

Masters of cinema & global film professionals endorse Qumra for its innovative and purposeful approach and positive impact on regional industry

- *Masters of cinema and industry experts praise second edition of the Doha Film Institute initiative*
- *Community component of event strongly supported with sold-out screenings*
- *Directors and Producers associated with 33 film projects, including 15 from Qatar, benefit from strong industry linkages*

Doha, Qatar; March 16, 2016: The 2016 Qumra Masters, project participants and international industry experts have feted the second edition of Qumra, the annual industry event by the Doha Film Institute, for catalysing the development of a vibrant regional film industry and shaping the skillsets of emerging talent.

More than 100 industry professionals, including international film festival directors, producers, fund managers, script consultants, sales agents, distributors and other experts took part in the event, which delivered meaningful experiences to participants across three main programmes.

The first was a series of Masterclasses by the five Qumra Masters – screenwriter, director and leading US indie producer James Schamus; Turkish auteur and Cannes Palme d’Or winner, Nuri Bilge Ceylan; Japanese Cannes Grand Prix winner writer/director Naomi Kawase; Russian auteur and Golden Lion winner Aleksandr Sokurov; and two-time Academy Award nominated US documentarian Joshua Oppenheimer. The sessions were open to the representatives of the 33 international projects chosen by the Doha Film Institute for mentoring this year as well as a group of accredited industry delegates from the Qatari film and media industries.

The second component of Qumra was the industry programme for the 33 selected projects in development and post-production, comprised of a series of mentoring and one-on-one sessions with the world’s leading industry experts and a selection of work-in-progress and ‘picture lock’ screenings for projects in their final stages. Over the six day event, the projects participated in a total of 182 match-made meetings with producers and funds; 133 one-on-one bespoke tutorials with experts and mentors; 25 individual ‘Meet the Master’ sessions with the Qumra Masters; seven rough-cut consultations; seven script consultations; 20 working breakfast roundtable sessions; and more than 50 other one-on-one meetings.

The third aspect was the Qumra Screenings – a series of public screenings of works by the five Qumra Masters as well as films supported by the Doha Film Institute grants programme showcased in the ‘New Voices in Cinema’ segment which took place at the Museum of Islamic Art auditorium and were accompanied by question-and-answer sessions with the filmmakers.

A platform for emerging talent

Fatma Al Remaihi, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: “Last year, we launched Qumra and embarked on an ambitious journey to provide emerging talent with an industry platform to help them build their skills and foster meaningful industry connections. In its second edition, we are excited to see it define its own niche with experts from across the world taking part in the discussions and asserting their commitment to supporting young filmmakers. We thank them for

being here in Qatar and sharing their experience with the spirit of generosity that has come to embody this event.”

“The two major changes we implemented for the second edition were the introduction of the Qumra Shorts programme, a dedicated strand specifically tailored to those working in the short form; and an expanded number of non-fiction films in the selection of projects (increased from 4 to 10 this year), further enhanced by the inclusion of a non-fiction master for the first time. Qumra always was, and will remain dedicated to filmmakers and we look forward to continuing to develop and refine the form of this event each year with their input to meet their needs.”

Elia Suleiman, Artistic Advisor of the Doha Film Institute, reinforced the importance of Qumra as a space to inspire young filmmakers. Speaking during the event, he spoke of the importance of this support at a time when fences and borders are being built, and new ones are springing up all over the world: “The imagination and poetry of our young filmmakers serve as a resistance to these borders. The fact that we are here at Qumra shows the confidence in our filmmakers to break these barriers”.

Masters’ Voice

The concept of Qumra has received high praise from the five Qumra Masters who attended the event, with Joshua Oppenheimer comparing the flair of Qumra to that of the Telluride Film Festival.

“This is a very serious event,” he observed. “I have been to only very few film related events of this gravity. It is a place where people are so serious and so questing to find new ways of telling stories that are adequate to the impossible experiences in this region. Being here and listening to people’s stories and questions, and meeting the Masters, I feel like I attended a masterclass.”

He added: “It was so inspiring to see people whose exploration and innovation of the film form was not something done out of intellectual or aesthetic curiosity but out of an urgent need to figure out how they make sense of the disjointed world when they themselves, and their own experiences of the world has been formed by that same violence and rupture.”

Naomi Kawase said that Qumra has a significant role in telling the young generation of the world that they can do something in their own hometowns. “You have filmmakers here from all over the world. And why do they come here? That is because we want to hand down culture to our young generation.”

Aleksandr Sokurov praised the maturity of the filmmakers he mentored during Qumra: “Sometimes it’s very difficult to deal with emerging film-makers because they’re not sure of themselves, they don’t have clear ideas. But here I have seen something very mature, they are really professional,” he said.

Industry appreciation

The importance of nurturing young talent, the top priority of Qumra, was echoed by industry experts too. A script consultant from Australia, Clare Dobbin described Qumra as an ‘amazing opportunity for filmmakers,’ adding ‘it presents delegates a view of how the entire industry works.’

Carlo Chatrian, Artistic Director, Festival del Film Locarno, said the interesting mix of the event ensures an enriching experience for the delegates, who can benefit from the diversity while the ‘human experience’ of one-to-one meetings and spending time in an intimate setting helps industry professionals to understand the young filmmakers and their projects better.

A programmer of Buenos Aires International Film Festival, Violeta Bava said the unique benefit of Qumra is that it ‘really discusses cinema’ with none of the distractions, and presents the opportunity to meet people who are all on the same page.

Matthieu Darras, Artistic Director, Torino Film Lab, said that the intimate setting of Qumra serves in providing ‘an overview of everything about the industry’ for the delegates, describing it as a welcome difference in comparison to film festivals.

Global Voices in Doha

Delivering its mandate of supporting the next generation in filmmaking talent, Qumra nurtured 33 projects including 13 narrative feature films, 10 feature documentaries and 10 short films.

The projects represented 19 countries of production with a total of 15 projects from Qatar-based filmmakers, 12 from the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region and 6 from the rest of the world. Of the 33 projects, 11 are features films in development, 12 are in post-production and 10 are short films in development.

Twenty of the feature projects are alumni of the Institute’s grants programme and 3 are by independent filmmakers from Qatar. Of the 10 short projects, 7 are by Qatari filmmakers and 3 are by Qatar-based filmmakers identified through the Institute’s ongoing engagement with local industry.

Celebrating Qatari talent, Qumra opened with a screening of Jassim Al Rumaihi’s *The Palm Tree* (Qatar, No Dialogue, 2015) in the New Voices in Cinema segment, winner of the Made in Qatar Award for Best Documentary at the 2015 Ajyal Youth Film Festival.

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About Qumra:

Qumra is an initiative that seeks to provide mentorship, nurturing and hands-on development for filmmakers from Qatar and around the world, alongside a series of screenings for Doha audiences featuring films by international masters and recipients of support from the Institute.

** The Arabic term ‘qumra’ is popularly said to be the origin of the word ‘camera’, and to have been used by the scientist, astronomer and mathematician Alhazen (Ibn al-Haytham, 965-c.1040 CE), whose work in optics laid out the principles of the camera obscura.*

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

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