



## **Press Release**

# **Accomplished International Film Professionals to Choose Winners of DTFF's Arab Film Competition**

- *Four juries to select winners in Feature Narrative, Documentary Narrative, Short Film and Made in Qatar categories*
- *Total prize money of over US\$440,000 for region's only film competition fully dedicated to Arab cinema talent*

**Doha, Qatar; October 31, 2012:** Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF), the annual cultural celebration of Doha Film Institute (DFI), has announced the juries to select the winners of the Arab Film Competition, the only competition at any regional film festival dedicated wholly to honouring Arab cinema talent.

The members of the four juries, drawn from across the world, include internationally acclaimed film professionals, authors and cultural thought leaders. They will evaluate the Arab Film Competition's three segments – Feature Narrative, Feature Documentary and Short Film – as well as the 'Made in Qatar' segment of the festival, devoted to films made by Qatar-based talent. The awards have total prize money of over US\$440,000.

The Feature Narrative jury will be headed by renowned Tunisian actress Hend Sabry (*The Yacoubian Building*, *Whatever Lola Wants* and *Asmaa*). The other jury members are: Indian director Ashutosh Gowariker (*Lagaan*, *Jodhaa Akbar*); Dr. Emad Amralla Sultan, Deputy General Manager of Cultural Affairs of Katara Cultural Village; renowned Turkish filmmaker Yeşim Ustaoglu (*The Trace*, *Journey to the Sun*); and critically acclaimed Algerian author Mohammed Moulessehoul, who writes under the pen-name Yasmina Khadra (*The Swallows of Kabul*, *The Attack*).

The jury for Documentary Narrative comprises: Syrian documentary filmmaker, producer, and scriptwriter Hala Al Abdalla (*I Am the One Who Takes Flowers to Her Grave*), Qatari director Hafiz Ali Ali (*The Oryx Return*, *Scents of Shadows*, *Cab Driver*), and renowned Iranian artist and filmmaker Shirin Neshat (*Women Without Men*). The short films at the competition will be evaluated by Joana Hadjithomas, Tahani Rached, and Nadir Mokneche.

Appraising the 'Made in Qatar' showcase, which features the largest line-up yet this year with 19 films including 15 World Premieres, are: acclaimed Qatari author Waded Al Kuwairi; Saudi Arabia's first female filmmaker, Haifaa Al Mansour (*Women Without Shadows*); and founder of the Qatar Fine Arts Society and renowned visual artist Faraj Daham.



Mr Abdulaziz Al-Khater, Chief Executive Officer, Doha Film Institute, said: “We are thankful to the jury members, coming from around the world, to evaluate our Arab Film Competition entries. The jury members will evaluate the films to international standards thus ensuring that our films are benchmarked against the best. We are setting the bar high to ensure that the finest Arab filmmaking talent get the due recognition and international recognition through the Doha Tribeca Film Festival.”

This year, Doha Tribeca Film Festival will feature over 87 movies from 34 countries, with numerous nations making their debut at the Festival through the Arab Film Competition. The fourth edition will open with Mira Nair’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. This year, the Festival has expanded its scope to eight days, providing 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. Public participation will be central with the Festival hosting an array of large community events, including Family Day, as well as panel discussions, networking events and educational filmmaking programmes including Doha Talks and Doha Projects.

The events and programme at the fourth Doha Tribeca Film Festival underscores Doha Film Institute’s mandate to provide audiences with opportunities for education and entertainment in important community spaces.

#### **DTFF 2012 Jury:**

##### **Feature Narrative:**

##### **Hend Sabry (Jury President)**

**Hend Sabry** is a Tunisian actress who started acting at the age of fourteen, starring in *‘The Silences of the Palace’* (1994) by Moufida Tlatli. She went on to act in numerous Tunisian and Egyptian films; her breakthrough came in 2001 with the film *‘Mothakarar Morahiqah’*. She has made twenty-three films, three TV series and one TV programme, and is one of the most prominent actresses in the Arab world, with more than 20 international awards to her credit. Last year, Sabry starred in *‘Asmaa’*, a film based on a true story that addresses issues of the taboo around HIV/AIDS in Egypt, written and directed by Amr Salama and produced by Mohamed Hefzy. Sabry is also active in social and humanitarian work, and since 2009 she has been working closely with the UN World Food Programme (WFP) to raise awareness about hunger in the MENA region. In 2010, Sabry was named a WFP regional ambassador. She received her law licence from the Faculty of Law of Tunis in 2001, and her Master’s degree in law focusing on intellectual property and copyright in 2004.

Born in Mumbai in 1964, **Ashutosh Gowariker** graduated from Mithibai College, where he participated in theatre, dance and music, which led him on a unique path of self-discovery. After graduation, he pursued acting for 10 years before turning to directing. His film *‘Lagaan’* won an Audience Award in Locarno and was nominated for an Oscar in the Best Foreign Language category. Gowariker entered the world of Hindi cinema with *‘Ketan Mehta’s Holi’* in 1984, and followed it up with films like Mahesh Bhatt’s *‘Naam’* and Saeed Akhtar Mirza’s *‘Saleem Langde Pe Mat Ro’*. His film *‘Jodhaa Akbar’* won Best Foreign Film in Sao Paulo and the Grand Prix in Kazan, Russia.



