

Doha Film Institute Showcases Diverse Storytelling with International Cinema at Ajyal Film Festival

Doha, Qatar; 21 November 2019: International filmmakers associated with projects supported by the Doha Film Institute, *You Will Die at Twenty*, *Bombay Rose* and *To the Ends of the Earth* showcased their films at the seventh Ajyal Film Festival, the annual cinema event hosted by the Doha Film Institute (DFI) at Katara Cultural Village. All three films premiered at major international film events, highlighting DFI's association with compelling content from emerging talent around the world.

A result of a DFI co-financing partnership initiative, Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *To the Ends of the Earth* (Japan, Uzbekistan, Qatar/2019) tells the story of a young Japanese woman named Yoko, who encounters a series of culture-clashes and misunderstandings when she sets off to Uzbekistan to shoot the latest episode of a travel variety show. The film is an intimate portrait of someone cast into a foreign land and struggling to find their bearings.

"We live in a world where we are interconnected but still don't understand each other," said Japanese auteur Kurosawa. Speaking on the importance of teamwork, he added: "Experiencing films from different countries, decades and themes can help aspiring filmmakers grow. They must also understand the central value of teamwork and collaboration with directors, producers and actors to create a great film."

Following its world premiere at the International Critics Week at the Venice Film Festival 2019, Gitanjali Rao's *Bombay Rose* (India, France, UK, Qatar/2014), a DFI grantee, is a haunting musical romance set on the streets of Bombay that is told through exquisite hand-painted animation and storytelling techniques. The film also screened in the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival's Contemporary World Cinema category.

Rao is an award-winning animator, who has independently produced, directed and animated three internationally award-winning short films *Orange*, *Printed Rainbow* and *True Love Story*. At a press briefing, she touched on the state of animation in modern Indian cinema: "Out of the six years it took to create *Bombay Rose*, four were spent finding funding and producers to take on the project. I have always visualised my films through paintings and I like the fluidity of the medium to help me build the narrative. I hope that making this type of content will inspire local producers to trust in animation as part of the Indian film industry."

Winner of the Luigi De Laurentiis Award for a Debut Film at the Venice Film Festival 2019, *You Will Die at Twenty* (Sudan, France, Egypt, Germany, Norway, Qatar/2019) is Sudanese director Amjad Abu Alala's feature debut. The main character, a young boy named Muzamel, receives an ominous prophecy at his naming ceremony, predicting his death at the tender age of twenty. Muzamel lives under the burden of this prophecy until a cinematographer opens a window onto a whole new world.

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Speaking at the press briefing, Abu Alala discussed the underlying inspiration for his film: “It is based on a short story that I read and that moved me to create a cinematic portrayal of how the Sudanese society deals with topics of sadness, ignorance and bullying.” His previous work includes several short films that have screened at international film festivals, including *Tina*, *Coffee and Orange*, and *Feathers of the Birds*.

Tickets for the 7th Ajyal Film Festival are available for purchase at the Ajyal Main Box Office located in Katara Building 10; at the Ajyal Box Office at VOX Cinemas Doha Festival City for screenings taking place at VOX Cinemas; and from the Novo Cinemas Box Office for screenings at Novo Cinemas, the Pearl. For ticket purchase and up-to-date information on the Ajyal Film Festival, please visit:

<https://www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival/ticketinformation>

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2019 Ajyal Film Festival’s Official Partners include: **Katara Cultural Village** – Cultural Partner; **Qatar National Tourism Council** – Principal Partner; **Novo Cinemas, Ooredoo** – Strategic Partner, **St. Regis Doha** - Signature Partner.

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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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