latticed balconies and heavily carved wooden doors and windows. The finest structures, once occupied by Jiddah's great mercantile establishments, are located in the heart of what was formerly the old walled city, near the principal market place or *sug*.

Actually, few of the picturesque town houses now left are more than 100 years old for, as the famous Swiss traveler John Lewis Burckhardt commented after a visit to the city early in the 19th century, “No buildings of ancient date are observed in Djidda, the madrepore (coralline rock) being of such a nature that it rapidly decays when exposed to the rain and moist atmosphere prevalent here.” Coastal Jiddah's summertime humidity is extremely high; with age, poor foundations and salty soil also weakened the tall structures.

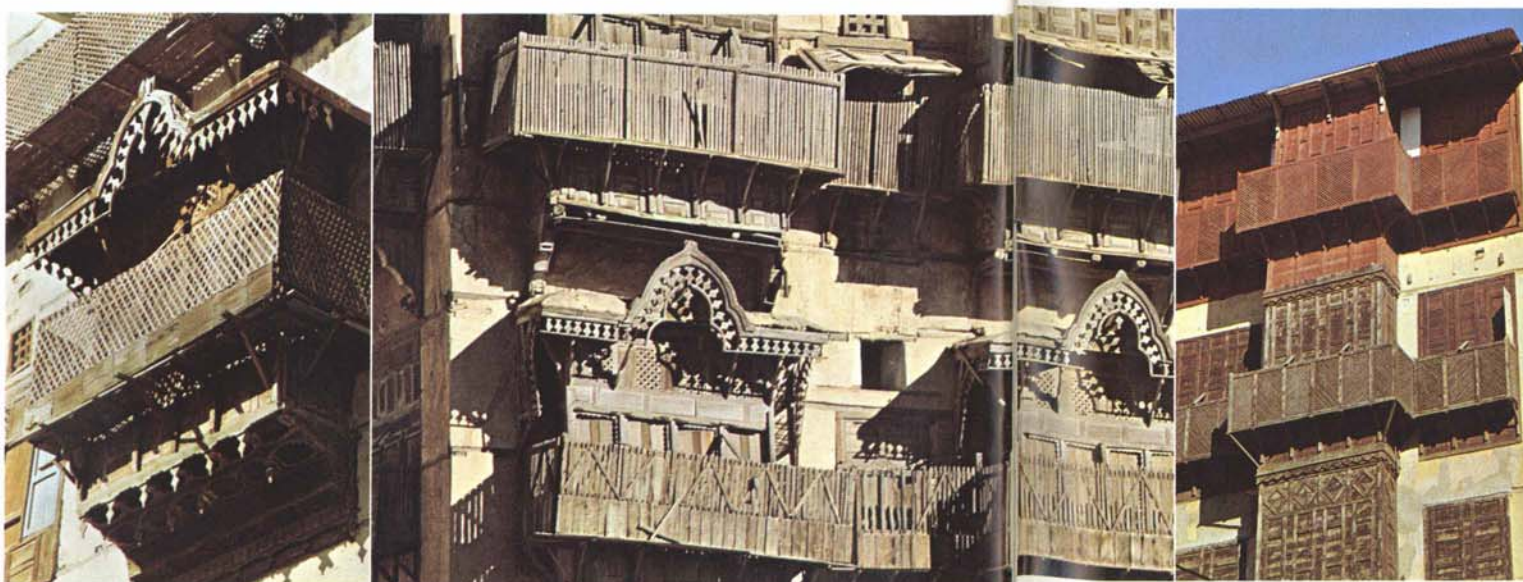
But the architectural style, if not the buildings themselves *is* old. Some local historians believe it to be of Persian origin and, if nomenclature is any guide, this may be the case. The great bay windows or oriel, for example, are called *rawashin*, a Persian word meaning splendid and bright. Other authorities simply describe the style as “oriental,” and note that similar latticed balconies are known elsewhere in the Middle East as *mashrabiyyaat*. In fact, given the city's long history as a commercial center and pilgrim port, Jiddah's architecture is most likely a composite of many foreign influences.

Jiddah is known for its mixed population, and the city's carpenters are no exception. From early times, Muslim craftsmen who came as pilgrims from the far corners of Africa and Asia often stayed on to practice their trade in Mecca—and nearby Jiddah, the Holy City's gateway. Shaykh Ahmad ‘Ali ‘Atiyya, now over 70 but still recognized as master of the city's carpenters' guild, says he first learned woodworking from an Iraqi craftsman who had settled in Mecca. Later Shaykh Ahmad taught apprentices of his own, and he still delights in showing visitors samples of the classic abstract Islamic designs he once carved so masterfully; some of the finest woodwork still to be seen in

Jiddah is the product of his hand.

