

On Ajyal Spotlight, stars of 'AlRawabi School for Girls' say the show's honesty helped break new ground

Andria Tayeh and Noor Taher shared their experiences of being part of the Netflix drama, 'AlRawabi School for Girls' and how the show has helped transform Jordanian cinema

Doha, Qatar; November 12, 2021: On the Ajyal Spotlight at the ninth Ajyal Film Festival, presented by the Doha Film Institute, the lead cast of the youthful Netflix drama, *AlRawabi School for Girls*, highlighted how the series not only helped push boundaries for Jordanian cinema but also serves as a relevant work that highlights truths that are less discussed.

Andria Tayeh, who played the lead role of Mariam, and Noor Taher, who acts as Layan and is a classically trained ballerina, said they were prepared for backlash and negative criticism about the series. "Given how important the issues discussed in the show are, the team at Netflix helped us anticipate any potential negative reactions and work through how to express what we felt. Even now, when we need support we reach out to them," they said.

Noor said she was fascinated by the storyline and the subject of bullying, which is seldom openly discussed. With every episode of the series, creators Tima Shomali and Shirin Kamal pushed boundaries so that *AlRawabi School for Girls* is now seen as a quantum leap in Jordanian cinema outside of traditional less provocative stories.

Andria said although she loves the local shows and the Bedouin-centric dramas that are a staple in Jordanian entertainment, this was "a giant step towards a new genre of film and series making. It does not present a distorted image of the society; rather, it presents facts that must be discussed. When we talk about subjects such as bullying, we need to address them directly so that we can put an end to it."

Trending in the top 5 series with international audiences, *AlRawabi* has enabled Jordanian cinema/series to make a distinctive mark, they said. "We believe that the future of entertainment will be centred around online streaming, especially as we see young people everywhere around us enjoying content on mobile phones," they said.

Andria and Noor aspire to further pursue careers in acting and are hopeful for a second season for *AlRawabi School for Girls*.

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

The seven-day festival until Nov. 13, 2021, has 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.

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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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