

Doha Film Institute to showcase the best of independent American cinema to mark the 2021 Qatar-USA Year of Culture

- *Featured films will be screened in late October, in partnership with Qatar Museums and the U.S. Embassy in Qatar*

Doha, Qatar 19 October 2021: The Doha Film Institute (DFI) is launching two film series to celebrate the best of independent U.S. cinema this month as part of the 2021 Qatar-USA Year of Culture.

The 'Indie Hits' programme will be screened on 21st and 22nd October and will feature a selection of popular, independent films from the international film festival circuit. The 'Year of Culture Series' will run from 26th - 30th October and showcases five films that have helped shape the trajectory of U.S. independent cinema. Both series will be held at Building 16, Katara Drama Theatre.

The 2021 Qatar-USA Year of Culture is the latest in Qatar Museums' (QM) annual cultural exchange initiative, which was established in 2011 to deepen ties with countries around the world through events such as festivals, exhibitions, screenings, competitions, workshops and talks. Through these activities, QM aims to bring people together using different creative mediums to explore their similarities and celebrate their differences.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Chief Executive Officer of DFI, said: "Beyond typical associations of U.S. films with Hollywood blockbusters and studio titles, America and Qatar share an important past and present culture of independent cinema where unheard voices are amplified and celebrated. By screening classic genre-defining films alongside ground-breaking recent productions, we take audiences on a journey through the evolution of U.S. independent film, demonstrating the crucial role that it has played in raising awareness of social and cultural topics, and emphasizing the unifying power of cinema across borders and cultures."

Samantha Jackson, U.S. Embassy Doha's Public Diplomacy Officer said: "The Qatar-U.S. Year of Culture encourages dialogue on our bilateral relationship and shared ideals of tolerance and diversity. These discourses via film promote cultural engagement and authentically allows for creatives to comment on contemporary issues, while allowing a global audience to reflect on their own heritage and lives. Filmmaking is an important medium celebrating freedom of artistic expression."

The 'Indie Hits' programme features eight films released over the past five years that have played a significant role in shaping the dynamics of independent cinema. It includes two feature films, kicking off on 21 October at 5PM with ***Nine Days*** (2020) by Edson Oda, a supernatural drama that presents a heartfelt and meditative vision of human souls in limbo (also to be screened on 22 October at 8PM). This will be followed by ***Minari*** (2020) on 22 October at 8PM by Lee Isaac Chung, a tender and sweeping story about what roots us by following a Korean-American family that moves to an Arkansas farm in search of their own American Dream.

On 22 October at 5PM, the 'Indie Hits' series presents a specially curated selection of short films including: ***Feeling Through*** (2019) by Doug Roland which tells the story of late-night encounter on a New York City street between a teen in need and a man with physical disability ; ***A Concerto is a Conversation*** (2021) by Ben Proudfoot and Kris Bowers, charting virtuoso pianist and film composer Kris Bowers' journey as he tracks his family's lineage through his 91-year-old grandfather; ***Dear Philadelphia*** (2021) by Renee Maria Osubu explores three fathers' stories as they unravel the incomparable partnership of forgiveness and community in North Philadelphia; ***Two Balloons*** (2017) by Mark C. Smith, charts the adventures of two lemurs as they navigate their airships to meet each other but are suddenly disrupted by an approaching storm; ***The Elephant's Song*** (2018) by Lynn

Tomlinson, narrates the true and tragic tale of the first circus elephant in America; and **Radiance** (2017) by Chialing Yang, is a semi-autobiographical animation of a young girl who is coping with the loss of her grandmother.

The 'Year of Culture Series' complements the 'Indie Hits' programme by providing audiences with the opportunity to view five of the most iconic films, dating from 1973 to 2017, enabling them to track the progression of indie film over the past five decades. It commences on 26 October at 7PM with **Badlands** (1973) by Terrence Malick – often cited by critics as one of the most influential films of all time. This tale of crime and love documents how a teenage girl and her older rebellious boyfriend embark on a crime spree through the Midwest after murdering her father over his disapproval of their relationship.

Elephant Man (1980) by David Lynch will be screened on 27 October at 7PM and follows the story of Joseph (John) Merrick, who uses his congenital disfigurement to earn a living in a circus sideshow, until he is helped to become the toast of London by a caring doctor. On 28 October at 7PM, Jared Hess' **Napoleon Dynamite** (2004) will tell the tale of an awkward teen who, after a troubled family life, befriends the new kid in school and how together the two launch a campaign to run for class president. **Amreeka** (2009) by Charien Dabis screens on 29 October at 7PM, documenting how a vivacious Palestinian woman and her teenage son cope with culture clash as they try to build a new life in rural Illinois. The 'Year of Culture' series comes to a close on 30 October at 7PM with **The Rider** (2017) by Oscar Award-winning filmmaker Chloe Zhao, is a contemporary Western film that shares the story of a young cowboy who is forced to look for a new purpose, after a riding accident leaves him unable to compete in the rodeo circuit.

All films will be screened at the Katara Drama Theatre. Tickets are free but must be booked in advance via the DFI website www.dohafilminstitute.com.

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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.

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