The following documentary covers the rise of singer/song writer Ahmed Safi in the Egyptian underground music scene, as well as the obstacles that have faced him over the years. It is simply a piece about a man who makes his life choices based on the feeling of fulfillment they give him, rather than how much he will make out of them.

SAFI: “I’ll be the world renowned artist, Ahmed Safi, now in…whatever. Playing hits from his debut album. Music to me is therapy. Music to me is a message. Music is something that I use in order to bridge gaps between people. The point of life is for people to be connected with each other one way or another, and music is one hell of a connector.” (:01)

NATSOUND of Safi’s band rehearsing

From the very first year of his life, Ahmed Safi was attracted to music in unbelievable ways. His mother describes him at the age of nine months:

MOTHER: “He knew the tunes, especially for Faris, it was the first song 'ya shok ya shok, ya ya ya ya'. It was amazing. No body believed that a baby, 9 months, could sing it.” (:40)

MUSIC: “Laqad Same't”

MOTHER: “I thought it was something that will pass away, but it didn't” (1:05)

From there, his life with music only developed more and more over the years. His first performance was in a third grade recital, and since that point he was inspired to make music. At the age of 12 however, tragedy struck, and his father passed away.

MUSIC: "Ah ya Nakheel"

MOTHER: “It was a shock when his father died, because he was the only son beside him. We were in a visit to Kwait, just a visit, all of a sudden they say your father will pass away.” (1:39)
SAFI: “His death brought out the song writer in me, because initially after he passed away, I started writing stuff, started scribbling stuff, mostly horrible stuff, really really sad sad stuff. And I'm glad I survived that emo three days grace phase. But yeah, through the issues that arise in life, and all the complications, and all the problems, and all the disasters, and the drama, all that just moles you as a person, and it moulded me as a song writer.” (2:08)

That moulding was mostly self inflicted. His family always supported his talent, and gave him musical influences considering both his older brothers played music, but he was a self taught musician through and through.

SAFI: “I tried to ask my brothers to teach me how to play the guitar. They were like screw it, we're not teaching you, you teach yourself. Which in the end was... it was really useful, because now I'm a self taught guitarist, I'm a self taught trumpetist, I'm a self taught keyboardist, I'm a self taught ney player. I'm a self taught a lot of things. It helped me grow my passion for music." (3:11)

And grow it did. After high school, Safi performed with a jazz funk band, as well as joined an awareness band called 'Zabaleen'. He was also writing several parody songs for himself. These would later turn into the well known musical comedy act 'High on Body Fat', which performed all around the country and region. The act was created when Safi met with his friend and stand up comedian Marwan Imam, and they decided to start writing musical comedy together. Their chemistry was strong, and Marwan describes during their first writing session:

NATSound/MUSIC: “Bad Betengan”

MARWAN: “We were laughing so hard while writing it, and I made a comment: 'Oh my god, we must be high' and Safi looks at me and he's like, 'yeah, we're high on body fat'. And that joke kind of stuck with us that...” (4:05)

A series of open mic events then followed, where the duo would have a new song ready for every performance.

This was followed by a series of performances in night clubs and cultural venues, where their audiences got to listen to the very familiar melodies of Britney Spears' hit song 'Hit Me Baby One More Time' and Lady Gaga's 'Bad Romance', with a lyrical twist that kept everyone laughing.

NATSound/MUSIC: “Bad Betengan”
The band was also invited to play in the Frankfurt museum for Egyptian history week, and in early 2012, they went on to participate in the popular tv show 'Arabs Got Talent', reaching the semi finals, which got them a huge fan base with new Facebook pages being created every day. However Safî tells us:

*Safi*: “Someday it just hit me, like, I don’t wan a be labelled as a comedian who can sing, but rather as a musician who is funny, and I wanted music to be the priority in my life” (5:16)

And this led Safî to begin working on a solo career. He did not abandon High on Body Fat, but he chose to dedicate more of his time on something new, where he could expand his musicianship, rather than stick with his already popular option. According his mother however, this is not unlike him.

*NATSOUND/MUSIC*: “Bad Betengan”

*MOTHER*: “He is not satisfied about anything, he wants more, he always wants more, and that will lead him to success” (5:45)

Success in his eyes is achieving something unique, not simply fame and money. Despite being offered the chance to sign for a record label after producing a demo for them, Safî prefers to leave that until later in his career.

*Safi*: “Soon, no. Eventually, yes. I would like to remain independent so I can have full creative force, and control of what I have. Because the problem with Egypt is, and the Middle East in general, is that there is no concept of producing, and there is no concept of an album. What artists produce is a CD with a bunch of songs, that tries to connect with a bunch of different people. You'll have the oriental stuff, you'll have the house, you'll have the latin, and they try to reach so many targets, that in the end they sound like no one, and they sound like everyone, and no one wants to listen to the entire CD. They just create singles. I don't want to create singles, I want to create a good solid album, where of course there will be some musical variations with in the album, but you can trace them together.” (6:03)

His album so far has six songs, mainly focusing on a fusion of jazz, and Middle Eastern music, with some funk influences, but a lot of the songs are simply about being happy.

*Safi*: “When I was a kid I thought I will be rock star one day, or I'll be a superstar one day, and that changed from I'll be a rockstar to I'll be a guitarist, to I'll be a musician, to I'll be a jazz artist, to I'll be a vocalist, to I'll be a lot of stuff, and until I started thinking about 'What if it's not a viable career, what if you don't make money, what if you…' all these questions that our parents force us to ask. But I think I've pulled through, and I want to do this as a career, I want to do this
for the rest of my life” (7:08)

MUSIC: "Ah Ya Nakheel"

This documentary was produced by Mostafa Elezaby.

Special thanks to Ahmed Safi, Ahmed's mother, and Marwan Imam for their interviews. All music was written and performed by Ahmed Safi, Marwan Imam, Noor Ayman, Ahmed Dahan, and Ismail Arafa.