

Press Release

## Overcome clichés to craft a great short film and know your audience, industry experts tell emerging filmmakers at Qumra

- *Industry programme for nurturing regional talent features in-depth group tutorials on short film industry, legal aspects of co-production and international sales & marketing*
  - *Qumra Masters and industry experts share insights at Working Breakfasts and one-on-one tutorials*

**Doha, Qatar – 8 March, 2015:** Emerging filmmakers in Qatar and the wider Middle East and North Africa region were offered invaluable opportunities to network with leading film industry professionals at special group and one-on-one tutorials at Qumra, the new event by the Doha Film Institute.

Underlining the industry focus of Qumra to nurture the new generation of filmmakers, a series of working breakfast meetings, one-on-one tutorials, group discussions and work-in-progress screenings were led by seasoned film professionals. In all, 29 projects at various stages of production have been selected to benefit from the bespoke mentorship labs and business meetings.

In a group tutorial on the short film industry, Sébastien Aubert, Managing Director of Ad Astra Films, urged the participants to break free of clichés to create compelling short films. Drawing on his experience of watching hundreds of short films every year, he said that even when narrating local stories, the shorts must have an international idiom, so that audiences anywhere can relate to them.

“Do not copy-paste personal stories,” he said, and “be clear about the context of the story, where it is set and who the protagonists are.” Aubert said good shorts will have a strong sense of conflict, and crafting that is where the creativity of the filmmaker shines through.

Aubert pointed out that “a scene that comes to your mind obviously enough, is a cliché. Research your story, put yourself in the shoes of all the characters, avoid typical good versus bad stories, and break clichés by taking the opposite viewpoint.”

He described how short films can break through the clutter by focusing on the right genre, through professional casting, seeking the help of experts in editing and making screen tests. He also emphasized how short and simple dialogue construction and the effective use of music can lift the game.

Highlighting the market trends in sales and marketing, Frédéric Corvez, President and Founder, Urban Distribution International, said it was extremely important to identify where the filmmaker intends to take the film – be it film festivals or to distributors for a minimum guarantee – in shaping its marketability.

He provided in-depth insights into the strengths and weaknesses of major film festivals, and how it has become extremely difficult for first-time filmmakers to make the cut at the prestigious ones. He also warned of how the perception of different film festivals – niche or popular, as the case maybe – puts a tag on the film, that could potentially impact its sales.

Corvez said the magic of filmmaking is that it is totally unpredictable. A film shot on a shoe-string budget coming with little expectations could turn out to be the biggest find of the season. He also explained the considerations to be made while signing up a sales agent including the drawing of contracts that should not hinder the filmmakers' long-term prospects.

The first series of working breakfast meetings focused on how to get films by the emerging filmmakers into the international film festival circuit. Massoud Amralla Al Ali of the Dubai International Film Festival, discussed the festival and its Enjaaz funding initiative.

Remi Bonhomme from the Cannes Critics Week and Christophe Leparc from the Cannes Directors Fortnight, elaborated on the launch of films in the Sidebar and Directors' Fortnight sections at Cannes. Cameron Bailey from the Toronto International Film Festival, and Bianca Taal from the International Film Festival, Rotterdam, provided insights on the two global events, while Karel Och presented details of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival.

Ryan Kampe from Visit Films shared insights on selling international author-driven films out of the US, and Gamila Yistra of Binger Filmlab, spoke to the new generation of filmmakers on developing their films at Binger. Dora Bouchoucha of Carthage Film Festival; Adriek van Nieuwenhuyzen and Vanja Kaludjeric from CPH DOX also held working breakfast sessions providing insights on taking films by emerging talent to the next level.

Participants with projects in development stage also had the opportunity to engage in individual consultation sessions with Qumra Master Danis Tanovic, along with one-on-one consultations with script and development experts.

**-ENDS-**

**About Qumra:**

Qumra is an initiative that seeks to provide mentorship, nurturing and hands-on development for filmmakers from Qatar and around the world, alongside a series of screenings for Doha audiences featuring films by international masters and recipients of support from the Institute.

*\* The Arabic term 'qumra' is popularly said to be the origin of the word 'camera', and to have been used by the scientist, astronomer and mathematician Alhazen (Ibn al-Haytham, 965-c.1040 CE), whose work in optics laid out the principles of the camera obscura.*



**About Doha Film Institute:**

Doha Film Institute is an independent, not-for-profit cultural organisation. It supports the growth of the local film community through cultivating film appreciation, enhancing industry knowledge and contributing to the development of sustainable creative industries in Qatar. The Institute's platforms include funding and production of local, regional and international films; skills-sharing and mentorship programmes; film screenings; the Ajyal Youth Film Festival; and Qumra. With culture, community, learning and entertainment at its foundation, the Institute is committed to supporting Qatar's 2030 vision for the development of a knowledge-based economy.

Doha Film Institute

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