



Press Release

Doha Film Institute Announces Ajyal Youth Film Festival Competition Line-Up

Doha, Qatar; November 9, 2015: The Doha Film Institute has announced the competition line-up for the third edition of the Ajyal Youth Film Festival, comprising feature films from 20 countries and a series of short film programmes to be screened from November 29 to December 5 at Katara.

More than 500 young people from the ages of 8 to 21 who make up the Ajyal Competition Jury will watch and analyse a dynamic programme of films under three competitive sections – Mohaq, Hilal, and Bader – followed by discussions and events including panels, workshops and Q&A sessions with filmmakers.

Each of the three Ajyal Juries awards a Best Film prize to their favourite short and feature-length films, for a total of six awards. The directors of the winning films are awarded funding toward their next film, so jurors are empowered to support and promote future content that is relevant and important to them, in a proactive way.

More than 500 jurors are registered for the programme including 24 international jurors who will travel to Doha for the event from 12 countries including Australia, Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Italy, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Serbia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

Fatma Al Remaihi, Festival Director and CEO of the Doha Film Institute, said: “By providing young people with access to international cinema, filmmakers from around the world, and the space to discuss their ideas and develop critical thinking, Ajyal empowers the youngest members of our community and develops their understanding of the world around them.”

“We are very proud of this year’s programme and look forward to sharing this outstanding selection of films with our jurors in a few weeks time. Each section is carefully curated based on the themes and cinematic language we feel will resonate with each age group. Our competition films are also part of our public programme and I am certain that Doha’s film-lovers will find a wealth of choices to entertain, enlighten and inspire.”

Mohaq means ‘New Moon’ in Arabic, and these are Ajyal’s youngest jurors, aged 8 to 12. These jurors will watch one programme of short films and four feature-length films, marking the first year that competitive feature films are included in this category. They are: ***Celestial Camel*** (Russia) by Yuri Feting about a young shepherd living in the desolate Kalmyk Steppe, who sets off on an epic journey after his father is forced to sell the family’s beloved camel calf; ***The Greatest House in the World*** (Guatemala, Mexico) by Ana V. Bojórquez and Lucía Carreras - a film about the never-ending circle of



life told through the story of a young girl in the isolated highlands of Guatemala; **Paper Planes** (Australia) by Robert Connolly - a tale of friendship, creativity and the bonds of family which centers around an 11-year-old boy with an exceptional talent for creating paper airplanes; and **Phantom Boy** by Jean-Loup Felicioli, Alain Gagnol (France, Belgium) a heart-warming animated film about an 11-year-old boy whose illness allows him to have out-of-body experiences and mysterious powers.

Ajyal's jurors aged 13 to 17 are the Hilal jury – the term means 'Crescent Moon' in Arabic. Five feature films and a programme of shorts make up this jury's film selection. The feature films competing in this section are: **Lamb** (France, Ethiopia, Germany, Norway, Qatar) by Yared Zeleke, a beautifully crafted portrait of a young Ethiopian boy trying to find his way in the world; **Landfill Harmonic** (USA) by Brad Allgood and Graham Townsley, a documentary that tracks the astounding rise of a Paraguayan youth orchestra who live next to one of South America's largest landfills and make their instruments from recycled materials; **Mina Walking** (Canada, Afghanistan) by Yosef Baraki, a powerful tale of a 12-year-old girl in war-torn Afghanistan struggling to make ends meet for her family; **Scarecrow** (The Philippines) by Zig Madamba Dulay which explores the complicated relationship of social injustice and familial expectations through the story of a young mother in a rural town; and **Wolf Totem** (China, France) by Jean-Jacques Annaud. Set against the backdrop of the Chinese Cultural Revolution 1967, it is the story of a two young Chinese students who are sent on a research assignment with the nomadic herdsmen of Inner Mongolia and become fascinated by the wolves that roam the plains.

The most mature of Ajyal's juries, Bader (Arabic for 'Full Moon') jurors are aged 18 to 21 and will select their favourite films from five features and two programmes of short films. The feature films vying for top honours in this section are: **An** (Japan, France, Germany) by Naomi Kawase is a graceful drama about a lonely baker whose life is reinvigorated when he hires an elderly woman with a special culinary skill; **The Second Mother** (Brazil) by Anna Muylaert which is an exploration of the bond between mothers and their children told through the story of a housekeeper in Sao Paulo; **Taxi Tehran** (Iran) by Jafar Panahi in which the celebrated Iranian director places himself in the driver's seat of a cab, taking fares to their destinations in a wonderful portrait of contemporary Iran; **Very Big Shot** (Lebanon, Qatar), a bold and insightful dark comedy by Mir-Jean Bou Chaaya that skewers political corruption and the media circus that goes with it; and **Walls** (Spain) - a fascinating documentary by Pablo Iraburu and Migueltxo Molina that follows several subjects on both sides of three contemporary international borders, demonstrating that the people on each side of the barriers are not as different as they may believe.

In addition to the three competitive sections, the Festival's youngest audiences under the age of 8 years will also vote for their favourite film with the help of their parents who will determine the Parents' Choice Award in the Bariq programme. Bariq films are selected to satisfy the excitement and curiosity of young children and are suitable for the whole family. This year's programme features a delightful collection of eight short films and will also include a special outdoor cine-concert on the Katara esplanade by the Festival Tout-Petits Cinéma from Paris, with four films accompanied by live music by pianist Anthony Boulc'h and saxophonist Fanch Minous.



The third annual Ajyal Youth Film Festival will be held from Nov 29 – Dec 5 at Katara. 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; SONY Cinema Under the Stars; family weekend; the Doha Giffoni Youth Media Summit; special events and exhibitions; the Sandbox interactive digital playground; school screenings; and the Ajyal Competition, where hundreds of young jurors between the ages of 8 and 21 will watch and discuss shorts and features and decide on the winning films. Tickets go on sale on November 16. For more information visit www.ajyalfilm.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 the 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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