

Doha Film Institute Supported Films Win Major Awards at 2016 Cannes Film Festival

- ***Co-financed by DFI, Asghar Farhadi's The Salesman wins coveted Best Screenplay and Best Actor awards in Festival's Official Competition***
- ***DFI Grantee Divines by Houda Benyamina takes the Camera d'Or prize and SACD special mention for debut film in Directors Fortnight***
- ***DFI Grantee film Mimosas from Oliver Laxe wins The Nespresso Grand Prize for Critics Week***
- ***SACD prize handed to DFI Grantee film Diamond Island by French-Cambodian director Davy Chou***

Doha, Qatar; May 09, 2016: Four films supported by the Doha Film Institute have won top honours in key sections of the 69th Cannes Film Festival, including the Best Screenplay and Best Actor awards for ***The Salesman***, co-financed by the Institute, in the Festival's official competition. DFI grantee film ***Divines***, the debut feature by Houda Benyamina scooped the coveted Camera d'Or prize at the award ceremony held yesterday, along with a special mention from SACD for debut film in the Directors Fortnight section.

Selected to screen in key sections of the Festival, the winning films competed with the latest works from auteurs of cinema and emerging talents from across the globe at the prestigious film event that ran from May 11-22.

In addition, DFI grantee films, ***Mimosas*** and ***Diamond Island*** won key prizes at the Critics Week and Directors Fortnight sections of the 2016 Festival. ***Mimosas***, the sophomore feature from Spain's Oliver Laxe, scored the Nespresso Grand Prize awarded by the Semaine de la Critique's Jury at the Critics Week sidebar, whilst ***Diamond Island*** by French-Cambodian director Davy Chou won the SACD Prize, which is handed out by the French film screenwriters' guild. SACD also gave special mention to ***Divines***, Houda Benyamina's debut film in Directors Fortnight.

Fatma Al Remaihi, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: "It is a great honour for the Doha Film Institute that films we supported have gained top recognition at the leading annual film event. This has truly been an exceptional year for DFI at Cannes. We started the festival with seven films selected to screen in key sections and close this year's event with major prizes, which is a strong testament to the quality of films and filmmaking talents we have supported.

"We are delighted that their talent and creativity has been recognised by the festival jury and want to congratulate them on their success. These awards recognise the best in global filmmaking and we are privileged to have played a part in bringing these amazing projects to global audiences.."

Co-financed by DFI, *The Salesman* won Best Screenplay for Asghar Farhadi and Shahab Hosseini won the Best Actor award in this year's Cannes Film Festival. The Salesman is produced by Memento Films Production and Asghar Farhadi Production, in coproduction with Arte France Cinéma and in association with Doha Film Institute, Memento Films Distribution and Arte France.

Forced out of their apartment due to dangerous works on a neighboring building, Emad and Rana move into a new flat in the center of Tehran. An incident linked to the previous tenant will dramatically change the young couple's life. The Salesman stars Shahab Hosseini (*A Separation*) and Taraneh Alidoosti (*About Elly*). Farhadi won the 2012 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film for *A Separation* and the Best Actress Award at Cannes 2013 for his last film *The Past*.

Mimosas, a mountain odyssey with mystical elements follows a caravan through the Moroccan Atlas escorting a sheikh to be buried near his loved ones, but the quest takes a turn when the elderly and ailing sheikh dies en route. The sophomore feature from Spain's Oliver Laxe, won the Nespresso Grand Prize at the Critics week, awarded by the Semaine de la Critique's Jury.

The SACD Prize, which is handed out by the French film screenwriters guild went to *Diamond Island* by French-Cambodian director Davy Chou. This is the first narrative feature from the director, and follows an 18-year-old who leaves his village to work on the construction sites of Diamond Island, a project for an ultra-modern paradise for the rich, and a symbol of tomorrow's Cambodia. There, he reunites with his charismatic elder brother who went missing five years earlier and introduces him to an exciting new world.

Following its SACD special mention, Houda Benyamina's debut feature, the French drama *Divines*, also scooped the Camera d'Or prize. Part of the Directors Fortnight sidebar, the funny, often suspenseful and always emotionally involving drama is about a tough but naïve teenager, Dounia, who sees getting rich or dying trying as her most viable option. Her slightly more cautious friend Maimouna is less immediately willing to embrace thug life, but easily swept along for the ride.

The Nespresso Grand Prize is awarded by the Semaine de la Critique's Jury to one of the seven feature films in competition with a cash prize of €15,000 to the winning director. Previous winners include Jeff Nichols for *Take Shelter* (2011), Antonio Méndez Esparza for *Aquí y Allá* (2012), Fabio Grassadonia and Antonio Piazza for *Salvo* (2013), Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy for *The Tribe* (2014) and last year, Santiago Mitre for *Paulina*.

The SACD (French film screenwriters guild) Award is given to one of the seven feature films in competition in the Critics Week section. The winning filmmaker is awarded a cash prize of €4,000. The jury is made up of filmmakers that are members of the board of directors of the SACD.

-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.

Twitter: @DohaFilm; Instagram: @DohaFilm; Facebook: www.facebook.com/DohaFilmInstitute