



Press Release

Doha Film Institute Announces Special Screenings Line-Up for 2015 Ajyal Youth Film Festival

- *World premiere of animated feature film 'Bilal' to close Festival's third edition*
- *Middle East Premiere of Pixar Animation Studios latest release included in line-up along with one of the final anime sensations from Ghibli Studios*
- *An inclusive cinema experience presented for the first time in the Gulf on the UN's International Day of Persons With Disabilities*

Doha, Qatar; November 9, 2015: The third annual Ajyal Youth Film Festival, presented by the Doha Film Institute, will close with the world premiere of animated feature film ***Bilal*** on December 5 at Katara. The latest release from Pixar Animation Studios, two films from international master directors, one of the final anime sensations from Japan's Ghibli Studios and a Qatari short round out the Special Screenings section that includes films from Qatar, the United States, Japan, India and Italy.

The festival will come to a close with the world premiere of, ***Bilal*** (UAE/2015), a new animated feature film made with funding from the Doha Film Institute and produced by Dubai-based Barajoun Studios. Involving creative talents from 22 countries, ***Bilal*** by Directors Ayman Jamal and Khurram Alavi is an inspiring adventure story of faith, hope and self-discovery. Combining a wonderful script inspired by the real-life story of Bilal Bin Rabah, the film presents breathtaking animation technology, impeccable research and high production values that will resonate with audiences across generations. The cast and crew of the film will be in attendance for the premiere including the directors of the film and cast members Andre Robinson (*Despicable Me 2*) and Adewale Akinnuoye Agbaje (*Lost*, *The Bourne Identity*, *Game of Thrones*) who voice the young and adult Bilal respectively.

The Ajyal Family Weekend will feature the regional premiere of ***The Good Dinosaur (USA/2015)***, the new film from Pixar Animation Studios and the team behind beloved Pixar classics *Finding Nemo* and *Inside Out*. Taking place on Friday December 4th, the film's first screening in the region will feature a special 'kids red carpet' for all families and young people from the community to participate.

Marking the UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Ajyal 2015 will present in a regional first, an inclusive cinema experience specially 'transadapted' to suit audiences with different abilities, a special screening of Al Rayyan Productions animated short ***Hero and the Message*** (Qatar/2012). Guests will be able to view the film through sound alone, with special subtitles for people who have difficulty understanding speech. This inclusive version of the film has been developed with the support of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and is the result of a collaboration between the Doha Film Institute and the Translation and Interpreting Institute at Hamad Bin Khalifa University who are spearheading the development of transadapted content in the Gulf region.

Fatma Al Remaihi, Chief Executive Officer of Doha Film Institute and Festival Director of Ajyal Youth Film Festival, commented, "Since our first edition, animated films have formed a core part of the Ajyal



programme and I am delighted that this year, we will premiere three incredibly diverse examples of the artform. Pixar's *The Good Dinosaur*, Studio Ghibli's *When Marnie Was There* and Barajoun Studios' *Bilal*, an impressive debut from our own region, represent the highest levels of animated filmmaking from three corners of the globe."

"Making the line-up even more memorable is our special inclusive screening of Qatari animation *Hero and the Message* that highlights our efforts to use cinema as a medium to raise awareness and foster inclusion of people with different abilities and I would like to thank the Translation and Interpreting Institute for their partnership in bringing this event to the festival this year."

"Alongside these animated titles, the films in our Special Screenings section present a vibrant selection of local and international films that will provide diverse cinematic experiences. We look forward to welcoming all our guests at this year's Festival and providing them with access to films that will inspire and entertain."

Earlier announced titles within the Special Screenings programme include Nanni Moretti's *Mia Madre* (Italy/2015) and *Tigers* by Danis Tanovic (India, France, UK/2014), screening on the 30th of November and the festival's opening night gala *The Idol* by Hany Abu-Assad which will have its regional premiere at Ajyal.

Al Remaihi confirmed today that Academy Award nominated director, Hany Abu-Assad and Arab Idol champion Mohammed Assaf, whose life story the film is based on, will attend the opening night in Doha on November 29th and will also participate in a special 'In Conversation' session on 30th November. The talented duo will provide an in-depth discussion about bringing Assaf's life story to the big screen and highlight the power of combining music and cinema and the challenges facing Arab artists today.

Bilal (UAE/2015) In a dreamlike vision, mysterious dark riders mounted on demonic black horses bear down upon a village. Nearby, little Bilal dreams of being a great warrior as he gallops along on his hobbyhorse. The riders come closer – are they real? Or are they just a figment of the youngster's extraordinary imagination? Suddenly, Bilal's dream becomes a nightmare. The men on horseback kill his mother and take him captive along with Ghufaira, his sister, and they are soon sold as slaves to Umayya, the wealthiest merchant in all of Arabia. Bilal never forgets this terrible day, which haunts his sleep for years to come. But the echoes of his mother's gentle voice stay with him, a constant reminder that to break free of the chains that enslave him, he must forge his own destiny.

The Good Dinosaur (USA/2015), the latest feature from the award-winning Pixar Animation Studios transports us to a world where dinosaurs walk the Earth. Directed by Peter Sohn, the film screens on December 4th and presents an alternate history where the asteroids that wiped out these ancient reptiles never hit our planet.

Hero and the Message (Qatar/2012) tells the fantastic tale of a Qatari brother and sister who travel back in time to witness the founding events of the State of Qatar. Produced by Al Rayyan Productions, the top-notch animated short directed by Pawel Borowski was created to celebrate Qatar's National Day in 2012, and screens on the 3rd of December.



When Marnie Was There (Japan/2014), screening on December 4 is one of the final anime sensations from Ghibli Studios and is based on the novel *When Marnie Was There* by Joan G. Robinson. Directed by Hiromasa Yonebayashi, the film is about a young girl Anna who explores a long- abandoned villa and meets a mysterious blonde girl only she can see.

The third annual Ajyal Youth Film Festival will be held from Nov 29 – Dec 5 at Katara. The programme consists of daily public screenings of local and international films; the popular ‘Made in Qatar’ section dedicated to showcasing home-grown talent from Qatar; SONY Cinema Under the Stars; family weekend; the Doha Giffoni Youth Media Summit; special events and exhibitions; the Sandbox interactive digital playground; school screenings; and the Ajyal Competition, where hundreds of young jurors between the ages of 8 and 21 will watch and discuss shorts and features and decide on the winning films.

For more information on the movie timings and the Ajyal Youth Film Festival, log onto www.dohafileminstitute.com.

-ENDS-

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 Youth 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

Press Enquiries:

Menna Gomaa

Communications Associate

+974/55073325

mgomaa@dohafileminstitute.com

MENA Press Enquiries:

Abbas Moussa / Aileen Andojar

ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller

+974 4423 9222

Abbas.moussa@bm.com / aileen.andojar@bm.com