

Press Release

## 15 films supported by the Doha Film Institute to screen at 10<sup>th</sup> edition of Dubai International Film Festival

**Doha, Qatar; December 3, 2013:** An impressive line-up of 15 films including features, documentaries and shorts supported by the Doha Film Institute will screen at the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) 2013, from December 6 to 14, 2013.

Highly original, exploring new narrative styles and rooted in societal realities, the selected films highlight the diversity of filmmaking in the Arab world today, and the growing participation of young talent in the industry. Featuring films by auteurs to debutants, the selection also represents the vast geography of the Middle East and North Africa region.

Several of the films supported by the Doha Film Institute are competing in the Muhr Arab competition section of the festival. The selection includes short films produced with the support of the Doha Film Institute's Hazawi Fund, an initiative under its Gulf Film Development unit. Hazawi Fund aims to promote film production in the Qatar and the region, providing the opportunity to produce up to six high quality short films written and directed by Qatari and Gulf filmmakers, annually.

Abdulaziz Al Khater, Chief Executive Officer, Doha Film Institute, said: "We congratulate DIFF on its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and for its contribution to supporting the Arab film industry and talent. It is wonderful to see that films backed by the Doha Film Institute - several of them international and regional collaborations - are increasingly gaining recognition at major film festivals. The strong line-up of films highlights the tremendous filmmaking talents in the Arab world, and reinforces our belief that with the right support, their stories can reach global audiences."

Films supported by the Institute include two co-financed projects, 10 grant recipients and three Hazawi films. Four additional projects financed by the Doha Film Institute are available for viewing through Cinetech, the Festival's digital video library designed for sales agents and distributors.

The three Hazawi Fund-supported films which mark their premiere in the Gulf Voices programme of DIFF include: ***A Dream*** (Qatar, 2013) by Faisal Al Duwaisan, about Amer, who has a recurring dream every night in which his wife is with a strange man. His wife's suspicious behavior adds to his paranoia. ***Eye and Mermaid*** (Qatar, 2013) by Shahed Ameen narrates the story of 10-year-old Hanan, who sneaks into her fisherman father's shack, where she discovers the secret that he captures mermaids. ***Three*** (UAE & Qatar, 2013), directed by Nayla Al Khaja, is about a nine-year-old boy, who enjoys role-playing games with his younger sister. However, as his birthday approaches, he becomes increasingly hostile.

The feature narratives and documentary films at DIFF, supported by the Doha Film Institute's grants programme, include ***Champ of the Camp*** (UAE, Lebanon & Qatar, 2013), the first feature-length documentary filmed in the UAE's worker accommodation quarters. Directed by Mahmoud Kaabour, it follows a Bollywood singing and trivia competition that takes place each summer in Dubai and screens in the Festival's Arabian Nights section.

The five films in the Muhr Arab Feature programme include co-financed projects: ***Ladder to Damascus*** and ***May in the Summer***. Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Mohamed Malas, ***Ladder to Damascus*** (Syria, Lebanon & Qatar, 2013), narrates the story of Ghalia, who is possessed by the spirit of a girl. She travels to Damascus, where she meets an aspiring film-maker; love blossoms between the two, until the tumultuous events in the country affect them.

***May in the Summer*** (USA, Qatar and Jordan, 2013) by Cherien Dabis is the story of May Brennan, an intelligent, successful, published author who is set to marry her loving fiancé. But the cracks in her seemingly perfect life begin to show when she returns to her hometown Amman for the wedding.

***Three grantee projects constitute the other titles in the Muhr Arab Feature section: Pillow Secrets*** (Morocco & Qatar, 2013), directed by Jillali Ferhati, portrays the life of a young woman, who is drawn violently back to her past, when she recognizes the body of a woman as that of her mother.

Directed by Kaother Ben Hania, ***Challat of Tunis*** (Tunisia, France, Canada & UAE, 2013) is set in summer 2003 in Tunisia. It tells the story of Challat, who is on a personal mission targeting women strolling along the city's sidewalks. One woman sets out to track him down, determined to clear up the mystery of Challat, at any cost.

***Stable Unstable***, (Lebanon & Qatar, 2013), is about seven individuals who are on their way to visit their psychologist, clinging to hope that they can make sense of the past year. The film is directed by Mahmoud Hojeij.

Screening in the Muhr Arab Documentary segment are grantees: ***Birds of September*** (Lebanon & Qatar, 2013), directed by Sarah Francis, which depicts a glass van roaming the streets of Beirut. The van houses a camera that explores the city from behind the glass, and through the journey it becomes a mobile confessional capturing moments from people's lives.

***Walls and People*** (Morocco, UAE, Algeria, France & Qatar, 2013), directed by Dalila Ennadre, chronicles how each night, the voice of Casablanca takes viewers to the door of one of the city's inhabitants, who share snapshots from their lives – whether on issues related to illegal immigration, unemployment or political cooperation.

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**Waves** (Egypt, 2013), directed by Ahmed Nour, invites audiences to five special periods in his life – each portrayed as a wave. The film uses the director's voice over, animation, and a poetic sound & camera style to explore the extraordinary city of Suez, where the Egyptian revolution was born.

**My Love Awaits Me by the Sea** (Jordan, Germany, Palestine & Qatar, 2013), by Mais Darwazah, follows the director's journey as she returns to Palestine, exploring it through the poems and drawings of Palestinian artist Hasan Horani.

Two short films funded by the Doha Film Institute's Grants Programme also screen in the Muhr Arab Shorts category: **Blued** (Palestine, Norway & Qatar, 2013) by Rama Mari is set in a small village in West Bank, and follows the efforts of Yassine and her mother to hide a crime they thought would be easy to cover up. **Playtime** (Kuwait, 2013), by Hamad Altourah, narrates the story of Matthew, a 10-year-old, who finds company in Dalal, a Kuwaiti girl. Together, they plan to make an escape.

The additional projects available through the Cinetech platform include grant recipients **Bastardo** (Tunisia, France & Qatar, 2013) by Nejib Belkadhi, Merzak Allouache's **The Rooftops** (Algeria, France & Qatar, 2013), **Though I Know The River Is Dry** (Egypt, Palestine, Uk, Qatar, 2013) by Omar Hamilton and co-financed project **For Those Who Can Tell No Tales** (2013) by Jasmila Zbanic.

The films competing in the Muhr Arab awards stand to gain valuable prizes and industry contacts that bring global recognition.

**-ENDS-**

**About Doha Film Institute:**

Doha Film Institute (DFI) is an independent, not-for-profit cultural organisation established in 2010. It organically supports 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 platforms include funding and production of local, regional and international films, educational programmes, film screenings, the Ajyal Youth Film Festival and the Qumra Doha Film Festival.

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.

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