

‘Press Play!’: 9th Ajyal Film Festival to Showcase 85 Inspiring Films from 44 Countries

- Award-winning film **A Hero** by Academy Award winning director and DFI collaborator Asghar Farhadi to open the festival
- Weeklong festival from **Nov. 7 to 13** to present a diverse range of activities that will bring the community back together to celebrate film and culture
- Expanded programme marks return to in-person events at Katara, Msheireb, Lusail and Vox Cinemas Doha Festival City
- Festival programme includes **31 Features and 54 shorts; 22 Arab films; 32 films** by women filmmakers and **13 films** supported by the Institute

Doha, Qatar; October 26, 2021: The ninth edition of Ajyal Film Festival, presented by the Doha Film Institute (DFI), will deliver a weeklong calendar of film screenings and community-oriented events under the theme ‘Press Play!’ to celebrate the return to in-person events in the spirit of togetherness and the resilience of the nation in addressing the pandemic.

Returning to its beloved physical events, the seven-day festival from Nov. 7 to 13, 2021 will feature a diverse mix of virtual and in-person events including film screenings, interactive discussions, multi-media art exhibit, Qatar’s largest pop-culture event Geekdom, and a drive-in cinema as part of a multisensory experience for all ages.

Audiences across the city can participate in the diverse offerings, with the Festival’s physical presence to include locations at Katara, Sikkat Wadi Msheireb, Lusail and Vox Cinemas Doha Festival City.

In line with updated government guidelines and with the health of all Ajyal participants as the top priority, DFI continues to work closely with Qatar’s Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and the Crisis Committee to deliver a safe festival experience with a balance of virtual and safe in-person elements.

This year’s **Ajyal Film Festival** will open with **A Hero** (Ghahreman), directed by Academy Award winning filmmaker and DFI collaborator and Qumra Master Asghar Farhadi. The compelling slice of life story, which won the Grand Prix at Cannes Film Festival earlier this year, will resonate with all. True to his signature style, **A Hero** is poignant and understated, and the moral dilemma the film unearths demonstrates Farhadi’s unique ability to turn ordinary human situations into cinematic masterpieces.

Tickets for the 8th Ajyal Film Festival are available for online purchase from today, Oct. 26. For up-to-date information and ticket purchase please visit: www.dohafilminstitute.com/festival.

Addressing the official press conference of Ajyal Film Festival 2021, Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Festival Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: “*The past two very eventful years have been full of uncertainty due to the pandemic, and its wide social and economic impact has resulted in a display of the strength of the human spirit. The collective crisis has helped us realize the importance of social interaction, and that we are all in it together. Ajyal 2021 reflects our deepened understanding of the world, where we appreciate now more than ever the importance of people coming together for creative expression and community.*”

She added: “Ajyal Film Festival returns with this year’s theme, “Press Play”, to move forward out of pause mode and rekindle people’s passion for play, exploration, and discovery through shared cultural experiences. As one of the first film festivals in the world to adapt to a hybrid format last year, Ajyal demonstrated that we have the can-do spirit – and this year, as the world slowly starts to re-open- we continue to represent the innovation and forward thinking of Qatar’s leadership”.

2021 PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

Presenting the finest works of filmmakers from around the world, Ajyal Film Festival 2021 continues to promote new voices in cinema that have a lasting positive influence and underlines the values of human empathy, valour, generosity and resilience.

The programme includes an impressive slate of **85** films from **44** countries, including Qatar, with a compelling selection of **31** feature films and **54** shorts from accomplished directors as well as first-time and emerging talent. **22** of the films are by Arab filmmakers, with **32** helmed by women filmmakers - nearly a third of the programme - highlighting the influential role of female talent.

DFI SUPPORTED FILMS

Ajyal will feature **13** diverse films supported by the Doha Film Institute, which include recipients of the Spring/Fall Grants, co-financing, Qatari Film Fund and mentorship through the year-long labs and development workshops.

This year’s DFI supported films include ***1982, And Then They Burn the Sea, Border, Costa Brava, Lebanon, Don’t Get Too Comfortable, Fever Dream, Land of Dreams, Little Palestine, Diary of a Siege Night, Olayan, Orca, School of Hope*** and ***Virtual Voice***

MADE IN QATAR

One of the most sought-after screenings of the festival, the 2021 Made in Qatar programme presented by Ooredoo, includes 10 films that represent the evolution of our homegrown talent and storytellers. This year’s programme includes World Premieres, and screenings of films presented to international audiences at leading film events in Locarno and Venice.

The Made in Qatar selection includes: ***A Lens Under Water; Don’t Get Too Comfortable; Olayan, And Then They Burn the Sea, When Beirut was Beirut, Border, Fever Dream, Kan Fe Nas, Remnants*** and ***Virtual Voice***.

INCLUSIVE SCREENINGS

Continuing the tradition of one of the most unique cinema presentations, Ajyal Film Festival will present the trans-adapted screening of Oualid Mouaness’ DFI-supported film ***1982***, to mark the UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Presented in collaboration with the Translation and Interpreting Institute (TII) of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), the programme highlights the power of film as a tool for inclusion that transcends physical limitations.

DRIVE-IN CINEMA

One of the most popular highlights of Ajyal 2020, DFI's Drive-In cinema at Lusail in partnership with QNTC returns with a diverse line-up of family-friendly titles and midnight horror screenings that appeal to all members of the family including **101 Dalmatians**, **Annabelle**, **Child's Play**, **Harry Potter & The Philosopher's Stone**, **The Conjuring** and **Maya the Bee - The Golden Orb**.

SPECIAL GUESTS

Ajyal 2021 will provide young Ajyal Jurors, aged 8 to 25, the opportunity to interact with several distinguished guests, who will share their insights and views on cinema including

ART EXHIBITION

Drawing inspiration from the Al-Kurd family living in the embattled Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, this year's exhibit '**We Will Not Leave**' derives its name from their defiant and now iconic graffiti art.

The multi-media exhibit at Sikkat Wadi Msheireb will bring attention to the everyday struggle of the Palestinian people – through 26 standout expressions by Qatar's creative community, who have come together in a spirit of solidarity, support and kinship for our Palestinian brother's and sister's to present a sensory experience that manifests both the poignant beauty and affecting hardships of their current subjugation.

AJYAL CREATIVITY HUB

The Ajyal Creativity Hub will serve as a destination for film, art and music lovers, transcending age groups to enjoy multisensory experiences. Taking place at Sikkat Wadi Msheireb, key activities include Geekdom, Qatar's largest and one-of-a-kind pop-culture event; Ajyal Tunes, celebrating the country's musical talents with three themed musical concerts and the multi-media Art Exhibit.

PARTNERS

2021 Ajyal Film Festival's Official Partners include: **Katara Cultural Village Foundation**– Cultural Partner; **Qatar National Tourism Council** – Principal Partner; **Ooredoo** – Strategic Partner; **Qatari Diar**, **Msheireb Properties**, **W Doha**– Signature Sponsors.

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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.

Ajyal Film Festival

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