

## Doha Film Institute announces support for seven new projects by Qatari filmmakers through the Qatari Film Fund

- Selected projects include feature and short films with two animation titles and the first local series recipient
- 26 Qatari projects including 8 features and 18 shorts supported to date
- Previous recipients include A.J. Al Thani's *Kashta*, Nora Al-Subai's *Al-Johara*, *1001 Days* by Aisha Al-Jaidah among others

**Doha, Qatar; 9 April, 2019:** The Doha Film Institute (DFI) has announced the recipients of the Fall 2018 Qatari Film Fund, which aims to nurture Qatari filmmakers and support them in their script-to-screen journey.

An expert panel reviewed a high volume of submissions to select the final seven projects. Feature film recipients include Mahdi Ali Al-Sharshani (*Lavandula*), Jassim Al Rumaihi (*Our Legend*), and Noor Al-Nasr (*The Pearl*). Short film recipients include animation projects by Amal Al Shamari (*Freha*) and Hassan Al-Jahni (*Ms7ar*) and a short documentary by Sara Al Obaidly (*Hitch 60*). The final project to receive support is the first Qatari series to be awarded by the fund, Reem Al-Maadeed and Sana Al Ansari's *Al Khataba*.

Designed to foster home-grown talent, the Qatari Film Fund offers two funding cycles per year to Qatari nationals and to date has supported 26 national projects including 8 features and 18 shorts. Each selected short project will receive up to QAR 182,500 in production funding, in addition to in-kind support in development, mentorship and the use of DFI's equipment and production facilities. Selected feature projects will receive the same contribution in development support to reach a final draft of their script. The Qatari Film fund is committed to the development of up to four feature films, in addition to up to eight short films annually.

Some of the completed projects from the fund include festival favourites A.J. Al Thani's *Kashta*, Nora Al-Subai's *Al-Johara*, *1001 Days* by Aisha Al-Jaidah, Kholoud Al-Ali's *Red*, Amal Al-Muftah's *Sh'hab*, *Nasser Goes to Space* by Mohamed Al Mahmeed, *Amer: An Arabian Legend* by Jassim Al Rumaihi among others.

Fatma Al Remaihi, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: "The Qatari Film Fund celebrates the skills and accomplishments of Qatari filmmakers, and highlights the importance of providing multi-faceted support to develop a home-grown culture of filmmaking. Our goal is to inspire, nurture and empower the next generation of storytellers, who present our stories to global audiences, and serve as a window into our world and the creative aspirations of Qatar's emerging filmmaking talents.

"We had an extremely competitive pitch for the Fall 2018 cycle with several high-quality projects submitted by our emerging talents. The selected projects stand out for their originality, creativity and narrative power, and are diverse in their genre and approach. At the Doha Film Institute, we believe in

the power of compelling filmmaking that question perceptions and presents new perspectives. We are proud of our filmmakers for their innovative approach to cinema and for tackling challenging subjects with confidence,” she added.

Mahdi Ali Al-Sharshani’s feature film *Lavandula* follows an orphan, Sultan, through his strange and mysterious dreams as he discovers the reason behind a breakdown in his family. The film was a development project at Qumra 2019. His last film *Amphitheatre*, a QFF project premiered at the 2018 Ajyal Film Festival.

Jassim Al Rumaihi’s feature film *Our Legend* is about a scorned young jockey and his older Arabian horse who overcome mockery, jealousy, and bad luck as they strive for success. Jassim’s previous film ‘*Amer: An Arabian Legend*’, recipient of the first QFF grants in 2015 won the Best Documentary prize at the 2016 Ajyal Film Festival.

Noor Al-Nasr’s feature film *The Pearl* imagines the life of a tech-obsessed Qatari teenager who travels back in time to when Qatar was dependent on pearl diving as its main source of income. The teenager learns how to connect with others face-to-face, finding a deep appreciation for his family along the way. Noor is a graphic designer, writer, and aspiring filmmaker, interested in art in all its forms.

Directors Reem Al-Maadeed and Sana Al Ansari’s *Al Khataba* is the first ever series recipient of the QFF. *Al Khataba* follows a determined, well-known matchmaker through a Qatari wedding season. Drama ensues as she attempts to arrange a marriage for her only son to prevent him marrying a girl she does not approve of.

Sara Al Obaidly’s short documentary *Hitch 60* is set in 1960s London and tells the true story of 16-year-old Maureen who flees London for the Middle East when her hopes for higher education are dashed by her working-class father.

Finally, the 2018 Fall cycle of Qatari Film Fund will support the creation of two short animations, *Freha* and *Ms7ar*, by Amal Al Shamari and Hassan Al-Jahni respectively. *Freha* is about a successful business woman and her relationship with her inspirational mother. *Ms7ar* is about a young girl who battles through her fear of the dark to enlist the help of a local mystic to wake up her dying grandmother.

The Qatari Film Fund is one of the many ways that DFI nurtures emerging talent in Qatar and the wider region. It also supports film production through its Training and Development and Grants Programmes.

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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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