

Inspirational Real-Life Stories Showcased at Ajyal Film Festival

Doha, Qatar; 22 November 2019: The seventh Ajyal Film Festival, Doha Film Institute's (DFI) annual celebration of cinema, hosted two acclaimed directors associated with **1982** and **Give Me Liberty**, offering a powerful platform to diverse stories inspired by real-life events from all corners of the world.

DFI-grant recipient **1982** (Lebanon, USA, Norway, Qatar/2019) by Oualid Mouaness tells the story of eleven-year-old Wissam and his struggle to confess his true feelings to his classmate as the air invasions close onto Lebanon. The film won the NETPAC Award for World or International Asian Film Premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival 2019.

At a press briefing, Lebanese-American writer and director Mouaness spoke about his latest feature film: "I chose to tell the story of a boyhood crush set in Lebanon of 1982 to bring audiences closer to a moment in time that has defined the country's history for decades to come. Being able to showcase my work at an amazing festival such as Ajyal will introduce a new set of curious minds to the stories of our past and raise awareness on how the culture of our region has been shaped through history." He has previously directed several short films, including *'The Rifle, the Jackal, the Wolf and the Boy'*, which was shortlisted for an Academy Award®.

A comical and endearing portrait of American dreams and disenchantment, **Give Me Liberty** (USA/2019) by Kirill Mikhanovsky follows the story of medical transport driver Vic's eventful journey to deliver his grandfather and a dozen elderly Russians to a funeral. The film is inspired by Mikhanovsky's personal experiences as a Russian medical transport driver in America.

Mikhanovsky is a Russian-born writer and director, whose latest title earned him the Golden Strands Award for Outstanding Ensemble Cast at the Tallgrass International Film Festival 2019. He touched on the significance of a filmmaker's body of creative work: "Prior to my work on **Give Me Liberty**, I was engaged in several short films and TV productions, each of which shaped by directorial experiences, as per the Russian saying *'You can't throw words out of a song'*."

Touching on the variety of tools available to aspiring filmmakers, he added: "Most of the roles in my latest feature are portrayed by non-actors who were cast in the streets of Milwaukee where the main events of the film take place. We employed a community-casting technique to deliver a more authentic experience to audiences."

Tickets for the 7th Ajyal Film Festival are available for purchase at the Ajyal Main Box Office located in Katara Building 10; at the Ajyal Box Office at VOX Cinemas Doha Festival City for screenings taking place at VOX Cinemas; and from the Novo Cinemas Box Office for screenings at Novo Cinemas, the Pearl. For ticket purchase and up-to-date information on the Ajyal Film Festival, please visit:

<https://www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival/ticketinformation>

<https://www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival/films>

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2019 Ajyal Film Festival's Official Partners include: **Katara Cultural Village** – Cultural Partner; **Qatar National Tourism Council** – Principal Partner; **Novo Cinemas, Ooredoo** – Strategic Partner, **St. Regis Doha** - Signature Partner.

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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 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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