



Stories of Hope and Intense Dramas Highlight DTFF's Arab Film Competition

27 Films That Showcase Breadth of Arab Filmmaking – From Established Names to Emerging Talent

- *Seven documentaries, seven narrative features and 13 short films representing 10 Arab countries*
- *Over US\$440,000 in prize money for winners including new Best Performance Award*
- *Films in competition reflect impact of Arab Spring on new generation of filmmakers*

Doha, Qatar; October 31, 2012: The fourth Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF), the annual cultural event organised by Doha Film Institute (DFI) to be held from November 17 to 24, 2012, presents established and emerging faces of Arab cinema in its Arab Film Competition line-up.

The Arab Film Competition this year makes a marked evolution in the cinematic sensibilities and approaches of the region's filmmakers, representing Egypt, Qatar, Tunisia, Algeria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Jordan, Palestine, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Through their films marked by a distinctive cinematic style, they address issues that were seldom tackled before such as freedom of political expression, family and love stories set amidst strife, and the searing tales of fighters in post-revolution nations.

The centerpiece of DTFF, the Arab Film Competition has a total of 27 films including seven documentaries, seven narrative features and 13 shorts from 10 Arab countries including first time entries to the competition from Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The Arab Film Competition for narrative features and documentaries has five world premieres and two international premieres; the Arab Short Film Competition has eight world and international premieres.

The films that make their world premiere in the Arab Film Competition include feature films: ***Asham: A Man Called Hope; Playground Chronicles; Die Welt*** and ***Goodbye Morocco***; and the documentary ***O My Body!***. The World premieres in the short film competition section include: ***Ismail, Sanctity, The Forgotten, The Wall, Bidoon*** and ***Tariq***.

His Excellency Mr. Issa Bin Mohammed Al-Mohannadi, DTFF Vice Chair said: "The most fascinating aspect of this year's Arab Film Competition selection is their thematic brilliance and attention to cinematic detailing. Bringing together works by renowned auteurs as well as high-calibre debutants, the selection is a clear statement on how Arab cinema has evolved, particularly after the events of the Arab Spring. The Arab film competition serves as a stepping-stone for regional filmmakers to showcase their creativity to the global community and complements our efforts to support the development of a credible regional film industry."

Auteurs competing for top honours include Merzak Allouache, Tahani Rached, Joana Hadjithomas, Khalil Joreige, Mahmoud Ben Mahmoud, Nabil Ayouch and Nadir Moknèche. Representing the emerging face of Arab cinema, directors such as Hanan Abdalla, Maggie M. Morgan, Karim Alexander Pitstra, Brahim Fritah, Tamara Stepanyan and Damien Ounouri will share the spotlight with established names. Their films present two uniquely different perspectives from the region, highlighting classical works and innovative approaches with several subject matters.



DTFF's Arab Film Competition also highlights the strong inroads being made by Arab female filmmakers with 10 films, more than one third of the total selection, portraying the struggles, aspirations, achievements and hopes of women across the region. To evaluate the impact of the Arab Spring on the region's cinema, DTFF will also host a panel discussion on 'Emerging Cinema of Change.'

Chief Arab Programmer Hania Mroue, who works closely with Chadi Zeneddine, Resident Filmmaker and Programmer, to curate the programme for the Arab Film Competition, explained: "Today's filmmakers are more confident, approaching subject matters that were rarely explored earlier, and present them in compelling styles that highlight the strong creative standards of the region's talent."

With prize money of over US\$440,000, the best feature narrative and documentary will each receive prize money of US\$100,000. An award of US\$50,000 will be awarded to the best directors in both categories. A Best Performance Award of US\$15,000 will be presented in the Feature Narrative competition. The Best Short film will receive US\$10,000 and a development prize of up to US\$10,000.

With an expanded Festival format this year, DTFF 2012 will showcase over 87 films from across the globe under distinct themed categories including Arab Film Competition, Made in Qatar, Contemporary World Cinema and Special Screenings.

This year, DTFF provides audiences a comprehensive and enriching cultural experience with new screening venues in Doha. Indoor and outdoor screenings will take place at Katara Cultural Village, Museum of Islamic Arts (MIA), and Souq Waqif.

Narrative

Asham: A Man Called Hope (Asham)

Director: Maggie M. Morgan

World Premiere | Feature Narrative | Egypt | 2012

The restlessness of Cairo during the lead-up to the 25 January Revolution provides the backdrop for the stories of six couples at different stages of romantic involvement. Linking these tales of aspiration, disappointment and joy is Asham, a street peddler whose optimism about a better future reflects the hopes of Egypt.

