



‘Black Gold’: a New Era of Arab Film

Director, Producer and Key Cast Discuss ‘Noble, Universal’ Story at DTFF 2011

Doha, 25 October 2011 – The director, producer and key cast members of *Black Gold*, the Doha Film Institute’s first international co-production, appeared at the Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF) to discuss the film ahead of its glittering premiere, which will launch the third edition of DTFF.

The consensus among them was that *Black Gold* was a ‘noble, universal’ story that will usher in a new era of film in the Arab world.

Set in 1930’s Arabia, ‘Black Gold’ tells the story of two warring Emirs who make a truce that binds them to respect a no man’s land between their desert kingdoms. However, after oil is discovered, the stage is set for control of the area and the riches it promises to yield.

At a crowded press conference, Tarak Ben Ammar, the film’s producer and CEO of co-production partner Quinta Communications, said: “We are proud to be here presenting the film with the Qatari people, six years after I first came to Doha.”

He also spoke of his pride in filming during the Tunisian revolution, comparing the new openness of Tunisia after Ben Ali with the advances in storytelling that will come from the film’s new view of the Arab world, a far cry from stereotypical Hollywood portrayals of Arabs. He cited Warner Brothers and Universal Pictures’ involvement as indicating new openness to diverse Arab characters—a positive step.

The film’s director, Jean-Jacques Annaud, said: “My experiences of being on holiday in the region were very different from what I had heard and read in the media. It became my passion, and I wanted to make a film about the Arab world. We wanted people to travel for two hours to an Arab world that is not Hollywood.”



From left, Jean-Jacques Annaud, Tahar Rahim, Freida Pinto, Mark Strong, Jan Uddin, Akin Gazi, James Horner, Tarek Ben Ammar

Ben Ammar praised the “wonderful authenticity” of Tahar Rahim in creating the character of the Emir, which Rahim attributed to the universality of the film’s themes. British actor Mark Strong agreed, saying: “The film is about dignity, integrity, honesty, and being a good father, all of which cross cultural boundaries. As Amar, I didn’t feel like I was playing ‘An Arab,’ I felt like I was playing a father who just happened to have those qualities.”

Freida Pinto was asked about playing an Arab woman in the film, and stated that her character was brought up in a different time with different traditions: “Princess Lallah wants freedom, but she pushes delicately against her tradition by respecting her father as opposed to rebelling against it outright.”

In closing, director Jean-Jacques Annaud said that “Black Gold is not just a film about the Arab world. At the heart of the film is an open discussion about what the future will hold, which every civilization in the world has had to deal with.”

Black Gold stars Antonio Banderas, Freida Pinto, Tahar Rahim, Mark Strong and Liya Kebede. In a novel collaboration, legendary composer James Horner (*Titanic*, *Troy*, *Avatar*) composed the film’s score, featuring Qatari vocalist Fahad al Kubaisi on the moving opening track and collaborating with Qatari composer Abdullah al Manai on an adaptation of a traditional Bedouin song.

For additional information relating to Festival screenings, tickets, venues or transportation please visit: <http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival>.

The official website for Black Gold is: <http://blackgold-themovie.com>. The site will be live from 5pm AST

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Notes to Editor

About Doha Film Institute (DFI):

The Doha Film Institute (DFI) is an independent cultural organisation established in 2010 to incorporate Qatar’s film initiatives under one banner.

Located at Qatar's new cultural hub, Katara, DFI's many initiatives include film and television funding for MENA and international films, year-round education programs, film screenings, and the annual Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF).

In addition, DFI has established a number of strategic cultural partnerships with leading local and international organisations including Katara Cultural Village Foundation, Tribeca Enterprises, World Cinema Foundation, Maisha Film Labs and Giffoni Film Festival.

DFI was founded by H.E. Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani. Along with Her Excellency, DFI leadership comprises DFI Board Vice-Chair and Festival Board Chair, H.E. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Fahad Al-Thani; DFI Board Member and Festival Board Vice-Chair, H.E. Dr. Hassan Al-Nimah; DFI Board Member, Mr. Mansoor Ibrahim Al-Mahmoud; Festival Board Member, H.E. Sheikh Jabor Bin Yousuf Al Thani; and DFI Executive Director, Amanda Palmer.

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