

# interview

by **Pat Canfield**

photos by *Gigi Grasso, Erwin Escher,  
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Rabab Stud is an oasis of date palm trees, blooming cacti and sprawling stables set at the edge of the desert at the foot of Egypt's ancient Pyramids. Most importantly, it is the home to a wonderful group of magnificent Arabian horses. They live and thrive in Arab style stables surrounded by paddocks and show rings. This is the world that has been fashioned by Khaled Bin Laden. It is where he plans and dreams of his horses and gives them what he believes is a world very close to their own at the edge of the desert but with the atmosphere to bring their world alive.



*Kenz Noor  
(Imperial Madori x  
Naksh El Kouloub)  
with Khaled  
Bin Laden*

# Sh. Khaled Bin Laden

SH. KHALED BIN LADEN

### *Describe your image of the Arabian horse.*

**KBL:** When I think of an Arabian horse, I visualize a living, moving tableau. I see the living heritage of the Arab people. Sometimes I think of the brutal world of the desert with little water, little food and almost no shelter..And yet, this magnificent creature of God was able to survive and even flourish. One must look at them and wonder from where the horse has the spirit and the will to survive and also has the intelligence and the character to mean so much to the history of the Arab peoples..Every day, I give thanks to God that I am here to enjoy and love this gift from him.

Here in Egypt, we should look on the Arabian horse as the Fourth Pyramid.

If you study some of the temples in Luxor from the time of Ramses II, Seti I and Ramses III, you will see wonderful carvings of the King's chariots. The horses who are drawing them have the same graceful features and strength as those horses who are among us today.

The horse has such a long history. They started by helping to hunt and then they moved to the wars. We have used them for farming, manufacturing then they became part of the world of sports. Now we have them in shows all over the world.

It is important to remember that these incredible beings are not with us to be viewed as a statue..They are alive and must be allowed to be who they are and to thrive with all the dignity and support we can give them.

### *When you look at the Arabian horse, what do you see?*

**KBL:** When I look at the Arabian horse, I see an incredible animal with strength and at the same time a great refinement. I feel his presence and spirit. What I know is that this is a creature who has four legs who must run and know who he is. He is not someone who should be put in a cage. We cannot sacrifice this freedom for the beauty..A dished face on a horse with weak legs and back will not survive. We must breed first for the body. Later we can bring in the beauty but not at the price of good legs and body.

### *Who have been the influential stallions in your program?. On the International scene?*

**KBL:** In the beginning, it was Bilal I (Morafic x Mona [Inshaas]) at Shams El Asil. To me, he was the complete horse; he had everything. To my thinking, he was one of the best Nazeer grandsons. I don't believe that he ever reproduced himself. I had his grand son, SEA Maddah out of SEA Mashallah who was the closest to Bilal.

Another early stallion for me was Ibn Adaweya. I loved him because his dam was Adaweya and I always believe that the mare gives 75% to the offspring. He is now twenty-seven years old and still has his strength and presence.

Now I have a number of younger stallions in my program. Each one has his own strengths which he passes on to his get. The very dramatic Kenz Noor (Imperial Madori x Naksh El Kouloob) is now showing and winning in America. Fortunately, I have some of his offspring that are very promising here on the farm. Bouznika (Imperial Mashaar x Mayyat) is one of the most beautiful black stallions I have ever seen and is siring very well here at Rabab. Ibn Basha (El Basha Saqr x Nawader) is another stallion crossing very well with my mares.

Internationally, for me Imperial Imdal has always been my dream. That is why I am so happy to have his line in GR Lahari and Mahala who are both by Al Lahab. The filly Mahala is winning championships throughout Europe and Lahari was just Jr. Champion colt at EAO. While speaking of the international horses, there is something that I have observed when the horses come to the desert from Europe; they become a different horse. I saw it especially with Bouznika. When he rode into the desert for the first time and breathed the air, he literally froze in place and filled his lungs with the air. Since he is here it is as though we stripped off the outer layers and have reached into the essence of his being. He has become much drier and aware of himself.

Some countries have the land which brings the best to the horse. There are other countries that do not allow the horse to thrive. It is so specialized that even in the same country, it is not all equal. We are lucky because the desert in Egypt is one of the places that allows the horse to thrive.