Die Welt

Director: Karim Alexander Pitstra

World Premiere | Feature Narrative | Netherlands | 2012

For Abdallah and many Tunisians, Europe represents a land where freedom and riches are easily obtained – and it seems closer than ever since he met a vacationing Dutch woman in a nightclub. 'Die Welt' explores the existential yearnings of a young, optimistic man, and the hopes and dreams of the people of North Africa.

God's Horses (Les chevaux de Dieu)

Director: Nabil Ayouch

MENA Premiere | Feature Narrative | Morocco | 2012

Inspired by terrorist attacks in Casablanca in 2003, 'God's Horses' follows two young men over a 10-year period, examining the events that gradually draw them from innocent youthful excitement toward terrorism and, ultimately, sacrifice. The film was a huge success in its native Morocco and has won international critical acclaim.

Goodbye Morocco

Director: Moknèche

World Premiere | Feature Narrative | France, Belgium | 2012



When ancient Christian ruins are discovered beneath the construction site she oversees, Dounia sees an easy solution to all her problems. When a tragic accident threatens the success of her plan, she abandons her scruples in a selfish attempt to remodel her life, destroying everything she loves in the process.

Playground Chronicles (Chroniques d'une cour de récré)

Director: Brahim Fritah

MENA Premiere | Feature Narrative | France, Qatar | 2012

In France in the summer of 1980, 10-year-old Brahim is becoming aware of the complexities of the world around him. By setting the simple trials and jubilations of youth against a backdrop of social turmoil, the director imagines what childhood treasures Brahim will take with him into the future.

Professor (Al Oustadh)

Director: Mahmoud Ben Mahmoud

International Premiere | Feature Narrative | Tunisia, France, Qatar | 2012

When the student with whom he has been having an extramarital affair is jailed for her political views, a professor working for the Tunisian government finds his career and his family life in jeopardy. 'Professor' is a vigorous examination of the state of human rights in Tunisia during the 70s.

The Repentant (Le Repenti)

Director: Merzak Allouache

MENA Premiere | Feature Narrative | Algeria, France | 2012

The touching story of Rashid, a young jihadist who leaves his mountain hideout to return home in an attempt to resume a normal life. With 'The Repentant', Algerian director Merzak Allouache delves into his nation's 'black decade', taking a close look at the lingering effects of extremism and civil war.

Documentary

A Deep Long Breath (Nafass Taweel)

Director: Tahani Rached

International Premiere | Feature Documentary | Egypt, Qatar | 2012

In a mere 18 days, the recent upset of power in Egypt brought about the end of dictatorship, and Egyptians began to remake their nation. What are their lives like as they take on the mantle of democracy? This film invites us to share their experiences during their revolution-in-progress.

Embers

Director: Tamara Stepanyan

MENA Premiere | Feature Documentary | Lebanon, Qatar, Armenia | 2012

'Embers' is a touching tribute to the memory of the filmmaker's grandmother – also named Tamara – through conversations with her elderly circle of friends in her hometown. Their memories and souvenirs of this beloved woman close a gap between past and present, and uncover some of the history of post-war Armenia.

Fidaï

Director: Damien Ounouri

MENA Premiere | Feature Documentary | Algeria, France, United Kingdom, Kuwait, China, Qatar, Germany | 2012

The struggle for Algeria's independence was fought by unnamed fighters whose selfless acts threw off more than a century of oppressive colonial rule. El Hadi, the filmmaker's great uncle, is one such unsung hero. Here, he illuminates the actions of revolutionaries during one of the world's most inspiring battles for freedom.

In the Shadow of a Man (Zoll Ragel)

Director: Hanan Abdalla

Middle East Premiere | Feature Documentary | Egypt | 2011



New freedoms have recently come to the citizens of Egypt, but what is it like to be a woman in that nation today? Through intimate conversations, four women from different backgrounds are transformed into unique, authentic figures who imprint themselves on our memories as they go through their own personal revolutions.

The Lebanese Rocket Society

Directors: Joana Hadjithomas, Khalil Joreige

MENA Premiere | Feature Documentary | Lebanon, France, Qatar | 2012

In the 60s, Lebanon launched the first Middle Eastern rocket, and the nation celebrated its involvement in the international space race. In bringing this forgotten episode to light, this film revives Arab dreams buried since the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1967 – a reflection of the reawakening of hopes in the wake of the Arab Spring.

O My Body! (Ô Mon Corps!)

Laurent Aït Benalla

World Premiere | Feature Documentary | France, Qatar | 2012

Conceived as a bridge between Mediterranean cultures, choreographer Abou Lagraa's 'Nya' is the inaugural work of Algeria's first contemporary dance troupe. On the eve of its world premiere in Algiers, 'O My Body' examines the piece's evolution and the former hip-hop dancers' discovery of new ways to use their bodies.

