

Doha Film Institute strengthens international outreach with co-finance support to new global film projects

Looking for Oum Kulthum, Grain and Birds Like Us are global film projects that also highlight regional filmmaking talent

Doha, Qatar; October 24, 2017: The Doha Film Institute has further strengthened its roster of international film projects with three new co-financed films that not only highlight emerging and established voices in global filmmaking talents, but are also examples of compelling narratives that present poignant human stories of hope, ambition and global realities.

The new co-financed productions are: ***Birds Like Us*** (Bosnia and Herzegovina, UK, Turkey, US, Qatar/2017) directed by Faruk Šabanović and Amela Ćuhara; ***Grain*** (Turkey, Germany, France, Sweden, Qatar/2017) by Semih Kaplanoğlu; and ***Looking for Oum Kulthum*** (Germany, Austria, Italy, Qatar, Lebanon/2017) by Shirin Neshat in collaboration with Shoja Azari.

Earlier this year, the Doha Film Institute announced its co-financing partnership on the world's first fully-painted feature film, ***Loving Vincent***, a cinematic ode to the remarkable life of legendary artist Vincent van Gogh. The film is written and directed by Dorota Kobiela and Hugh Welchman, and produced by Academy Award winning studios, Poland's BreakThru Films and UK's Trademark Films.

Fatma Al Remaihi, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: "We are honoured to partner with these ambitious films that present distinctive and compelling narratives through our co-financing initiative. These partnerships underline our commitment to support emerging voices in global cinema, distinguished by their innovative approach to filmmaking and focus on presenting human stories that have universal resonance. We have always believed in supporting film productions that stand out for their vision and creativity, and our new co-financed films reinforce Qatar's commitment to quality international film productions, underlining our nation's continued focus on promoting talent in arts and culture."

Looking for Oum Kulthum is a movie-within-a-movie about an ambitious Iranian director's attempts to film the life and legacy of legendary Egyptian singer Oum Kulthum. Through the simultaneous exploration of three main female characters, Oum Kulthum, Mitra (the Iranian filmmaker,) and Ghada (the Egyptian actress, who plays the role of Oum Kulthum,) the narrative reveals how women, living in male dominated societies, face the same predicaments: their sacrifice of a traditional family and an unspoken sense of alienation in the absence of a conventional life style, despite the glory of achieving fame and success. The film had its world premiere at the 2017 Venice Film Festival and also screened at the 2017 Toronto Film Festival.

Celebrated visual artist and director of ***Looking for Oum Kulthum***, Shirin Neshat commented, "My relationship with Doha Film Institute goes back to when I first attended the Doha film festival in 2011 as a guest, and later as a member of the jury in 2012. Later when I began to develop a film based on the life and art of Oum Kulthum, DFI was the first institution to express interest in supporting the project.

I'm especially grateful to DFI today for remaining committed to this film regardless of the unforeseen challenges we experienced throughout the making of this film."

An animation, ***Birds Like Us*** premiered at the recent Sarajevo Film Festival. It is about the lovely bird Hupu, her silent husband Hasan, a tiny busy-body bird Mi and the bird tyrant Kondor who are forced on an epic journey to find their way home, after being flung out of the safe haven of Birdabad into a world tormented by horror. Through hair-raising adventures, the unlikely heroes are forced to work together to face their fear and understand the true nature of the Horror. Actors Alicia Vikander and Jeremy Irons voice key characters in the film along with others.

Having made its World Premiere at Sarajevo Film Festival, Golden Bear-winning director Semih Kaplanoğlu's latest feature ***Grain*** is a dystopian story set in a world where a genetic crisis leads to massive crop failure. Semih's last feature, the 2010 drama *Honey*, won the Berlin Film Festival's top prize and was nominated for three prizes at the European Film Awards.

The films co-financed by the Doha Film Institute have gained international acclaim, opened major film festivals and secured prestigious awards. Some of these projects include ***The Salesman*** by Asghar Farhadi; ***Kahlil Gibran's The Prophet*** by Roger Allers; ***The Idol*** by Hany Abu-Assad, ***Reluctant Fundamentalist*** by Mira Nair; ***May in the Summer*** by Cherien Dabis and ***Narrow Frame of Midnight*** by Tala Hadid.

In addition to co-financing, the Institute supports first- and second-time filmmakers from around the world and established filmmakers from the MENA region through its Grants programme. The Institute also nurtures national film talent through the Qatari Film Fund dedicated to supporting short and feature filmmaking by Qataris.

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Note to Editors:

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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