



***Capharnaüm* has sparked discussion; but now is the time to act and make a difference, says Nadine Labaki at 6th Ajyal Film Festival**

Doha, Qatar; November 30, 2018: Lebanese filmmaker Nadine Labaki, who set history as the first Arab woman filmmaker to win a major prize at the Cannes Film Festival with her *Capharnaüm* (Lebanon/2018) this year, says the film has become a conversation-starter but it is now time to act and make a difference to the lives of the underprivileged children.

“The impact [of the film] has already started,” she said at a media briefing at the sixth Ajyal Film Festival, the annual cinema event hosted by the Doha Film Institute at Katara Cultural Village, where *Capharnaüm* is being screened.

The powerful film that won the Jury Prize at Cannes Film Festival 2018 retraces the journey of 12-year-old Zain, who decides to sue his parents for having brought him into this world when they clearly can’t give him the care he so desperately needs. In his harrowing journey, he must also take care of the infant Yonas (Boluwatife Treasure Bankole), the child of an Ethiopian single mother desperately trying to secure a residence permit.

“The film has become a real conversation; people are coming out of the shell and talking about the issues. But the real impact is something we must work on. For me, it is important that we talk to the government and see what we can do to make change.”

Labaki said she shot over 500 hours of footage, filmed over six months, and edited over a period of about two years. However, the majority of the film’s five years went into research, which gave her the tremendous insights on the lives of refugee children.

“We went to the streets, slums and unfortunate neighbourhoods in our country and interviewed people [to find the characters]. It was important that when you are showing a real struggle you must show the reality of things. I didn’t want to imagine the story. I didn’t feel entitled to imagine something I have not personally lived. We researched for three years almost, writing the film in parallel.”

Labaki said the extensive research also helped her to understand the situation better. “I have been researching so much, so long that I know the failures of the system. I know what must be tackled. We must really begin talking about the problem, listen to each other and see what we can do and try to change.”

Labaki said in working with the child actors, “timing was very important. You had to spend time with them and know them well. My daughter was the same age as Treasure, so it gave me so much knowledge about what is going to happen when she is hungry, when she wants to sleep. It is all about knowing children and being very patient. You have to adapt to their rhythm and not expect them to do what we need. We must capture their reactions in reality and sometimes knowing that if it doesn’t happen today, it will happen tomorrow.”



Do not miss the screening of *Capharnaüm* today (Saturday, Dec. 1), 8:30 PM at the Novo Cinemas, The Pearl.

2018 Ajyal Film Festival's Official Partners include: Katara Cultural Village – Cultural Partner; Ooredoo – Principal Partner; Novo Cinemas – Strategic Partner and St. Regis Doha – Signature Sponsor.

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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 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.

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 in a creative and educational environment. 'Ajyal', Arabic for 'generations', brings people of all ages together through screenings and events that inspire creative interaction and stimulate cinematic dialogue. Through its' jury programme, youth between the ages of 8 and 21 are given an opportunity to watch, analyse and discuss global cinema and culture, developing self-confidence, independent critical thinking skills, self-expression, and an appreciation of cinema. 6th Ajyal Film Festival takes place from the 28th of November to the 3rd of December.

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