



Press Release

Robert De Niro advises young actors: “Don’t expect to be famous. You have to love what you do and have fun doing it.”

Academy Award-winning actor discusses working with Martin Scorsese and David O. Russell as part of an In Conversation session at DTFF 2012

Doha, Qatar; November 19, 2012: Speaking to a packed audience at the Al Rayyan theatre Sunday night, Academy award-winning actor Robert De Niro (The Godfather Part 2, Raging Bull) was given a warm reception as he spoke about his career and work in a wide-ranging In Conversation session with Tribeca Enterprises’ Chief Creative Officer Geoff Gilmore.

On the eve of the MENA premiere of his latest film Toronto Film Festival award-winning Silver Linings Playbook, directed by David O. Russell, De Niro discussed his approach to acting and his early training at the Actors Studio with Stella Adler.

“Unlike theatre which isn’t so structured, movies go through a process. My feeling personally has always been whatever works, works so long as you don’t hurt yourself or anyone else.”

The acclaimed actor went on to discuss working with such directors as Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola. “With Marty we’d rehearse scenes, videotape rehearsals, improvise scenes and make adjustments. He has such great respect for actors that he went along with anything you wanted to do. If it didn’t work he’d direct you or fix it in the editing room.”

De Niro said the most important thing about working with directors is ‘that you feel like you can do no wrong. It’s not about whether they agree with you or not. It’s that you try whatever you want. It’s exciting to work with someone who enjoys what you do. It’s like having a permissive parent.”

Asked about where he starts on a role, De Niro said: “Sometimes you start with the director or writer or both. However I like to have a read through of a script before I even get onboard with a project. It’s a discovery process even if they don’t want me for the role.”

De Niro spoke of his admiration for Marlon Brando and said of the actor: “He was wonderful. And even though in later life he changed his own feelings about acting, when he was on it he was great. I loved him.”

Asked if his own approach to acting has changed in latter years, De Niro added: “I feel like I’ve let things that used to concern me or preoccupy me go. I now feel more free.”

Talking about the many different comedic versus dramatic roles he has played over the years – from



Meet the Parents to Analyze That and Wag The Dog - De Niro pointed to the importance of timing when playing comedies: "You have to be light with comedy, but I like it when there are lots of things mixed in – comedy, drama, irony or moments when there is nothing said at all. That's what I like the most."

Questioned about whether he has ever turned down roles he didn't think were right for him, De Niro said: "If people approach you and you respect them then it's worth considering the role whatever it is. You put yourself in their hands and try to see things and try to see things from their point of view."

Asked about his work as a director, including A Bronx Tale and The Good Shepherd - De Niro said he thought actors generally made good directors. "Generally they get very good performances," he said. "It makes you even more sensitive as an actor when you are a director. Everyone works as a team to support you. They watch your back. All the moving parts come together as one."

In terms of roles he has regretted taking, De Niro smiled and said "I did them so I have to accept responsibility for all the roles I've played."

Asked if there were any young actors he admired, De Niro cited the work of Matt Damon, Leonardo DiCaprio, Bradley Cooper and Sean Penn as among those actors he would want to work with again.

The role of critics and the press were also discussed in the session, with De Niro talking honestly about the part that critics play in the lifecycle of a movie. "When you do a movie and show it to people, friends and family can never be totally honest with you. If a critic's being just mean or nasty it's unfortunate. Good critics that write with intelligence and compassion are very important. If it's constructive criticism you can take it or leave it but you always learn something."

Asked if awards and honours were important to him, De Niro joked: "I'd rather have them than not!"

In terms of whether he was considering giving up acting in the future, De Niro said: "I don't see myself stopping really at this point," which drew a huge round of applause from the audience.

"I'd like to see where else I could go and concentrate on something different that audiences haven't seen before."

Discussing if age changes the types of roles you are offered, De Niro talked about his parts playing fathers and grandfathers in various movies.

"You draw from your own experiences. As a father, as a grandfather, and if I'm lucky enough as a great grandfather!"

Answering a question from the audience about the advice he would give to young actors, De Niro said: "I always say – you've got to really love what you do. Don't expect to be famous – do it because you really love doing it and have fun doing it. I've always said if I can make a living at it, I'm happy."



Regarding the importance of the script in moviemaking, De Niro advised: “It’s one thing to have a good book but the script is the key. If it’s not on the page, it’s not on the stage. You want to see the script to figure out what the sensibility is, what the project is about.”

Having worked in both the studio and independent sectors, De Niro was asked what the differences were.

“Independent filmmaking is just as hard as making studio films. You’ll always have people breathing down your neck as it’s always expensive to make a film. You have to deal with the stakeholders and it’s a process. The higher the budget the higher the pressure. But it is what it is.”

Put on the spot by a young juror in the audience, De Niro was asked what his favourite role was.

“It’s hard to say because it’s like asking me to choose between my children,” he confided. “Each role has different problems and demands. Raging Bull was hard on one level, The Deerhunter on another but Awakenings was also challenging on a physical level.”

Asked by another member of the audience what his advice would be aspiring filmmakers, De Niro simply summed up: “Just keep plugging away.”

-ENDS-

About Doha Film Institute:

Doha Film Institute (DFI) is an independent cultural organisation established in 2010 to incorporate Qatar’s film initiatives under one banner; organically supporting the growth of the local film community by enhancing industry knowledge, cultivating film appreciation and contributing to the development of sustainable creative industries in Qatar. DFI’s year-round platforms include funding and production of local, regional and international films, educational programmes, film screenings, and the annual Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF). With culture, community, education and entertainment at its foundation, DFI serves as an all-encompassing film hub in Doha, as well as a resource for the region and the rest of the world. DFI is committed to supporting Qatar’s 2030 vision for the development of a knowledge-based economy. DFI has established a number of strategic cultural partnerships with leading local and international organisations including Tribeca Enterprises, World Cinema Foundation, Maisha Film Lab, Katara Cultural Village and Giffoni Film Festival.

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