**Dr. Emad Amralla Sultan** began travelling regularly at the age of 20 to experience the world's essential artistic venues, including Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera and the Teatro Alla Scala, among others. From an early age, he was attracted to independent and international cinema, and every year he attends many film festivals around the world, including the BFI London Festival, and the Cannes, Berlin and Venice film festivals. His experience during the last 20 years and his current post as the Deputy General Manager of Cultural affairs of Katara Cultural Village has allowed Dr. Sultan to develop his skills in cultural management. He also organises and oversees productions of outdoor opera, drama and ballet performances, as well as exhibitions related to photography and the visual arts.

After a string of award-winning shorts in Turkey, **Yeşim Ustaoglu** made her feature-film debut in 1994 with *'The Trace'*, which screened at numerous international festivals in countries including Russia and Sweden. Ustaoglu won international recognition for her 1999 film, *'Journey to the Sun'* (*'Güneşe Yolculuk'*), the moving story of a courageous friendship undaunted by political cruelty. The film received the Blue Angel Award (Best European Film) and the Peace Film Award at the Berlin International Film Festival, and swept the awards at the Istanbul Film Festival, winning Best Film, Best Director, the FIPRESCI Prize and the Audience Award.

**Yasmina Khadra** is the pen name of author Mohammed Moulessehoul. Born in 1955 in Kenadsa, Algeria, he adopted a woman's pseudonym while an officer in the Algerian army in order to avoid censorship during the Algerian Civil War. Despite publishing many successful novels, Moulessehoul only revealed his true identity in 2001, after leaving the army and going into exile in France. In 2004, *'Newsweek'* acclaimed him as 'one of the rare writers capable of giving a meaning to the violence in Algeria today.' His novel *'The Swallows of Kabul'*, set in Afghanistan under the Taliban, was shortlisted for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, as was *'The Attack'* (2008).

#### **Documentary Narratives Jury:**

**Hala Al Abdalla** studied Agronomy at Damascus University, then left for France in 1981 after being detained for 14 months for political reasons. In Paris, she studied genetics and anthropology before studying cinema. Her first feature documentary was *'I Am the One Who Takes Flowers to Her Grave'* (2006), co-directed with Ammar el-Beik. She has taken on various filmmaking roles including writing, producing, casting and production management. Al Abdalla has also worked with many Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian directors, among them Omar Amiralay, Mohammed Malas and Oussama Mohammed. She has sat on the juries of many international festivals, including Venice, Vaid Marcel, France, Rhodes and Vision du Reel in Nyon, Switzerland.

Born in Qatar, **Hafiz Ali Ali** received his BFA in Theatre Design and Technology from the California Institute of the Arts in 1999, and his MFA in Film Directing from Chapman University in 2005. His films include *'The Oryx Return'* (2007), winner of the Best Documentary Award and Best Director Award at the Arab Radio and TV Festival in Tunisia, and *'Scents of Shadows'*, which premiered at DTFF in 2009, and won the Silver Award at the Gulf TV and Radio Festival. His 2008 film *'Cab Driver'* screened at festivals in the USA, France, Canada, Spain, Tunisia, Russia, Oman and the UAE. He has also made numerous documentaries and TV programmes for Al Jazeera Children, including *'Garangao'* (2008).

**Shirin Neshat** is an Iranian born artist/filmmaker living in New York. She has held numerous solo exhibitions at galleries and museums internationally and is the director of the film *'Women Without Men'*, which received the Silver Lion Award for Best Director at the 2009 Venice International Film Festival. She is currently working on her second feature film based on the life and art of the legendary Egyptian singer Oum Kolthum. A major retrospective of her work will take place in 2013 at the Detroit Institute of Arts. She is represented by Gladstone Gallery in New York City.



#### **Made in Qatar Jury:**

**Wedad Al Kuwari** is an acclaimed Qatari writer who is considered a top writer in the Gulf region. She has written for many newspapers and magazines, such as 'Zahret Al Khaleej', 'Al Arab Qatari', 'Al Youm Saudi' and 'Al Osra Emirati Magazine'. She has written short stories and received many awards for her work; she also specialises in writing for children's theatre. Al Kuwari holds a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy and Psychology.

**Haifaa Al Mansour** is the first female filmmaker in Saudi Arabia and is regarded as one of the most significant cinematic figures in the Kingdom. The success of her three short films, as well as the international acclaim won by her award-winning 2005 documentary '*Women Without Shadows*', influenced a whole new wave of Saudi filmmakers and made the issue of opening cinemas in the Kingdom a front-page discussion. Within the Kingdom, her work is both praised and vilified for encouraging discussion on topics generally considered too taboo, including tolerance, the dangers of orthodoxy, and the need for Saudis to take a critical look at their traditional and restrictive culture.

Among Qatar's most important visual artists, **Faraj Daham** is a founder of the Qatar Fine Arts Society, where he has exhibited annually since 1981. As a young student at a technical high school in Doha, he encountered materials and tools that introduced a scientific approach to the artistic methodology he still uses today. He has held solo shows, including the much-lauded '*The Movement of Objects*', in the MENA region and the USA, and has participated in the Asian Art Biennale in Bangladesh, biennales in Sharjah and Cairo, and the Egyptian International Print Triennial.

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#### **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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