



Press Release

‘Talk to people, follow your passion and never give up,’ Roger Allers tells young animators

*Writer-director of **Kahlil Gibran’s The Prophet** Roger Allers ‘In Conversation’ with
Mohammed Saeed Harib*

Doha, Qatar; December 6, 2014: The ‘In Conversation’ session of Roger Allers, the writer-director of **Kahlil Gibran’s The Prophet**, the Closing Night gala at the Ajyal Youth Film Festival, with fellow animator Mohammed Saeed Harib, offered interesting insights into the career of one of the world’s admired animators whose passion for the art goes back to when he was only four years old.

Allers said that Disney’s *Peter Pan* influenced him so much that he had always wanted to be a ‘Disney animator.’ However, he went through several setbacks including an early rejection by the art school and three of his first feature film projects never making it to the screen.

His advice to animators therefore was “to follow your passion, talk to people to learn more and find opportunities and never to give up. It always helps to know what everyone less does in the studio,” said Allers. “So find time to talk to others to learn what they do.”

Allers, who started his career working with a studio doing the entire breadth of animation work, finally got his big break with *The Lion King*, which he co-directed. The Academy Award-nominated animator (*The Little Matchgirl*), said he had been profoundly influenced by Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet*, which he read as a student. “It brought a big change of consciousness within me, and that has stayed with me ever since.”

He said the book finds resonance in people across the world, and was “very excited” with the opportunity to create the film, co-funded by Doha Film Institute. “The film is not just my vision; it is the vision of all the different directors.”

Allers said his task, entrusted by the film’s producer Salma Hayek-Pinault, was to create a “narrative that binds the different poems,” adding that *Kahlil Gibran’s The Prophet* is very different from other animated films as it presents philosophical observations on life.

Philosophical takes, however, have been not been new to him. Allers said that *The Lion King* connected to audiences because “it explores deep themes – the subject of loss, finding that connection within, dealing within and finding one’s place in the world. It was about finding one’s own way to live responsibly for the community.”



Allers said he found the transition from hand-drawn animation to computer generated (CG) effects, but ultimately “the vocabulary is the same for traditional and CG animation.”

Narrating his own experience of working on *Kahlil Gibran’s The Prophet* and the evolution of the industry, Mohammed Saeed Harib said it is a great time for animators and filmmakers to be in the Middle East – the testament being the close collaboration of the region’s talent on the path-breaking film that has gained world-wide acclaim.

-ENDS-

Photo captions:

Mohammed Saeed Harib and Roger Allers ‘In Conversation’ at the Ajyal Youth Film Festival

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 Youth Film Festival; and the 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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