

9th Ajyal Film Festival

opens with an action-packed red carpet to celebrate cinema

- *Distinguished guests walk the red carpet as the festival activates the theme 'Press Play' highlighting the safe return to in-person community cultural connection*
- *Festival opens with **A Hero** by Academy Award winning filmmaker and DFI collaborator and Qumra Master Asghar Farhadi.*

Doha, Qatar; 7 November 2021: The ninth edition of Ajyal Film Festival, presented by the Doha Film Institute, marked an action-packed opening with distinguished guests walking the red carpet at Katara Cultural Village to welcome the community for a week-long calendar of exciting cinematic, music, art and other cultural experiences.

Until Nov. 13, Qatar residents and visitors have much to look forward to at the 9th Ajyal, including a rich showcase of 85 films from 44 countries of 31 feature films and 54 shorts from emerging and accomplished talent. The Ajyal Creativity Hub remains a Festival favourite with an array of cultural talks, music performances and the ever-popular Geekdom and Ajyal Art Exhibition to assure memorable moments for all.

Celebrating this year's theme, 'Press Play!', Ajyal continues to offer its programme in its innovative hybrid format to ensure not only the safety of visitors but also to expand the festival's reach to global audiences.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Festival Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: "In the past two eventful years of uncertainty when the world was brought to a standstill, we at the Institute pressed forward and led our creative community to defeat the challenges we faced and keep the momentum of our growth and successes uninterrupted, by launching one of the first innovative hybrid format cultural celebrations in the world. We also integrated our new approach to our year-round programmes and activities to identify new talent, amplify new voices and bring together the film industry with renewed purpose to celebrate talent and independent voices to tell the stories of our humanity.

"However, our work has never been solely about Qatar. Our dream has always been to build bridges to form a creative community in the region, and in fact a global one, where all voices are heard and all perspectives respected and valued. We have seen how Qatar's creative industry has been transformed to break down barriers of geography and boundaries to strengthen our collective voice. United, we continue to reinvigorate our creative spirit to create connection and shine brighter than ever."

Special guests at the opening night

Special guests who walked the red carpet included Amir Jadidi, Fereshteh Sadre Orafaei, Hamid Ghorbani of *A Hero*; accomplished photographer Brigitte Lacombe, and diplomats including the Ambassador of Spain Bélen Alfaro; Ambassador of Palestine Moneer Abdulla Ali Ghannam; Ambassador of France Jean-Baptiste Faivre.

Other special guests included: Sheikh Abdulaziz Thani KH. TH. Al-Thani, State Minister with rank of Deputy Prime Minister Hamad bin Abdulaziz Al Kuwari, Issa Al Mohannadi, Sheikh Thani bin Hamad

bin Khalifa Al Thani, Ahmad Al-Namla, Yasmine Hamdan, Elia Suleiman Saad Burshiad, Mahdi Ali Ali and Hafiz Ali Ali and others.

Opening gala and other activities

Resonating with audiences globally, the festival opened with ***A Hero (Ghahreman)*** [Iran/France/2021], directed by Academy Award winning filmmaker and DFI collaborator and Qumra Master Asghar Farhadi. The winner of the Grand Prix at Cannes Film Festival this year, it is a riveting tale of morality in the age of social media.

This year's highlights include the Made in Qatar programme presented by Ooredoo, which features 10 films that represent the evolution of Qatar's homegrown talent and storytellers. Another festival favourite is DFI's Drive-In cinema at Lusail in partnership with QNTC returns with a diverse line-up of family-friendly titles and midnight horror screenings.

The Ajyal Creativity Hub Sikkat Wadi Msheireb will host the Ajyal Art Exhibition themed, 'We Will Not Leave', which presents the works of 27 artists who express the harsh realities of the Palestinians in solidarity with them.

2021 Ajyal Film Festival's Official Partners include: Katara Cultural Village Foundation– **Cultural Partner**; Qatar Tourism– **Principal Partner**; Ooredoo – **Strategic Partner**; Qatari Diar, Msheireb Properties, W Doha– **Signature Sponsors**.

Tickets for Ajyal 2021 and can be purchased at www.dohafilminstitute.com/festival.

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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.

Doha Film Institute:

Twitter: @DohaFilm; Instagram: @DohaFilm; Facebook: www.facebook.com/DohaFilmInstitute

About Ajyal Film Festival:

Ajyal Film Festival is an annual celebration of film designed to nurture young minds and support the development of mindful global citizens and thoughtful future leaders. 'Ajyal', Arabic for 'generations', brings people of all ages together through screenings and events that inspire creative interaction and stimulate cinematic dialogue.

Ajyal Film Festival builds on the Doha Film Institute's history of community-based programming. Through its jury programme, youth between the ages of 8 and 25 are given an opportunity to watch, analyse and discuss global cinema and culture, developing self-confidence, independent critical

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thinking skills, self-expression, and an appreciation of cinema, while making new friends and discovering global cultures.

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