### *Who have been the influential mares in your program? On the International scene?*

**KBL:** In the beginning, I was quite interested in Adalat. She had the most wonderful head. I have her granddaughter, Ya Halla Kheir, on the farm so I am able to have a bit of that incredible mare in my program.

But for me, the most special mare will always be Kout El Kouloob (Ikhnaton x Ghadir). I bought her at eight months against the advice of everyone I knew. To my eye, she is what I mean when I think of an Egyptian mare. In 1994, she won the Supreme Championship at the EAO with more 20's than anyone ever had. I bred

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her with Ibn Adaweya and they produced the outstanding mare, Afrah, who also won Supreme Championship a few years later. I still have Kout along with a granddaughter and great granddaughter. When you see them together, there is no mistaking the family.



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*Mahala (Al Lahab x Mahasin II)*

The same day that I bought Kout El Kouloub, I also bought the wonderful chestnut mare, Sharbat (Raki x Wasfeya). This was in partnership with Mme. El Barbary. Sharbat is like the Prima Ballerina of the troupe. She moves like no one else. Sharbat has produced many outstanding foals including SEA El Fateh, by Ibn Adaweya. He was Jr. Champion colt at the age of eight months. Internationally, there are many mares who are outstanding. I have always believed that the mares contribute more to the foal than the stallion and so it is important to use them well.

***Are there certain strains which you prefer and why?***

***KBL:*** There is something that is important in every horse. The strain is only a part of the total horse. However, I often lean toward the Obeyan strain. When they run, you can see the wind. It is the same way that you can sit with a certain tribe because you are comfortable with them. You don't have to like all of them but you really like to sit with them and hopefully there will be one that is really special to you. Always, I look at the individual first. The strain comes much later.

***Are there specific bloodlines you are stressing in your program and why?***

***KBL:*** Again, I always look at the individual horse. If there is something that catches my interest then I will investigate the pedigree. So often you can have a horse with an outstanding pedigree and the individual horse is

quite ordinary. The bloodlines can never guarantee the quality of the horse. It is only an indication.

I always look to the dam and the grand dam when I do look at a pedigree. I must know who they are and what they have produced. This tells me what is possible in the horse I am looking at. One of the early lines that was always of great interest to me was Bint Yousreia (Nazeer x Yousreia). That line always shows me something special.

***You have supported the EAO since the beginning of your program. How do you see their role regarding the private farms?***

***KBL:*** The role of the EAO is to protect and preserve the Arabian horse. They have the concentrated blood that has formed the Arabian throughout the world. If we lose the essence of it, it will be lost forever. It cannot come back. At the same time, the EAO must do everything to help the private farms. We are the ones trying to build the image of Egypt throughout the world. As part of the government, they must ease the difficulties of the bureaucracy. The procedures are making it impossible for the private farms to do our job which is to preserve and improve the Arabian horse. In order to compete on the world stage, we must be at a level with the other countries. We must be able to bring in the trainers, the food and the medicines to help with this.

Right now it takes at least forty-eight hours to bring a horse through import procedures. We have to run from place to place instead of handling this with an efficient

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process. We pay many fees in many offices. It should be simplified so that we can limit the stress on the horses which need to come to the farms for their physical and emotional health. We are losing horses because the medicines are not being released even though they are all tested and approved. We face nothing but obstacles where we need help to move things along. Another one of the areas that must be addressed is the importation of frozen semen. This would be invaluable in helping us to improve the breed by bring back some of the blood that left Egypt and has been preserved in other countries.

