



## 4<sup>th</sup> Ajyal Youth Film Festival to open with inspiring Mongolian adventure ‘The Eagle Huntress’

- *Announces Special Screenings line-up that includes ‘transadpated’ version of The Idol for an inclusive cinema experience*
- *To screen Meg Ryan’s Directorial Debut Ithaca*
- *Introduces ‘Midnight Screenings’ and celebrates kids red carpet gala of ‘Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory’ in loving tribute to Gene Wilder*

**Doha, Qatar; November 15, 2016:** The fourth Ajyal Youth Film Festival presented by the Doha Film Institute will mark its opening with the gala screening of ***The Eagle Huntress*** (Mongolia, UK, USA/ 2016), a spectacularly shot, inspiring Mongolian adventure that also underlines strong bonding of a father and daughter.

Underpinning the themes of Ajyal this year, including its focus on positive social change, women empowerment and the rekindling of hope, ***The Eagle Huntress*** marks its Middle East & North Africa (MENA) premiere at Ajyal. The film had premiered at Sundance Film Festival earlier this year to widespread critical acclaim. Directed by Otto Bell, the film is a heartwarming celebration of the passion of one very determined young woman, the special bond between a father and his daughter and, of the wonderful ability of the human spirit to rise to a challenge.

***The Eagle Huntress*** traverses the life of 13-year-old Aisholpan, who is determined to follow her ancestors’ footsteps and to capture and train a golden eagle, a tradition that has helped the people of Mongolia to survive in the often harsh climate of the Steppe.

Fatma Al Remaihi, Festival Director and CEO of Doha Film Institute, said: “We are delighted to open the fourth edition of our festival with a film that not only celebrates the values of familial bonding but also highlights the power of the human mind to beat all odds. A celebration of women empowerment, the film will be an inspiration for all, and resonates with the themes that we highlight this year. ***The Eagle Huntress*** is a profound tale that is also marked by amazing cinematic techniques that will give fresh insights for our emerging filmmakers and leave a lasting impression on our Ajyal jurors.”

Ajyal 2016 is excited to bring to Qatar audiences a special screening of Meg Ryan’s directorial debut ***Ithaca*** (USA / 2015). Actor Meg Ryan steps into the director’s chair for this moving and beautifully staged adaptation of William Saroyan’s novel “The Human Comedy”, with the story about a teenage boy in early 1940s Ithaca taking a part-time job as a telegram delivery boy, but finding himself having to deliver telegrams to parents giving news about the death of their son in the war. Ryan - who has a small but key role - also recruits her long-time co-star Tom Hanks for a cameo as her husband, while Sam Shepard shines as an old telegraph operator.

Rounding out the special screenings line-up are two moving documentaries that cover important and pressing issues of our age, global displacement, and man’s impact on the environment.



Directed by Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud, **Seasons** (France, Germany / 2015) narrates adventures from the point of view of many creatures against the backdrop of climate change as human activity increases its impact on the continent. Hernán Zin **Born in Syria** (Spain, Denmark 2016) follows seven young refugees over the course of a year, witnessing everything from their escape from their homeland, to their experiences in camps in the Middle East, their arrival in Europe, and the settling into their new homes.

In a rich showcase of unique cinematic experiences, 2016 Ajyal also presents an inclusive experience of **The Idol** by Palestinian director Hany Abu-Assad to mark the UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The special 'trans-adapted' version is presented in collaboration with the Translation and Interpreting Institute of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Hamad bin Khalifa University, and follows the successful screening of the Hero and the Message from last year.

The inclusive presentation will connect with visually impaired audiences, who can view the film through sound with audio description of the sound effects. Hard-of-hearing viewers, as well as those who have difficulty understanding speech, will benefit from subtitles enriched with information about sound effects and music.

Fatma Al Remaihi said: "The inclusive experience of The Idol highlights our commitment to bring a deeply inspiring film from our region to new audiences. We extend our appreciation to the students at Hamad bin Khalifa University for their painstaking effort to creatively adapt the film for all audiences and provide a unique cinema experience."

The colourful kids' red carpet gala will have young audiences walking the red carpet and dressing up as oompa-loompas, chocolate bars or blueberries to attend the family-friendly screening of **Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory** (USA / 1971), directed by Mel Stuart. Scripted by Roald Dahl and starring master comic actor Gene Wilder – whose death this year shocked his legions of fans – the film takes the hilarity of the book, 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', and adds a hefty dose of psychedelic art direction for a one-of-a-kind cinematic experience.

The free out-door SONY Cinema Under the Stars includes two films ideal for an inspiring evening out with family. **CodeGirl** (USA / 2015), directed by Lesley Chilcott, follows all-girl teams as they attempt to address issues from feeling isolated at school to wasting water, from garbage in the streets to violence in the home. **Naledi: A Baby Elephant's Tale** (USA, Botswana / 2016), directed by Geoff Luck and Ben Bowie is a critical demonstration that every elephant counts through the life of Naledi, an elephant born in a safari camp in Botswana, marking a small success in the battle to protect the elephants of Africa.

Two spine-chilling horror flicks will keep the viewers thrilled with Ajyal's first Midnight Screenings strand. Directed by Babak Anvari, **Under the Shadow** (Iran, UK, Jordan, Qatar / 2016) is set against the distressing backdrop of the War of the Cities that came after the Iranian Revolution, as it charts the frightening visions of a young girl whose favourite doll goes missing. **The Girl with All the Gifts** (UK / 2016), by Colm McCarthy injects fresh blood into the zombie apocalypse genre with its high-tension, high-stakes drama that reflects the divisive politics of our age.



Tickets go on sale from 16 November and are priced QR25 for general screening. Tickets are available for purchase 24 hours a day at [ajyalfilm.com](http://ajyalfilm.com) or from the Ajyal Katara Main Box Office in Katara Building 12 or Ajyal FNAC Ticket Outlet, FNAC Qatar (at Lagoona Mall).

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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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