

Qumra is a powerful platform to build young talent and expand horizons of Arab cinema, say industry experts

Know your audience and build a personal narrative to make your films heard and seen, they tell delegates at second edition of Qumra in Doha

Doha, Qatar; March 5, 2016: With some 50,000 movies made every year across the world, how can Arab filmmakers find their footing in the international market? This was one of the key topics discussed at the second edition of Qumra, the annual industry event by the Doha Film Institute designed to nurture the development of emerging filmmakers.

Through a series of one-on-one meetings, consultations and tutorials, delegates at Qumra - the producers and directors associated with the 33 projects from 19 countries selected for the industry programme - are provided deep insights on how their films can find their voice in the global film market.

Welcoming the industry experts and delegates, Fatma Al Remailhi, CEO of the Doha Film Institute, said: "Qumra marks the beginning of new collaborations, new creative partnerships and new friendships. At its heart, the mission of this event is to support emerging filmmakers. The programme has been designed with the constant goal to create a supportive and productive space for projects by emerging filmmakers to be nurtured and to provide maximum opportunities for our filmmakers to benefit from the wisdom of the most experienced industry experts in the world."

Elia Suleiman, Artistic Advisor of the Doha Film Institute, said that Qumra is for the young filmmakers and to inspire them, especially at a time when fences and borders are being built all around, and new ones are springing everywhere in the world. "The imagination and poetry of our young filmmakers serve as a resistance to these borders. The fact that we are here at Qumra shows the confidence in our filmmakers to break these barriers".

Hanaa Issa, Deputy Director of Qumra, added: "In many ways, Qumra is the culmination of the work we have been doing at the Doha Film Institute over the past five years. It builds on the existing support we give to filmmakers through our education and development programmes, our funding programmes, and our screenings and film appreciation initiatives. Our first edition showed us that the format worked and provided meaningful results to all those who participated, and we are confident that the second edition will contribute to extending further support to our talents."

Qatari filmmaker Jassim Al Rumaihi, whose film ***The Palm Tree*** (Qatar, No Dialogue, 2015) screened in the New Voices in Cinema segment of Qumra, said the meetings at Qumra provide a credible platform to meet the experts and take movies to a wider audience.

His second project ***Amer: The Arabian Legend*** (Qatar; Arabic, English; 2016) is one of the projects chosen at Qumra. "*The Palm Tree* was made as a part of a documentary workshop in just over a week. With the film winning the Made in Qatar – Best Documentary Award at the Ajyal Youth Film Festival 2015 and now receiving good interest from film festivals and critics, I see Qumra as a great networking platform. It gives insights on how the global industry works. Such information is not easy to get for filmmakers in the Arab world."

Al Rumaihi says that while he already has a rough cut of his second project, he attends Qumra with an open mind. "I am open to change and I am keen to learn what the experts think so that I can make improve my work. I did my first film with no expectations. Now that it has been received well,

there is of course the pressure to be better. I think that is natural for any filmmaker. It is a positive force and Qumra helps in channelling my work in the right direction.”

Sharing insights on taking Arab films to new markets during a working breakfast session, Cameron Bailey, Artistic Director of the Toronto International Film Festival, said the key is to know the audience for the films and to push oneself out there and tell their story.

“Being an English-language driven market, it is important to be aware how you use English and how much of the content will be in the language. Having a trailer that grabs attention, a sales agent who can cut through the clutter and building a personal narrative around the filmmakers will help raise visibility.”

Bailey shared the story of a young Sudanese filmmaker who would narrate his personal story and be present at every industry event at Toronto film-fest thus building a personal narrative. “Push yourself out there and tell your story; North America is not an impenetrable market.”

Heidi Tao Yang, Industry Programmer, Funds & Deal Maker at Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival, pointed out the shifting trends in how documentaries are viewed today. “Research shows some 95 per cent of the people who watch documentaries do it at home. Getting a good publicist and actively engaging on social media are important.”

Matthew Takata, International Manager – Feature Film Programme at Sundance Institute, also highlighted the importance of understanding the audience, and in realising that they might be aware of the background that is depicted, adding Sundance is creating the space for diverse voices in cinema.

The role of film festivals in championing Arab films, making films visible in the media landscape of the Arab world and the nucleus of future Arab-German productions were among other areas discussed by the experts and delegates during the working breakfast sessions.

Kaleem Aftab, film journalist and film producer, said being available for interviews with media is important for filmmakers to be seen, and narrated how a rom-com made in Saudi Arabia went on to gain international media coverage. Wendy Mitchell, Film Programme Manager at British Council, and Contributing Editor of Screen International, said it is important to engage the media with pre-stories and news stories of the movie, where relevant. Egyptian film journalist Ahmed Shawky also shared insights into regional media and how filmmakers can benefit from the festival circuit to launch their films effectively and gain profile in print and online media.

In addition to the networking sessions, Qumra also features Master Classes by the five Qumra Masters – James Schamus, Joshua Oppenheimer, Naomi Kawase, Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Aleksandr Sokurov.

Qumra also offers the public the opportunity to attend screenings that are organised in two segments: New Voices in Cinema and Modern Masters Screening. All screenings take place at the Museum of Islamic Art Auditorium and tickets are now on sale at www.dohafilminstitute.com

-ends-

Notes to Editors

About Qumra

Directors and Producers attached to up to twenty-five projects in development or post-production will be invited to participate in the event. They will include a number of emerging filmmakers from Qatar, as well as

recipients of funding from the Institute's Grants Programme. The robust programme will feature industry meetings designed to assist with propelling projects to their next stages of development, including master classes, work-in-progress screenings, bespoke matchmaking sessions and tailored workshops with industry experts. This creative exchange will take place alongside a programme of public screenings curated with input from the Qumra Masters.

The event is organised in three main sections: The Qumra Master Classes are daily sessions; each led by one of the Masters. The participating filmmakers have full access to these sessions, and will also be open to accredited industry guests to attend in an observational capacity.

The Qumra Meetings are a series of one-on-one meetings, workshops and tailored mentoring sessions between representatives from the 25 selected projects and seasoned industry experts.

The Qumra Screenings are open to the public and feature projects funded by the Institute through its grants and co-financing initiatives, as well as a series of films chosen by the Qumra Masters accompanied by Q&A sessions.

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

Twitter: @DohaFilm; Instagram: @DohaFilm; Facebook: www.facebook.com/DohaFilmInstitute

For All Enquiries:

MENA Press Enquiries:

Majid Wasi / Abbas Moussa

ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller

+9714 4507 600

Majid.Wasi@bm.com / Abbas.Moussa@bm.com

International Press Enquiries:

Cathy Dunkley

freuds

+44 203 003 6355

cathy.dunkley@freuds.com