Nayla Al Khaja

Nayla Al Khaja is the first female film Director/Producer in the United Arab Emirates. CEO of Nayla Al Khaja Films (previously D-Seven Motion Pictures), she founded in 2007 The Scene Club, Dubai's first film club, which now counts over 22,000 registered members. Al Khaja wrote and directed several films, all presented and awarded in international film festivals. She is currently developing her first feature film, Animal.

In 2006, she was awarded the title of Best Emirati Filmmaker during the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF). She then shot three short films: Once (2009), Malal (2010) and The Neighbor (2013). Malal received the Muhr Emirati Award at DIFF 2010 and The Neighbor was awarded Best Emirati Film at the 2014 Abu Dhabi Film Festival. In 2016, she shot the pilot of her first feature film, Animal, nominated for the Muhr Emirati Awards at DIFF 2016. The short film received the Jury's Special Prize for Best Short Fiction at the Italian Movie Award in Pompeii, Italy, in September 2017.

Al Khaja's accolades include being ranked among the Top 50 most powerful personalities in Arab Cinema, and 100 most powerful Arabs under 40 by Arabian Business Magazine. She's also been awarded the Visionary of the Year Award at the Arabian Business Awards, and she is Brand Ambassador for Canon Middle East since 2011. She was recently declared Entrepreneur of the Year during the Gulf Business Awards 2017.

Her topics range from Women Empowerment in the Middle East to Women Entrepreneurs. She can also discuss how to combat fear and chase one's dreams, based on her extraordinary true life story being the first female filmmaker in the UAE. She has also tackled taboo topics, such as breaking down the Arab Woman stereotype and how to stand out in a male dominated industry.

Over the years, Al Khaja's dedication to develop the UAE's film industry and her advocacy for Women in Cinema, helped her reputation of trustworthy professional grow. Today, she keeps supporting and mentoring local talents, and is considered a reference in the Middle East.