



International filmmakers highlight strength of Ajyal to promote cultural exchange

Doha, Qatar; December 3, 2016: Global filmmakers screening their films at the fourth Ajyal Youth Film Festival presented by the Doha Film Institute said the event is a unique experience that helps strengthen cultural exchange among filmmakers from across the world.

Addressing the media, director Goran Radovanović, whose film *Enclave* (Serbia, Germany) is screening at Ajyal, said: "It is really special for us to be here at Ajyal in Doha, a unique experience for us to come to this part of the world. We don't have a lot of cultural exchange between our two regions. For us, it has been a fascinating opportunity. People here have been very moved watching the film, and really participate - we had a very beautiful Q&A."

Serbia's entry to the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, *Enclave* is a hopeful vision of a world where young people can see beyond blinding hatred. "There have been a lot of wars in the Balkans; all these wars didn't solve the problem - hatred. There is still huge hatred in the Balkans. This is why I wanted to look at the last war in the Balkans - we have to get out of this hatred to see the future, see the hope, and get a mutual understanding of each other."

Radovanović added that the whole film is based on the innocence of children, "before they get older and are influenced by adults. The children in the film carry the idea of truth and hope."

Director Babak Anvari of *Under the Shadow* (Iran, UK, Jordan, Qatar), which is UK's entry for the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film this year, said: "I am very grateful because the Doha Film Institute supported this film from the beginning. I'm very happy and pleased so to be here at the festival, which is amazing. Bringing children from all over the world is very special."

He added: "I wanted to make a story as honestly as I could but as a film maker it's not my job to tell people how to interpret the film. Everyone should have their own experience. The inspiration came from my own personal childhood memories. It is a work of fiction but comes from a personal place. It was a very dark and intense time - no war is fun. If you ask Iranians who lived through that period I'm sure they all have stories to tell."

Actor Narges Rashidi said: "Through the movie I wanted the character to be as believable as possible. When I read the script I loved how complex it was. As a woman actress - to play the lead role is still very rare around the world, so it is such a big gift - she's a very strong woman and that's what drew me into wanting to do it so badly. I left Iran when I was very little but I love Iranian cinema - such great movies and cinema. I just want to see good stories told in a unique way."

Director Otto Bell of *The Eagle Huntress* (Mongolia, UK, USA), which opened the fourth Ajyal Youth Film Festival, explained the preparations that went into making the heartwarming documentary. "I kept the authenticity of the film with patience. It is the art of documentary making - spending time. There were big scenes - the taking of the eagle, the festival and the winter. The rest was quiet time - what they like



to eat, how they get water, what she does at school. I realised we needed more everyday texture and that was just time spend.”

On the community, he said: “There is deep respect for family and a prioritisation of family and encouraging your children to reach their full potential. They also have a deep respect for nature. Behind the scenes I was very touched by their faith.”

Otto Bell found out about the protagonist Aisholpan through a photo essay on the BBC. “A young photographer had stumbled upon her training with her father’s eagle. I found the photographer straight away on Facebook, we Skyped and very quickly got on a plane to go and talk to the family. The film took around one year to make with six or seven trips at different times.

“The hardest part to film was the final scene. I originally put aside five days and took 22 days. It was minus 50 degrees. Everything breaks. The film took only three production people and my life savings - which wasn't very much.”

Aisholpan, who attended the red carpet, added: 'To begin with I was quite nervous but after a few days I was used to having the cameras around and it felt normal.'

Her parents added: “We didn't worry - we were very excited. Many tourists (adventure tourists) come and take pictures of the family so we are used to it.”

Otto and the team plan to take the film to the Mongolian region to show it to the family's community.

Katara is the Cultural Partner and Oxy Qatar is the Principal Partner for the 2016 edition of the Ajyal Youth Film Festival. Qatar Tourism Authority is the Signature Partner of the festival this year. For more details on the Ajyal Youth Film Festival, please visit www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival

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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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