

SALON DU CHEVAL D'EL JADIDA 2009

TIMELESS BEAUTY PRICELESS HERITAGE

FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS, MOROCCO'S TRADITIONS HAS ENRICHED THE LIVES OF ITS PEOPLE AND OTHERS, NOT WITH JUST THEIR LUSCIOUS FOOD AND FASCINATING HISTORY, BUT WITH PRESERVED RICH CULTURE, AUTHENTIC EQUESTRIAN PRIDE, AND HORSES THAT MAY NOT BE PRETTY TO THE EYES OF MANY, BUT A SYMBOL OF DELIGHT TO THE HEARTS OF OTHERS.

By Nada H. Abdelmoniem







▲ The Spanish Riding School performing to visitors of the exhibition ▲ Jean Francois Pignon

Initiated in 2008, Salon du Cheval d'El Jadida is hosted under the Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI and his positive presence and support to the equestrian industry, and organised by the Association of Salon du Cheval, whose president is HRH Prince Moulay Abdellah Alaoui. Under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture, the second 2009 successful edition of the event took place on October 21st 100 kilometres away from the capital Casablanca in a small city named El Jadida. El Jadida, an agricultural city thick with beautiful forests and on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, hosted visitors at Sofitel Golf Royale, a popular resort that offers the most inviting and wondrous beds and warm staff hospitality to exhibition visitors and European golfers. The ride to the enormous venue would be a drive by forests on the left, and the beach on the right where horse lovers would go racing every morning. The city of El Jadida has become famous in the national equestrian tradition where more than 1,000 riders from different regions of the

Kingdom gather. Dedicated entirely to highlight the importance of the horse, the event displayed a holistic programme aimed at gathering and federating the equine industry as well as entertaining the public.

The exhibition was built over a vast area of nearly 25,000 square meters with areas designated for indoor competitions, race courses, Tbourida, pole of exhibitions, press area, and a food court. The Tbourida alone covered a spot of 9 hectares attracting the interest of more than 15,000 visitors who applauded the celebration of their national traditions. The exhibition strived to become a reference event for those who are passionate about the horse, and indeed, it did.

Further to the outdoor Tbourida show, Anglo Hispanic and Sidi Brini horse breeds were on display next to a first ever Barb, Anglo Arab and Pure Arabian horse show that took place indoors. Also indoors, 1 star show jumping competitions saw participations from international and

Olympic riders from Spain, France, Belgium, Portugal, Italy, and Morocco. Not to say the least, entertaining stunt shows got off including the most beautiful and composed performance by the Spanish Riding School (Ecole Royale Andalouse des Arts Equestres de Jerez de la Frontera) led by the Spanish silver Olympic medallist Rafael Soto. Performances illustrating the Doma Vaquera, Jean Francois Pignon, the Cavaleric Pieric, traditional Hungarian performances, Laurent Jahan and the Moroccan Yassini Equestrian Farm show, also took place.

The presence of 50 private Moroccan exhibitors, 10 institutional exhibitors and 12 international exhibitors kept some crowds inside while many others were preoccupied with show jumping competitions. The exhibit stand of the Qatari Racing Federation, constructed as a mammoth horseshoe won the visitor's attention more than any other stand, and the indoor loud sounds of air-whipping demonstrations done by members of the Hungarian army, drew crowds in further.

▼ A bow to the audience by the Cavaleric Pieric

▼ Traditional Hungarian performance



THE TBOURIDA OF MOROCCO (FANTASIA):

The Tbourida represents the oldest equestrian culture in Morocco; it is a perfect example of their preserved horse traditions.

Riders wearing traditional Moroccan attire and mounting Barb Horses charge along a straight path at the same speed to form a 1-line race. At the end of the race (about 200 meters from the start line), all riders fire their gunpowder rifles in celebration of victory. This old-time and present performance is inspired from historical wartime attacks of Berber and desert knights against the French colonisation. French trenches used to be under ground, leading Moroccan knights to fire their rifles downwards, only after independence, shots are fired upwards in remembrance of victory. The difficulty of the performance is synchronisation during horse acceleration, especially during firing, as only one single united shot should be heard. Fantasia horses are well bred and well groomed Barb stallions whose bodies are complete muscle; no ordinary workhorse can participate in the Fantasia.



Today, the Fantasia is a celebrated cultural art as well as a form of martial art. Each region in Morocco has one or several Fantasia groups/regions called 'Jahawia', totalling thousands of horse riders nationwide. Performances are usually demonstrated during local seasonal, cultural or religious festivals. During the exhibition, it was performed daily throughout the 6-day event for both tourists and the thousands of visitors.

THE BARB HORSE OF MOROCCO:

Barb horses are a breed of North African countries and Morocco in specific - and this year's exhibition witnessed the crowning of the Barb horse by organising its first national show. Barb horses are part of Moroccan heritage and environment. It is smart, balanced, strong, and a flexible breed that can be used for all kinds of equestrian competitions. They are big in size, however they can endure the heavy weight of Moroccan saddles. They can be compared to Polo horses; they are very flexible when starting, and quite agile when racing. Today, the Barb horses are an internationally accredited breed.

ECOLE ROYALE ANDALOUSE DES ARTS EQUESTRES DE JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA:

For the first time in Morocco, Olympic medallist Rafael Soto led an extraordinary performance to astounding music on classical dressage at this year's event. Tickets were on sale and the indoor arena that held more than 6,000 spectators roared with applause at the splendour of the performance.

Soto is the director of the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art in Jerez, Spain. He has been a rider on the Spanish Olympic Team since 1996, which was placed 5th in the 2000 Sydney Olympics - and 7th in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. He won a 5th place individual award in the 2001 Varden European Championships. Riding 'Invasor', he helped the Spanish team come in 4th place during the 1999 European Equestrian Games.



▲ Tbourida horsemen lining up for a race

▼ Tbourida horsemen firing their rifles - only 1 single united shot is heard



▼ Rafael Soto led the Spanish Riding School in a spectacular performance



SHOW JUMPING:

For the first time, show jumping competitions kicked off during the exhibition with participations from 30 Moroccan riders and more from Europe. At a short notice, Marcel Rozier was invited by the President of the event HRH Prince Moulay Abdellah Alaoui to organise the competitions. International course designer Serge Houtmann designed courses of 1.40 and 1.45m for riders to compete for total prize money of 98,000 Euros. In the presence of HRH Princess Lalla Amina Alaoui, President of the Moroccan Equestrian Federation, HRH Princess Aisha Alaoui, and the Minister of Agriculture and Fishing, 30 riders from Morocco alone competed along side European Olympic medallists. For HRH Prince Moulay Hassan Trophy, wins went to France's Philippe Rozier at 1st place, Portugal's Luis Sabino at 2nd, and Herve Godignon, also from France, at 3rd place. For HRH King Mohamed the Sixth Trophy, wins went to Herve Godignon coming in 1st place, Philippe Rozier at 2nd, and Morocco's Ahmed Derghal at 3rd place.

With the presence of institutions such as the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Horse, both on a regional and national scale, the event represented an excellent platform for a high-level exchange of views. The international hall with stands from Hungary and France amongst others, and the regional hall highlighted developments throughout Morocco and its artisans in preserving Moroccan culture. **HT**

MIDDLE: Philippe Rozeier, Show Jumping Grand Prix winner

BOTTOM RIGHT: The beauty of the Arabian horse show attracted the crowds by the thousands

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