



Farouk Šabanović on filmmaking's message of hope and making an animated feature in a country with no film industry.

Doha, Qatar; November 29, 2017: In conversation with local and international press today, director Faruk Šabanović talked about the challenges he and his team faced when it came to making *Birds Like Us (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, UK, USA, Qatar / 2017)*, the full-length animation that screens at the 5th Ajyal Youth Film Festival on Friday Dec. 1 at 4pm.

Co-funded by the Doha Film Institute (DFI), the film is part comedy, part political allegory and is loosely based on Persian poet Farid Ud-din Attar's 12th century masterpiece, 'The Conference of the Birds' and the visionary feature was begun at a time when Šabanović's native country, Bosnia Herzegovina, had neither a film nor an animation industry.

"We were in ashes, for us to do a computer animated film at that time, in those conditions was a challenge equal to starting a space programme," he explained, adding that despite fears the film might never be completed due to a lack of funding, a lack of skills and initially, a lack of outside interest, passion and determination enabled his team to overcome the odds. "It's a tale of acceptance, an Oriental story told using Western means. We are telling the story of two worlds that must find a way to come together."

Made over seven years and set in Birdabad, a mythical tree kingdom of flightless birds forced to sacrifice three of their young each year to their egg-eating tyrant, Kondor, the film follows the surreal adventures of Huppu, who defies the system and is thrown out of Birdabad with her husband Hasan, a chick called Mi and Kondor himself. Despite their differences, the impromptu gang is forced to discover their true potential in order to survive the adventures ahead.

Šabanović, who is visiting Qatar for the first time, said that he was very pleased by how jurors reacted to the film, adding that he was especially impressed by the multiple perspectives and depth of understanding conveyed during questions.

"I think there is a feeling in the world today that we need to cross borders, to understand one another, flaws and all," he said. "At a time of so much misunderstanding and fear of the other, the feeling I got from jurors was that of Spaceship Earth, the idea of the world as a single nation. I was really taken emotionally."

Birds Like Us screens on Fri Dec. 1 at 4:00 PM.

Tickets are priced QR25 and 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 Doha Festival City.



The Ajyal Youth Film Festival is made possible thanks to its partners: Katara Cultural Village as its Cultural Partner; Qatar Tourism Authority is the Strategic Partner, and Occidental Petroleum Corporation and Ooredoo are the Principal Partners. For more details on the Ajyal Youth Film Festival, please visit www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival

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About Doha Film Institute:

The 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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