



Press Release

Arab filmmakers call to create concerted industry strategy and infrastructure to promote regional filmmaking

Film education must take priority to create homegrown industry professionals

Doha, Qatar; November 22, 2012: Filmmakers from the Gulf region and Iraq called for the creation of a concerted film industry development strategy and to strengthen infrastructure to promote regional filmmaking, at a discussion with the media at the fourth Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF), the annual cultural event of Doha Film Institute (DFI).

Attended by Bassam Al Thawadi, Bahraini film producer and director; Mohamed Al Daradji, Iraqi director; Khalid Mahmoud, Emirati filmmaker; Mohammed Hassan Ahmed, Emirati scriptwriter; and Abdulaziz Al Dorani, Qatari actor, the session was moderated by Saad Burshaid of Qatar Media Corporation.

The discussion principally focused on why Arab film production is yet to achieve full momentum with Al Thawadi pointing out that the relatively lower population in the Gulf region is one reason why the regional film industry is being limited in the number of productions. “When we cater to a narrow demographic, it is difficult to recover the costs, and that is why it is important to have governmental and private sector support to filmmaking as well as a creating a robust film infrastructure.”

He said that the lack of qualified technicians has been a challenge faced by the industry with Al Thawadi himself having to complete his earlier film post-production works in countries like Egypt, Greece and India, which in turn led to increased costs.

Khalid Mahmoud said that there is a clearly robust film movement happening in the region today, especially with filmmaking technology being simpler now, while Al Daradji said investing in film education and active governmental support can power the industry tremendously. He cited the example of Norway and Morocco, which had fledgling film industries in the 1980s, and through governmental funding now produce about 25 films a year.

Mohammed Hassan Ahmed said there is greater visibility for the works of Arab filmmakers now, citing the example of the film *Sea Shadow*, which he scripted, having gained theatrical release across the Gulf region. “People today are more aware of the work we do,” said the writer who left his government job to devote his energies fully into films. “In the last ten years, at least ten notable talents have been recognized from the Gulf region but that is not enough.”

Al Dorani said youngsters must seek out opportunities for partnering in the film industry, adding that strengthening film education and training will be of mutual interest – to the industry and the artists.

The participants were unanimous in their observation that investing in a strong film infrastructure and promoting film education are the two key pillars upon which the future of Arab film industry lies.

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About Doha Film Institute:

Doha Film Institute (DFI) is an independent cultural organisation established in 2010 to incorporate Qatar's film initiatives under one banner; organically supporting the growth of the local film community by enhancing industry knowledge, cultivating film appreciation and contributing to the development of sustainable creative industries in Qatar. DFI's year-round platforms include funding and production of local, regional and international films, educational programmes, film screenings, and the annual Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF).

With culture, community, education and entertainment at its foundation, DFI serves as an all-encompassing film hub in Doha, as well as a resource for the region and the rest of the world. DFI is committed to supporting Qatar's 2030 vision for the development of a knowledge-based economy. DFI has established a number of strategic cultural partnerships with leading local and international organisations including Tribeca Enterprises, World Cinema Foundation, Maisha Film Lab, Katara Cultural Village and Giffoni Film Festival.

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