Most of Jiddah's balconies are built of an East Indian redwood, much prized for its resistance to insects and humidity. Though it is difficult to work, carpenters favored this tough material because, in most cases, their handiwork had to brave the elements without benefit of varnish or paint.

The *rawashin* (bay windows) are the most striking feature on the façade of a typical Jiddah town house. Built on corbels or timbers projecting from the walls, these gingerbread structures traditionally varied in quality and number according to the builder's means. Their intricate panels, cornices, eaves and shutters gave maximum scope to the woodworker's art. But fine craftsmanship found expression in other features as well, features such as casements (*taqaat*), which, though not protruding from the wall, often displayed equally fine work. Also latticework balustrades were sometimes used along the edges of terraces or roofs (*sutuh*), in place of more common, open-faced brick, to exclude idle stares from neighboring houses but not cool breezes from the sea. Perhaps the most common features were small balconies with lattice screens (locally known as *shish*), designed to permit the occupants to see without being seen. Simple and easy to build, these balconies were favored for poorer houses, or even the side walls of finer homes, for the imported wood and the many hours of



painstaking labor required to construct a true *rawshan* did not come cheap. These were the principal elements of the Jiddah town house façade and usually both the interior plan of the house and esthetic considerations dictated a symmetrical arrangement.

To assume, as foreign visitors sometimes do, that the closed balconies were for the exclusive use of the "harem," is an oversimplification. The *rawashin* often served as extensions of the family living room and might be used to entertain close friends. Moreover, the window seats were usually fitted with comfortable pillows and often even doubled as beds because the typical old town house had no rooms used solely for sleeping, and the semi-enclosed balcony was often the coolest spot in the house. Thus the ornate, latticed *rawashin* served at least three functions, providing privacy while also enhancing the appearance of the house and especially its ventilation.

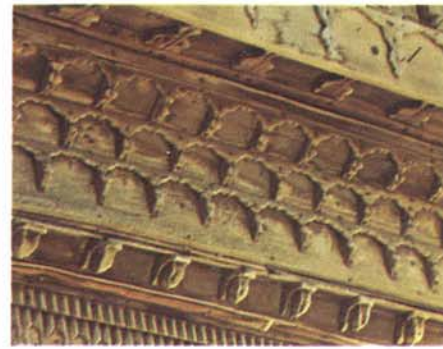
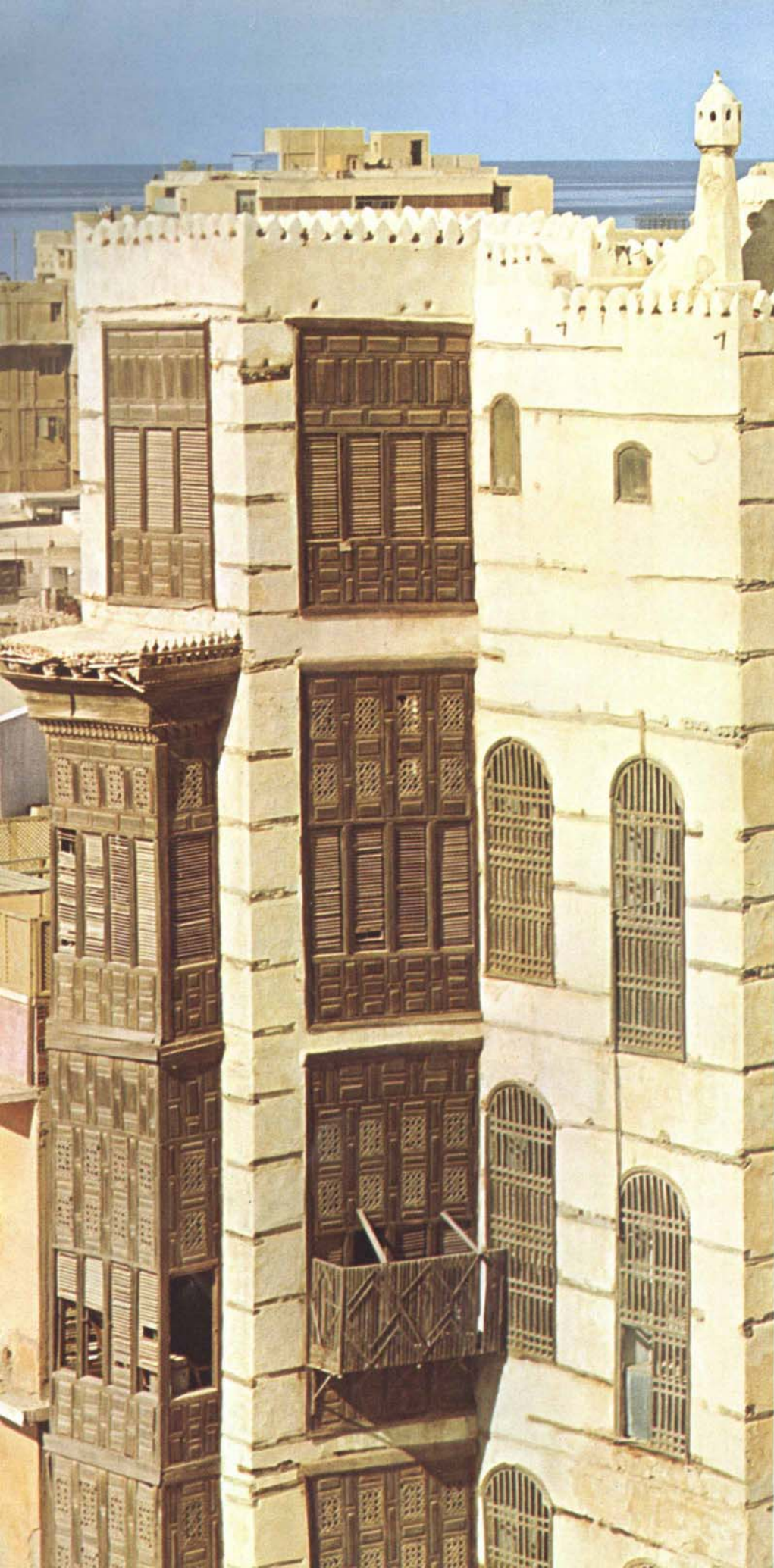
Nevertheless the balconies were not without romantic associations. Sometimes they figured in popular love songs, such as the following, once frequently sung by masons, carpenters, and cameleers:

