



14 meaningful feature films to educate, inspire and motivate youth at 2016 Ajyal Youth Film Festival competition

Doha, Qatar; November 19, 2016: Set to captivate young audiences, 14 thought-provoking feature films from across the globe are vying for top honours at the fourth edition of the Ajyal Youth Film Festival from Nov. 30 to Dec. 5 at Katara Cultural Village. These include festival winners and Academy Award submissions, that cover themes and issues impacting youth in Qatar and around the world.

Fatma Al Remaili, Festival Director and CEO of Doha Film Institute, said: “The feature films in-competition at Ajyal are indeed some of the finest works in world cinema today. They are all poignant takes on life that inspire and move you with real-life and fictional tales. Through stories of nature, human emotions, familial bonding and fantasy takes, these films are sure to engage our Ajyal jurors, and make a positive impact on their lives. Each film reflects our time and space, and even when discussing difficult subjects, they weave magic – instilling hope, self-confidence and motivation.”

“The selection also celebrates excellence in world cinema today and includes films from acclaimed filmmakers such as Ken Loach, Gianfranco Rosi, Asghar Farhadi and Taika Waititi, who are some of the most powerful voices within the international film community”, she added.

Youth participation is at the heart of the Festival and its jury programme, provides young people between the ages of 8 and 21 with an opportunity to watch, analyse and discuss films from all over the world, developing critical thinking, self-expression, and an appreciation of cinema.

The Ajyal Competition categories include Mohaq (New Moon in Arabic), Ajyal’s youngest jurors, aged 8 to 12. Ajyal’s jurors aged 13 to 17 comprise the Hilal jury (Crescent Moon in Arabic) and Bader (Arabic for ‘Full Moon’) jurors are aged 18 to 21. All jurors watch feature and short films specially curated for their age groups, and each of the three juries award a Best Film prize in both categories.

Screening in the Ajyal Competition’s Mohaq section are four deeply motivating films:

Hunt for the Wilderpeople (New Zealand / 2016), directed by Taika Waititi narrates the story of Ricky who has one last chance to settle down with a foster family before he lands in juvenile detention and state custody. Directed by Lee Sung-gang, ***Kai*** (South Korea / 2016) is about the eponymous hero and his sister, who are separated when a freak avalanche strikes. Rescued by his mother, Kai grows up to be a brave young warrior, who will fight back the cold heart of the Snow Queen Hattan.

Listen to the Silence (Georgia, Qatar / 2016) is the debut film of Mariam Chachia, which tells the story of nine-year-old Luka, who lives in a boarding school for deaf children. His decision to take up traditional Georgian dancing, changes his life. Three best friends are in a race against time to find the antidote for a toxin in ***Secret Society of Suptown*** (Estonia, Finland / 2015), directed by Margus Paju.

Five films compete in the Hilal section for audiences 13 years or older, that encourage self-expression:

Enclave (Serbia, Germany/2015), directed by Goran Radovanović, was Serbia’s entry for the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film last year. It is about young Nenad, who lives in a UN-protected Serbian



enclave in Kosovo, where he is taken to school every day in an armoured vehicle accompanied by soldiers.

Sonita (Iran, Germany, Switzerland / 2015) is the winner of the Grand Jury and Audience Awards for Best World Documentary at Sundance this year. Directed by Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami, it is about 18-year-old Afghan refugee Sonita, who dreams of being a world-famous rapper in Tehran, where it is illegal for women to sing.

Directed by Otto Bell, **The Eagle Huntress** (Mongolia, UK, USA/2016) is a heartwarming celebration of the passion of one very determined young woman, the special bond between a father and his daughter and, finally, of the wonderful ability of the human spirit to rise to a challenge. The film highlights the themes of Ajyal this year including its focus on positive social change, women empowerment and the rekindling of hope.

Directed by Niam Itani, a former refugee herself, **Twice Upon a Time** (Lebanon / 2016) is an attempt at documenting the meaning of childhood with nine-year-old Khalil, whose family fled Syria to the same village where Itani's family once took shelter during the Lebanese Civil War. **The World of Us** (South Korea / 2016) by Yoon Ga-eun is about two 10-year-olds, whose friendship is tested when the new school year begins, and everyday reality of their different social classes sets in.

The Bader segment for young adults includes five feature films that exposes them to cinema as a contemporary art form:

Fatima (France / 2015) by Philippe Faucon, which had its world premiere at Cannes this year, is about an Algerian immigrant to France who spends all her energy working as a cleaner to care for her two daughters.

Directed by Gianfranco Rosi, **Fire at Sea** (Italy, France / 2016) is the winner of Berlinale's Golden Bear this year, and is set in the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa, which has been the first stop on the migrant route from Africa to Europe.

The winner of the Palme d'Or at Cannes this year, **I, Daniel Blake** (UK, France, Belgium / 2016) is by celebrated director Ken Loach. It lays bare one of Great Britain's most damaging social ills through Blake, who finds himself entangled in the red tape when he applies for unemployment benefits.

Life, Animated (USA, France / 2016) is directed by Roger Ross Williams. It provides an uplifting look at the power of storytelling, the magic of the movies, and the incredible resourcefulness of the human mind through the story of Owen Suskind, who is diagnosed with autism.

The official Oscar entry from Iran, **The Salesman**, directed by Asghar Farhadi, and produced by Memento Films Production and Asghar Farhadi Production, in coproduction with Arte France Cinéma and in association with DFI, Memento Films Distribution and Arte France. It won the Best Screenplay for Farhadi and the Best Actor award for Shahab Hosseini at this year's Cannes, and is a complex story of two people suddenly at odds in a space contaminated by uncertainty and mistrust.



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 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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