

9th Ajyal Film Festival to Inspire the Community with Delightful Showcase of Activities

- *490 youth jury members from 52 countries to decide winners of the Ajyal Jury Competition*
- *Week-long festival to showcase 85 films from 44 countries including 13 DFI supported films*
- *Iran's submission to the 2022 Academy Awards®, A Hero by acclaimed filmmaker and DFI collaborator Asghar Farhadi to open festival's 9th edition*

Doha, Qatar; 6 November 2021: A celebration of new and independent voices in cinema from Qatar and around the world, the ninth Ajyal Film Festival – a stand-out event in the region opens today (Nov 7) to welcome the community with a wide range of activities curated to deliver memorable film experiences.

The weeklong film and cultural showcase offers something for everyone, marking the return to an action-packed week of a wide range of in-person and online experiences, enabling film lovers from around the world to explore compelling stories by outstanding filmmakers.

This year's theme, 'Press Play!', encourages the community to return to the much-missed physical togetherness and celebratory moments at the 9th Ajyal, while still following all safety protocols mandated by the authorities.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Festival Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: "As the world slowly returns to a new normal, there are few places better equipped and prepared to restart, rejuvenate, and reignite a passion for the arts than Qatar. The ninth Ajyal Film Festival returns to its original week-long run as we continue to present the Festival in an innovative hybrid format and expand the accessibility of all our programming to everyone in the community. Key to Ajyal are the life changing learning, friendships and unforgettable memories that film brings our youth and their families, as people from all walks of life come together to celebrate the joy of creativity.

"We admire the commitment and dedication of the filmmakers, who overcame the challenges of the pandemic to create extraordinary works of art. As we continue to experience unprecedented challenges, we are thankful for the commitment of our community to carry the spirit of Ajyal forward and help us realise our vision for Ajyal 2021, as we celebrate the resilience and positive spirit of our nation."

Diverse array of films

At Ajyal 2021, there is something for every film lover to explore – from intense dramas that present harsh human realities to inspiring adventures, much-loved classics, horror capers at midnight screenings, cine-concerts that will delight the little ones, and standout short films made by Qatari and international talents.

In addition to the festival home venue of Katara, the incredible Ajyal selection of internationally award-winning features and compelling short programmes films will also be screened VOX Cinemas, Doha Festival City. Audiences across the city can participate in the diverse offerings, with the festival's physical presence to include additional locations at Sikkat Wadi Msheireb and the drive-in cinema in Lusail.

Building on the continued success of the festival and its public programme, Ajyal's strong reputation for curating award-winning international films is reflected in this year's line-up of **85** films from **44** countries including **31** features and **54** shorts, which includes **22** incredible films by Arab filmmakers and **32** extraordinary women directors. Amplifying unique and compelling emerging and established cinematic voices, these spirited films address real-life issues from around the world to promote greater understanding and empathy.

Ajyal 2021's opening film reflects this sentiment with **A Hero** (Ghahreman), directed by acclaimed two-time Oscar winning Iranian filmmaker and DFI collaborator Asghar Farhadi. Among many recent international standout successes including the Grand Prix at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival, the film has garnered global awards and critical acclaim and is the official submission of Iran to the upcoming Academy Awards.

There are 13 films supported by the Doha Film Institute, including recipients of the Spring/Fall Grants, co-financing, Qatari Film Fund and mentorship through the year-round labs and development workshops.

The 2021 Made in Qatar programme presented by Ooredoo, includes 10 films that represent the rise of our homegrown talent and storytellers. This year's programme includes World Premieres as well as films presented to international audiences at leading film events in Locarno and Venice. A crowd-pleasing highlight of Ajyal 2020, DFI's Drive-In cinema at Lusail in partnership with Qatar Tourism returns with a diverse lineup of family-friendly titles and midnight horror screenings to appeal to all members of the family.

Ajyal Creativity Hub

The crowd-pleasing Ajyal Creativity Hub returns as the prime destination in Qatar for multisensory experiences. Hosted at Sikkat Wadi Msheireb, activities at the Hub 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.

Curated by Sheikh Khalifa Al-Thani, this year's profoundly powerful Ajyal Art Exhibition, 'We Will Not Leave', presents the works of Qatari and Palestinian artists who highlight the harsh realities of the Palestinian people in solidarity.

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

Tickets for Ajyal 2021 and can be purchased at www.dohafilminstitute.com/festival.

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About Doha Film Institute:

Ajyal Film Festival

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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:

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

About Ajyal Film Festival:

Ajyal Film Festival is an annual celebration of film designed to nurture young minds and support the development of mindful global citizens and thoughtful future leaders. 'Ajyal', Arabic for 'generations', brings people of all ages together through screenings and events that inspire creative interaction and stimulate cinematic dialogue.

Ajyal Film Festival builds on the Doha Film Institute's history of community-based programming. Through its jury programme, youth between the ages of 8 and 25 are given an opportunity to watch, analyse and discuss global cinema and culture, developing self-confidence, independent critical thinking skills, self-expression, and an appreciation of cinema, while making new friends and discovering global cultures.

Twitter: @AjyalFilm; Instagram: @AjyalFilm; Facebook: www.facebook.com/AjyalFilm

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