

58 Short Films to Delight Audiences at 8th Ajyal Film Festival

- Specially curated programme of short films available online to audiences in Qatar and the MENA region for viewing from the comfort of their home
- 20 DFI Grant-supported films are part of short-film line up
- Line-up includes *I am Afraid to Forget Your Face*, second Arab film ever to win the Palme d'Or for short films at the 2020 special edition of Cannes Film Festival

Doha, Qatar; November 08 2020: The 8th Ajyal Film Festival, the Doha Film Institute's (DFI) annual cinema event taking place in a new hybrid format from 18 to 23 November, will feature an inspiring slate of 58 short films. The Qatar Public Shorts section will include programmes themed **Matter of Integrity** and **A Winding Road**, while the Qatar & MENA Public Shorts section features **Dare to Imagine** and **Echoes of Another** programmes.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Festival Director and Chief Executive Officer of DFI, said: "Ajyal is an important platform that amplifies emerging voices to leave a legacy of hope for young leaders of tomorrow. Our carefully curated international short films programme reflects our commitment to develop and encourage our youth to participate in cinematic dialogue in a new virtual creative space of understanding that transcends physical separation. Film as a medium can spark significant social impact as it shapes our perception of the world and imparts lifelong lessons."

Qatar Public Shorts

The **Matter of Integrity** shorts programme explores inner strength and integrity as the protagonists face compelling struggles to prove that nothing can dim the light that shines from within. The programme features: *I am Afraid to Forget Your Face* (Egypt, France, Qatar, Belgium/2020) by Sameh Alaa in which, after being separated for 82 days, Adam travels down a rough road to be reunited with the one he loves; *David* (USA/2020) by Zach Woods is about a severely depressed man that reaches out for an emergency therapy session – but he is not the only one who needs help; *Witness* (France, Iran/2020) by Ali Asgari follows a mother that helps an elderly woman in a shopping mall in Tehran when a tragedy occurs; *Nightshift* (Egypt/2020) by Karim Shaaban is about Zein, an employee at a call centre, who receives a call from a disgruntled customer that may keep him awake for months; in *Clouds* (Oman, Qatar/2019) by Muzna Al-Musafer, Dablan faces pressure from his tribe to kill a leopard that is threatening the village in a place where the animals are seen as the ultimate test of a hunter's courage; and *Why Slugs Have No Legs* (Switzerland/2019) by Aline Höchli is about the city of animals where slugs have a hard time keeping up with the pace of life and, when a financial crisis hits, the industrious bees only see one solution.

A Winding Road is a programme that reminds audiences that life's beauty increases with age. The films explore kinship and its ability to carry us through the toughest challenges of past and present, childhood versus adulthood, and memories. The selection includes: *How My Grandmother Became a Chair* (Germany, Lebanon, Qatar/2020) by Nicolas Fattouh tells the story of an ageing grandmother that loses her five senses and in the process develops a closer bond with her faithful housekeeper;

The School Bus (Turkey/2019) by Ramazan Kılıç follows a young teacher in a rural village school in Anatolia, who requests a new school bus just to discover there is one small problem; *Napo* (Brazil/2020) by Gustavo Ribeiro is about a young boy who reinterprets old family photographs into new drawings, and helps his grandfather relive lost memories; in *En Route* (The Netherlands/2019) by Marit Weerheijm, nine-year-old Inay and her little brother try everything they can to cause a delay on a special family trip through the city; *Bethlehem 2001* (Palestine/2020) by Ibrahim Handal features a young Palestinian who recalls his childhood memories of the military invasion and siege of Bethlehem; *The Visit* (Iran/2019) by Azadeh Moussavi follows Elahe's visit to her political prisoner husband; and *The Present* (Palestine, Qatar/2019) by Farah Nabulsi is about Yusef and his young daughter setting out in the West Bank to buy his wife an anniversary gift - a seemingly simple task.

Qatar & MENA Public Shorts

The **Dare to Imagine** programme of shorts show audiences that great accomplishments require us to act – but also to dream. The programme includes: *Matilda and the Spare Head* (Lithuania/2020) by Ignas Meilūnas, the story of a little girl whose mother decides her head is already full to the brim, so she orders a second one; *Moonjump* (Germany/2019) by Lasse Holdhus in which Major Luna acts out her fantasy of drifting weightlessly in space in a swimming pool; *Falafel Cart* (Kuwait/2019) by Abdullah Al-Wazzan follows a lonely immigrant falafel vendor who stumbles upon a mysterious flower that whirls him into memories of his past; in *The Best Orchestra in the World* (Austria/2020) by Henning Backhaus, a talented sock named Ingbert applies for a position as a double bass player at the illustrious Vienna State Orchestra, but not everyone wishes him well; *Watchmaker at Time's End* (India/2020) by Shaheen Sheriff is about a protagonist that struggles to make the perfect watch to keep up with the times in Kerala town; *We Have One Heart* (Poland/2020) by Katarzyna Warzecha follows Adam who uncovers an extraordinary family secret when he comes across some letters his parents exchanged years ago; in *Left Foot* (Iraq/2020) by Falah Al-Baghdadi, a modest shoeshine envies one of his rich customer's material wealth, until he makes a startling discovery; and *Encountering Samir* (Jordan, Germany/2020) by Rand Beirut depicts the story of Farah and her brother as they make friends with an enemy counterpart - turning the barren battlefield into a magical playground.

The programme **Echoes of Another** is a testament to how finding common ground is the key to true understanding and recognition that the highest form of knowledge is empathy. The selection of shorts features: *Family Plot* (Japan/2019) by Shuichi Okita is comical Japanese short in which a would-be Wi-Fi thief gets much more than he bargained for; *Going After Refuge* (Turkey/2020) by Ibrahim Abazeed and Barış Elçin follows a wounded soldier who desperately tries to escape the battlefield; *Important Police Shift* (USA/2019) by Andrew T. Betzer is the story of a group of police cadets that are mercilessly hazed during the worst day of their training, the 'hardship day'; *Quarantine* (Lebanon/2020) by Ghadi Al Alam is an experimental short that transports us to Beirut, which has become a veritable ghost town under quarantine orders; in *Mascot* (South Korea/2019) by Kim Leeha, a determined fox pursues his dream of becoming a city mascot; *Prisoner and Jailer* (Libya, Qatar/2019) by Muhannad Lamin is the story of two contrasting Libyans—one a key official in the former regime, the other one of the most prominent figures of the post-revolutionary period in Libya; and *Apfelmus* (Austria/2019) by

AJYAL FILM FESTIVAL 2020

مهرجان أجيال السينمائي ٢٠٢٠

**THE SHOW
GOES ON**

**يستمّر
GOES ON**

**العرض يستمر
GOES ON**

Alexander Gratzner depicts philosophical dialogues between humans and animals on the important things in life such as freedom, existence and... apple sauce.

For ticket purchase and to access up-to-date information on the 8th Ajyal Film Festival, please visit:

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

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

2020 Ajyal Film Festival's Official Partners include: **Katara Cultural Village Foundation** – Cultural Partner; **Qatar National Tourism Council** – Principal Partner; **Novo Cinemas, Ooredoo** – Strategic Partner, **Msheireb Properties, Lusail, Qatari Diar** – Signature Sponsors.

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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.

Doha Film Institute

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