*Greetings, O you seated in the latticed balcony.
And exalted high above all other people.*

*Arise and don the tiara and bridal gown,
For you are over all other women ruling.*

The widespread use of modern reinforced concrete building techniques following Saudi Arabia's post-World-War-II economic growth probably began the decline of the stately old town house, and its demise was hastened by two machines which were also newcomers to the Red Sea scene. One was the air conditioner, now commonplace in Jiddah, even, for one room at least, in lower-middle-class homes. The second was the automobile. Jiddah demolished its old, confining city walls some 25 years ago as the first step of what has now become an almost frantic expansion into the new suburbs which stretch far out along the Mecca and Medina roads. But even within the old city there was no place for wheeled vehicles in the narrow alleyways which threaded like cool canyons between the lofty old town houses. As each year passes, more of the coral block houses in the heart of the old town are being pulled down as bulldozers clear the right-of-ways for broad new boulevards.

Despite their dwindling number, however, these stately old houses are not without admirers. Some longtime residents, among them Jiddah's chief harbor pilot, and the famous scholar Muhammad



Nasif, have taken pride in preserving and even modernizing their old homes. Other homes have now been converted into apartments where several families live together in a single house. A few serve as old folks' homes. But many of the finest examples, such as the famous Baghdadi house (the *Bait Baghdadi*, which once served as the office and home of H. St. J.B. Philby, and later as Aramco's first office in Jiddah), have recently been demolished. All that remains of their passing are a few nostalgic photographs and a lively trade in the wood salvaged from their walls.

The city's new concrete villas and apartment buildings, though comfortable and well built, have little in common with the old town houses that once distinguished Jiddah from other cities in Saudi Arabia. The porous coral rock has given way to stucco cement and the hard East Indian redwood to softwoods imported from northern Europe. Though the city's carpenters are more numerous and active than ever, almost none has any knowledge of the old trade.

As for Shaykh Ahmad 'Ali 'Atiyya, the venerable old craftsman now lives in retirement with his son in a comfortable new home in one of the suburbs. The interior woodwork in his house is of varnished Swedish pine. Thus for some residents of Jiddah, at least, the demolition of these magnificent old buildings represents the passing not only of an architectural style but a way of life.

Harry Alter was born in the Middle East and attended school in India and Lebanon. A graduate of Yale and Johns Hopkins, he is now Aramco's representative to the Saudi Arabian Government in the capital city of Riyadh.

