

Doha Film Institute Supports Nine Films Premiering at the 40th Toronto International Film Festival

- *Official Selection Includes Three World Premieres and Six North American Premieres of Doha Film Institute Supported Films , including Hany Abu-Assad's 'The Idol' biopic about Arab Idol winner Mohammad Assaf.*
- *Three Qatari content makers attend TIFF to participate in industry conference.*
- *Doha Film Institute CEO participates in TIFF industry panel about the discovery of new talent alongside leading industry voices from Europe, North America and the UK.*

Doha, Qatar; September 14, 2015: Nine films made with support from the Doha Film Institute are screening at the 40th edition of the Toronto International Film Festival which opened on Thursday, 10th September. Three of the films make their world premiere during the highly anticipated annual event including the much awaited next feature from Oscar nominated director Hany Abu-Assad, 'The Idol'.

The Institute is also supporting the attendance of three Qatari filmmakers and content producers to attend the TIFF industry programme. Bassam Al Ibrahim and Mohamed Al-Ibrahim from Innovation Films and Khalifa Al-Haroon, the founder of iLoveQatar.net and the iLoveQatar network are participating in the seven day industry conference that brings together over 250 high caliber speakers on a range of topics relevant to the industry including financing, co-producing, marketing & distribution along with sessions dedicated to the craft of filmmaking, including master classes with prominent filmmakers.

Institute supported films in the official programme include eight recipients of Doha Film Institute grants with two world premieres: Lebanese crime drama 'Very Big Shot' directed by Mirjean Bou Chaaya screening in the Discovery programme; and Mai Masri's moving Palestinian drama '3000 Nights' in the Contemporary World Cinema programme. Other grantees making their North American debuts following successful international festival screenings include: 'Frenzy' directed by Emin Alper which won the Special Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival this weekend; 'Nasser' directed by Jihan El-Tahri screening in the TIFF Docs programme and animated short film 'Waves '98' directed by Elie Dhager, winner of the Palme d'Or for Best Short Film at the Cannes Film Festival earlier this year. Three Doha Film Institute grantees by first-time directors that all made their debut in Cannes are also part of the line-up. They are: Turkish coming-of-age drama, 'Mustang', directed by Deniz Gamze Ergüven; Palestinian drama 'Dégradé' directed by twin brothers Tarzan and Arab Nasser; and Ethiopian film 'Lamb' directed by Yared Zeleke.

'The Idol', directed by two-time Academy Award nominee Hany Abu-Assad ('Paradise Now', 'Omar') made its world premiere on Friday evening in the prestigious Special Presentations programme. Co-financed by the Doha Film Institute, the film tells the remarkable true story of Arab Idol winner Mohammad Assaf. Hany Abu-Assad and Mohammad Assaf were in attendance along with Qais Atallah, the Gazan actor who plays the young Assaf in the film and Ahmad Qasim and Abdelkader Abubarak who play his childhood friends.

Leading US trade publication, Variety, praised the film by saying: “A thoroughly captivating portrait of Mohammad Assaf, the Gazan singer who won Arab Idol at age 23 and became an irresistible symbol of hope for Palestinians worldwide” and claims it is “a picture that deserves an audience well beyond its natural Arab fanbase.”.

Doha Film Institute CEO Fatma Al Remaili said: “We are very proud to be in Toronto to represent Qatar at this important international gathering for the film industry as TIFF celebrates the milestone of its 40th year. The TIFF programme is always an inspiring reflection of what is happening in world cinema at this point in time and we are delighted to have supported nine films in the line-up in their journey to the screen. We are also very pleased to facilitate the attendance of three talented Qatari filmmakers and content creators to participate in the industry component of the Festival to further their professional development and networks within the international film community.”

Al Remaili participated in a panel on the weekend as part of TIFF’s Industry Programme titled “Industry Dialogues: Financing Talent Discovery” where she spoke alongside Doreen Boonekamp, CEO of the Netherlands Film Fund; Laura Michalchysyn, Executive Producer and Co-Founder of Sundance Productions and Deborah Sathe, Head Of Talent Development and Production at Film London. The panelists shared insights on how the financing process can lead to the discovery of new filmmaking talent through international opportunities, programs and mentors—and what filmmakers can do to get noticed.

The Toronto International Film Festival continues until Sunday, 20th September.

-ENDS-

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.

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