



Press Release

Doha Film Institute Unveils First Titles for Third Edition of the Ajjal Youth Film Festival

**Middle East Premiere of Hany Abu-Assad's *The Idol* to open the festival
Films by Kawase, Moretti, Panahi and Tanović confirmed
Mir-Jean Bou Chaaya's Debut Feature, *Very Big Shot*, to screen in competition**

Doha, Qatar; October 13, 2015: The third annual Ajjal Youth Film Festival, presented by the Doha Film Institute, will open on November 29 with the Middle East Premiere of *The Idol*, from Academy Award-nominated Palestinian filmmaker Hany Abu-Assad.

Raising the curtain on the Doha Film Institute's festival, which brings audiences of all ages together in cinema appreciation, *The Idol* tells the inspirational true story of Mohammad Assaf, an amateur singer from Gaza, who became a worldwide sensation after winning the live-singing competition Arab Idol in 2013. The film enjoyed a successful world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in September and is screening this week at the 59th BFI London Film Festival.

Other Middle East premieres announced today are this year's Berlin Film Festival Golden Bear-winner, *Jafar Panahi's Taxi*, in which the celebrated Iranian director himself drives a cab around Tehran, picking up passengers to great comedic and dramatic effect; and Cannes 'Un Certain Regard' opener *An*, by Japanese director Naomi Kawase, a gentle tale about a sad cook's professional relationship with an elderly woman who teaches him to commune with nature.

Other films announced today are *Tigers*, a hard-hitting look at the nefarious practices of multinational corporations in the developing world from Academy Award-winning Bosnian director Danis Tanović, and *Mia Madre*, a gentle drama about a film director's relationship with her ailing mother by Italian director Nanni Moretti.

Ajjal will mark the Qatar premiere for *Tigers*, whose director, Tanović, was one of five Masters at the inaugural edition of Qumra in March, the Doha Film Institute's newly inaugurated industry event for emerging filmmakers. *Mia Madre* will have its Gulf premiere at Ajjal, following its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival this year, where it won the Ecumenical Jury Prize.

Also joining the line up is *Very Big Shot*, from Lebanese first-time feature director and Doha Film Institute grantee Mir-Jean Bou Chaaya. *Very Big Shot*, a dark comedy that takes a sly look at organised crime and political corruption, premiered at TIFF and is screening in competition at the 59th BFI London Film Festival this week. Its screening at Ajjal will be the regional premiere of the film outside of its home territory, Lebanon.



Fatma Al Remaihi, CEO of Doha Film Institute, said: “Hany Abu-Assad’s *The Idol*, the powerful true story of a young boy overcoming staggering odds to realise his dream, is a wonderful opening for this year’s edition of the Ajyal Youth Film Festival. As a co-financer of the film, the Doha Film Institute is delighted to bring home the story that originally touched the region, and indeed the world, in 2013. We are also honored to present Doha Film Institute grantee Mir-Jean Bou Chaaya’s outstanding debut feature *Very Big Shot*, a film that embodies our commitment to supporting emerging talent from the region.”

We believe this third edition of the Ajyal Youth Film Festival is set to be our strongest yet, as the Festival’s reputation continues to grow each year. The range of works from internationally renowned auteurs already confirmed will provide a truly memorable experience for our audiences and our young jurors, and we’re delighted to be bringing these films to Qatar.”

Ajyal, meaning ‘generations’ in Arabic, invites people of all ages to come together to discuss cinema through events that inspire creative interaction, opening up a fun, collaborative environment where young people can express themselves. Driven with the goal to inspire and create, Ajyal has been designed to empower the region’s youth and to inspire film enthusiasts of all ages in Qatar and the region.

The third annual Ajyal Youth Film Festival will take place from Nov 29 – Dec 6 at Katara Cultural Village Foundation. The programme consists of daily public screenings of local and international films; the popular ‘Made in Qatar’ section dedicated to showcasing home-grown talent from Qatar; family days; special events and exhibitions; the Sandbox interactive digital playground; school screenings; and Ajyal’s youth jury, where hundreds of young people between the ages of 8 and 21 will watch and discuss shorts and features and decide on the winning films.

The full line-up and schedule for the Ajyal Youth Film Festival 2015 will be announced in early November.

For more details, please visit www.dohafilminstitute.com

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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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