

Press Release

## Doha Film Institute announces co-financing partnership on Hany Abu-Assad's *The Idol*

- 'The Idol' will premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival next month as part of the Special Presentations programme
- Qatari filmmakers participating in post-production internship with Hany Abu-Assad this week in London

**Doha, Qatar; August 10, 2015:** Strengthening its ongoing commitment to international film production, the Doha Film Institute today announced its latest co-financing partnership on Hany Abu-Assad's 'The Idol' (Ya Tayr El Tayr).

'The Idol', directed by Academy Award-nominated Palestinian filmmaker Hany Abu-Assad (*Paradise Now, Omar*), will have its world premiere at next month's Toronto International Film Festival where it will screen as part of the festival's Special Presentations, a programme dedicated to showcasing high-profile premieres and the world's leading filmmakers.

The film tells the inspirational true story of Mohammad Assaf, a wedding singer from Gaza who became a worldwide sensation after winning the live-singing competition Arab Idol in 2013.

Doha Film Institute CEO Fatma Al Remaihi said: "Hany Abu-Assad is one of the most significant filmmakers from the Arab world and we are honoured to be partners on 'The Idol'. Mohammed Assaf's remarkable story, the many struggles he had to overcome, and his love and commitment to his family and community in Gaza had a powerful impact on us. In the hands of a great filmmaker like Hany Abu-Assad, this story will undoubtedly continue to resonate with people all over the world. We are really looking forward to sharing the film with audiences at its world premiere in Toronto next month."

The Doha Film Institute has been involved with 'The Idol' from the production stage of the project and this week, two Qatari filmmakers have participated in a post-production internship, working alongside Hany Abu-Assad during the final edit of the film in London.

The post-production interns are: Yousef Al Moadhadi, an editor and director whose short film '10%' won the Made in Qatar Award at the 2014 Ajyal Youth Film Festival; and Leena Al Musalmani, a Northwestern University in Qatar graduate whose first film, 'Public Phone', screened as part of the Made in Qatar section of the 2014 Ajyal Youth Film Festival. The Institute's Co-financing Coordinator and emerging filmmaker, Meriem Mesraoua, was also in attendance to observe and learn from the experience.

Commenting on the experience of her internship on the project, Leena Al Musalmani said: "This has been such a valuable experience for me to gain first-hand experience on a feature production. It was amazing to observe the dynamic of the crew and how they are working as a team towards one goal and supporting each other to achieve it."

The Doha Film Institute's participation in 'The Idol' follows its recent co-financing role on 'Kahlil Gibran's The Prophet', an animated feature film written and directed by Roger Allers ('The Lion King') with 'chapters' from nine award-winning animators. Salma Hayek produced the film and is one of the voice cast. The film is currently on release in the US.

The Institute's co-financing division seeks to invest in projects that are culturally relevant and commercially viable, with the underlying aim of strengthening the film industry of Qatar by facilitating opportunities for collaboration and development for Qatari Filmmakers.

In addition to its co-financing slate, the Institute supports first- and second-time filmmakers from around the world and established filmmakers from the MENA region through its grants programme which has funded more than 220 films since 2010. National film talent is further supported by the recently formed development and production fund - the Qatari Film Fund.

**Photo caption:** Yousef Al Moadhadi and Hany Abu-Assad pictured during post-production for 'The Idol'

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**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 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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