

Five films supported by Doha Film Institute selected to 2021 Locarno Film Festival

- ***Majid Al Remaihi's 'And Then They Burn the Sea' sets history as first Qatari film chosen for the official in-competition segment***
- ***Line-up includes films supported by the Institute's financing programmes of Qatari Film Fund, Grants and Co-Financing***
- ***Films from Arab and International Filmmakers Selected to Compete in Key segments***

Doha, Qatar; 02 August 2021: Five films supported by the Doha Film Institute (DFI) have been selected to screen at the Locarno Film Festival from August 4 to 14 2021, in Switzerland.

Recipient of the Qatari Film Fund, Doha Film Institute's initiative to promote the country's film industry and talent, ***And Then They Burn the Sea***, directed by Majid Al Remaihi, set history as the first Qatar short selected for the festival's in-competition segment.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Chief Executive Officer of DFI, said: *"The selection of Majid Al Remaihi's film in-competition at Locarno marks a milestone in the evolution of the country's film industry and will inspire more young talent to pursue cinematic ambitions and make an imprint in the global film community through authentic stories that reflect our nation's culture and traditions. It gives me great pride to see filmmakers from across the region emerge as creative leaders of a new wave of filmmaking, who craft compelling stories with global resonance. Their creative prowess and dedication to the arts is indicative of the state of Arab cinema today."*

"Over the last ten years, the Doha Film Institute has supported powerful stories and moving storytelling across a broad spectrum of issues and perspectives and has evolved into a key initiative for the next generation of filmmakers from the Arab world and beyond. Our financing initiatives echoes our core mission to amplify important voices of our time and help filmmakers realise their storytelling aspirations, to develop and support world cinema while fostering cultural diversity."

And Then They Burn the Sea is an ode to Al-Remaihi's mother, who suffered from gradual and terminal memory loss over the course of many years. Bringing together poetry, folk history, and Al-Remaihi's personal archives, the film explores themes of mourning and loss. At Locarno, it will screen in the **Pardi Di Domani** category, dedicated to showcasing short and medium-length films from around the world, and has been shortlisted for the Concorso Internazionale competition.

Developed as part of the Documentary Lab organised by the Institute, the film was one of the projects nurtured at Qumra 2021 and is produced under the mentorship of Academy Award-nominated director Rithy Panh.

"The Doha Film institute served as an important platform in shaping my film, which is a deeply personal story. From being granted the Qatari Film Fund to the mentorship from film luminaries, the Institute extended support across my journey. With this film, I wanted to touch on the common, yet underexplored, reality of being a part of a loved one's struggle with dementia, hoping it will spark a dialogue within the community and beyond. It is an incredible honour to be the first Qatari to take part in the Locarno Film Festival. Qatar has rich cinematic talent, and the selection will help highlight our vibrant cinematic scene," said Majid Al-Remaihi.

Co-financed by the Doha Film Institute, Ghassan Salhab's ***The River*** (Lebanon, France, Germany, Qatar) has been shortlisted for the festival's International Competition and nominated for the prestigious Pardo d'oro Award. The film shares the story of a man and a woman who were about to leave a restaurant in the heart of the Lebanese mountains on an autumn day, when they hear the sounds of warplanes flying at low altitude, giving them a sense of the return of war. They plunge into a journey into the depths of nature, with only a fragile relationship keeping them together.

Screening in the festival's Concorso Cineasti Del Presente category, dedicated to emerging directors from all over the world is ***Whether the Weather is Fine*** (Philippines, France, Singapore, Germany, Indonesia, Qatar) by Carlo Francisco Manatad. Recipient of the 2020 Fall Grants, the film follows Miguel after he wakes up in the chaos of Typhoon Haiyan, which destroyed Tacloban—a coastal city in the Philippines, in November 2013. Rumours of another incoming storm are spreading like wildfire, and Miguel roams the ravaged city with the two women in his life, his mother Norma, and his friend Andrea.

Bassel Ghandour's ***The Alleys*** (Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar), a Fall Grants 2018 recipient, premieres in the Piazza Grande category. The film, set in a claustrophobic East Amman neighbourhood where life is dictated by gossip and violence, Ali, a hustler who pretends to be a white-collar career man, has a secret relationship with Lana, a young college student. Their romance is kept hidden until one day Lana's mother, Aseel, receives an extortionist video of the young couple.

Night (Palestine, Jordan, Germany, Qatar), a Spring Grants 2017 recipient, directed by Ahmad Saleh will screen in the Concorso Internazionale competition section. This puppet animation short film follows a mother who has been awake since the disappearance of her son. However, each night a young girl, a metaphor for the 'night', returns the son to the mother's arms; only for them both to disappear once daylight begins. As she continues to stay awake, the mother's anxiety and longing to be reunited with her son deepens.

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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 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.

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