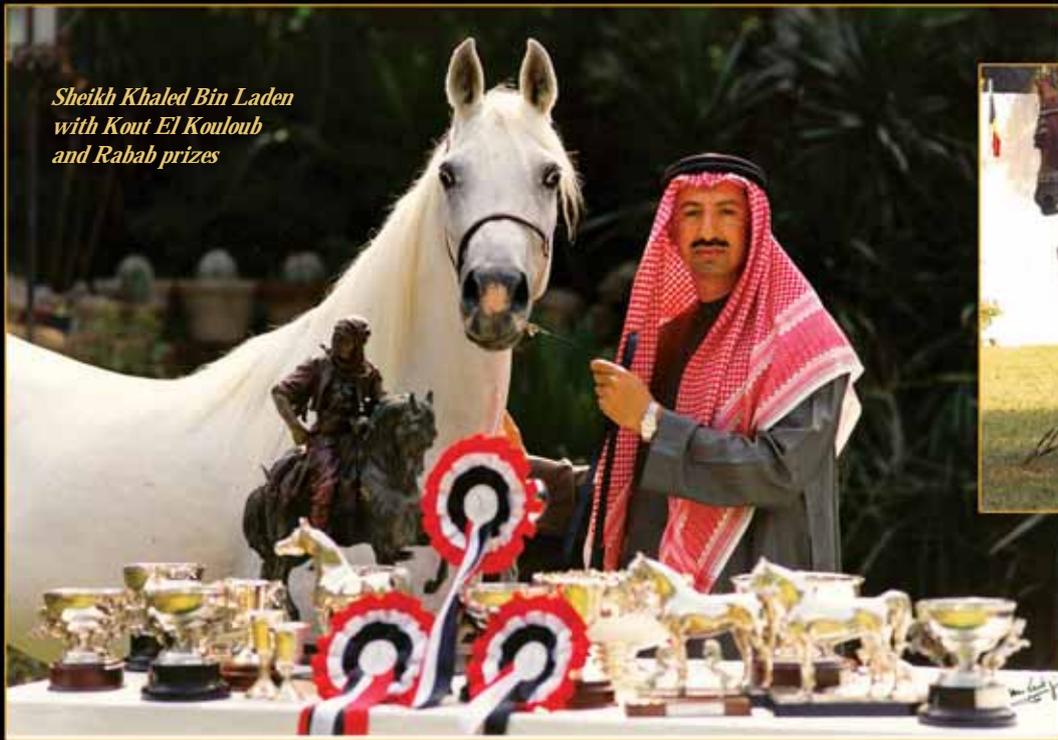
There is always the possibility that the stallion may not live. If we have the frozen semen here, we will not lose that gene pool. We must stop giving the advantage to the other countries that accept changes. I am asking this as



*Romeo (Amaar Al Rayyan  
x Imperial Maysama)*

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*Sheikh Khaled Bin Laden  
with Kout El Kouloub  
and Rabab prizes*



*Romman with  
Salem Bin Laden*

someone who is already winning abroad. I should not have to fight here as well as overseas to compete and win. The EAO must realize that the private farms are a source of revenue and prestige for the country. They must step into the world and do whatever they can to help us continue with the legacy of the Egyptian horse.

***How has your breeding program changed since your early days?***

***KBL:*** In the earlier days of my breeding program, I concentrated on improving the legs and the bodies. To me, you must have the foundation of the horse before you can build anything on it. This is just common sense since the horse must have a correct conformation before it can have anything else.

First I must have the proper foundation and then I can start to add the trimmings. Now that I have the foundation, I have started to breed for a dishier head but not to the exclusion of the ability to breath properly. Also, part of my program is to breed a group of my horses to achieve a line of beautiful blacks but all with very good conformation and movement.

To me, breeding horses is like growing palm trees. You do not plant a tree for today. It is for the future. I believe it is the same with the horse. It is a legacy that you build for your family and for people to enjoy in the future. The horse has meant so much to me that I want to

pass the joy of knowing the Arabian horse on to coming generations.

***What is the impact of the enormous expansion of Arabian breeders in Egypt?***

***KBL:*** I have been breeding for over twenty-five years. It is so long that I was number 15 in the original listings. Now we have over two hundred and fifty farms under the EAO. It is because of the interest of all these new people that the industry has advanced at this amazing rate. These breeders have created an interest in the Arabian horse through all the promotion and shows. There is much more awareness not only here in Egypt but we are also trying to become a force again in the world market.

The Americans and the Europeans did a lot to polish the rough diamond which was the Arabian horse. Now we have the chance to do even more polishing and refining. It is our obligation to our horses.

To my thinking, a breeder is like the composer of a symphony. He takes something from the strings, the horns, and the percussion and blends it to make the music. Many can try to create something but only the great ones can craft a masterpiece that can touch your heart. This is what a great breeder must do also.

***What are your goals for the future of Rabab Stud?***

***KBL:*** To win the World Championship. □