Rafea: Solar Mama

Directors: Jehane Noujaim, Mona Eldaief

MENA Premiere | Feature Documentary | United States of America, Denmark, Jordan | 2012

Rafea, a Jordanian Bedouin mother, leaves her desert home to travel to India to attend the Barefoot College, which trains women in the technology of solar energy. This education will mean a better life for her family and the village but will traditional values prevent her success?

Arab Short Film Competition: Film Programme

A Day in 1959

Director: Nadim Tabet

International Premiere | Short Narrative | Lebanon | 2012

Lebanon, 1959. An upper-class couple and their friend set out for a picnic by the river. En route, they pick up a daily worker and the unexpected events that follow challenge the comfortable sweetness of their lives.

The Wall (Al Hayt)

Director: Odette Makhoul Mouarkech

MENA Premiere | Short Narrative | Lebanon, Qatar | 2012

In Beirut during the civil war, Odette Makhoul Mouarkech's family would hide in Mary's house, which was known to be the safest in the neighbourhood because of its indestructible living-room wall. Now, the wall is being removed.

Blue Dive (Al-Lawn Al Azraq)

Director: Mostafa Youssef

MENA Premiere | Short Narrative | Egypt | 2011

Selim, a diver bewitched by the ocean, lays dying in a hospital bed. Mokhtar, a schizophrenic painter, contemplates the colour of death. Dalia, a nurse, remembers her father's drowning. Set in Alexandria, 'Blue Dive' is the story of a brief encounter encompassing death and the beauty and danger of the sea.

The Forgotten (Al-Mansiyyun)

Director: Ehab Tarabieh

World Premiere | Short Narrative | Syria, Qatar | 2012



Mustafa steals across the Israeli border with the help of a local smuggler. This is a one-way trip for Mustafa as he contemplates the end of his life. Forty-five years ago, he was forced from his home in the Golan Heights; his attempt to return is confounded by his inability to remember where he is going.

Bidoon

Director: Mohammed Al-Ibrahim

World Premiere | Short Narrative | Qatar | 2012

Aziz and Rana, two Qatar Foundation students of different social standing, have a secret love. When they decide they want to take their commitment to another level and get married, their families object to the proposed union. Now, Aziz must decide on his next step.

The Tunnel (Damousse)

Director: Karim Souaki

International Premiere | Short Narrative | Tunisia, Qatar | 2012

A couple mourn the tragic loss of a child. Isolated in the harsh conditions of the desert landscape, they try to overcome the pain and come to terms with their grief. A story of two solitary quests for reconciliation and survival.

Ismail

Director: Nora Alsharif

World Premiere | Short Narrative | Jordan, Palestine, United Kingdom, Qatar | 2012

A young Palestinian living in a refugee camp in 1949 struggles to escape imminent death when he and his little brother stray into a minefield.

L'Mrayet

Director: Nadia Rais

MENA Premiere | Short Narrative | Tunisia | 2011

Under Tunisia's totalitarian regime that began in 1987, Boum Mrayet is born into a world where people wear glasses from birth. As an adult, he is hired by a firm that specialises in writing the future.

Maqloubbeh

Director: Nicolas Damuni

MENA Premiere | Short Narrative | Egypt, France, Palestine | 2012

Five students who share an apartment in Ramallah are stuck inside due to the curfew. To kill time, they decide to make 'maqloubbeh', a regional Palestinian dish. They disagree over the ingredients, but finally find common ground and finish their preparations, when an unexpected guest interrupts them.

Pipe Dreams

Director: Ali Cherri

MENA Premiere | Short Documentary | Lebanon, France | 2012

Two moments in the history of contemporary Syria that echo the situation across all Arab countries: a memorable phone call between Syrian cosmonaut Muhammed Faris and late Syrian president Hafez al-Assad, and the removal of a statue of al-Assad by today's Syrian government to prevent its destruction by demonstrators.

Sanctity

Director: Ahd Kamel

World Premiere | Short Narrative | Saudi Arabia | 2012

Areej, a pregnant, young Saudi widow, will endure anything to protect her unborn child. Her brother-in-law wants to marry her, and she is sheltering a runaway young man in her home. A bold story about going against social customs, and trying to establish a friendship between men and women in a community that insists on gender segregation.

Tariq



Director: Alaa Mosbah

World Premiere | Short Narrative | Egypt, Qatar | 2012

Tariq, a teenager, wants to show his best friend that he is a man, but his mother gets in his way.

When They Slept (Qands ils dormant)

Director: Maryam Touzani

Gulf Premiere | Short Narrative | Morocco | 2012

Amina, a young widowed mother, takes care of her family with the precious help of her father. Lively and vigorous, the old man has a very special relationship with Sara, his youngest granddaughter, a sensitive and mischievous eight year old who will never let anything come between her grandfather and herself.

-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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