

Qumra lends voice and much-needed space to emerging talent, say accomplished Arab filmmakers

Doha, Qatar; March 11, 2023: The Doha Film Institute's (DFI) annual talent incubator event for Arab and international cinema, **Qumra 2023**, plays a decisive role in shaping the new generation of talent, providing them the voice and much-needed space to accelerate their script-to-screen journey, observed accomplished Arab filmmakers, who mentor young directors at the event.

Annemarie Jacir, whose films *Wajib* and *Salt of this Sea*, have captivated global audiences and won international acclaim, said Qumra is invaluable at many levels, including how it has enabled young filmmakers, especially who have bold themes to narrate, the support they need.

She said that themes set around Palestine and the struggles of its people are still taboo in the Western world and they are seen in a very critical manner. Qumra offers the platform for young filmmakers, who have such bold themes, to realise their cinematic aspirations.

While the landscape of cinema has changed tremendously since she started out, Annmarie says she is energised and inspired by the stories and narratives of today's filmmakers. "They keep you on your toes," especially in the manner they perceive various subjects that are relevant to the world today.

Annmarie said Qumra also helps create an audience for Arab cinema in the region, stating that it is possible that a huge critically and commercially acclaimed film can emerge from the region. "We must fight for our audience because the typical thinking is that there is not a large audience for Arab cinema. I never buy that argument."

She said that Arab cinema has long broken the glass ceiling, as is evident from the number of women filmmakers nurtured by the Doha Film Institute and participate in Qumra. "We have always had a level playing field."

Annemarie said she had wished for a mentor when she started her career as a filmmaker, one that Qumra today delivers for young talent. "My only advice to every emerging filmmaker is to trust their instinct – about the project and the situations they come across."

Tala Hadid, whose films such as *House in the Fields* have gained global recognition and has been associated with Qumra for many years as mentor, said the event has played a commendable role in offering seamless support to young filmmakers, even during the pandemic.

"Such support was much-needed, especially during the pandemic," she said. Describing Qumra as a 'very special space' for cinema, Tala said its vibe is "relaxed, open and supportive" and "creates a sense of community," which is relevant more so in today's world, where the spirit of being together is often threatened.

She said that over the years, young filmmakers who participate in Qumra, have had a fundamental quest – to make a good film without being fazed by the number of hurdles they must overcome. For her, the golden rule to any aspiring director is to "be honest in your endeavour."

Qumra is being held in an innovative hybrid format with in-person activities until March 15 and online sessions from March 19 to 21, 2023. This year, Qumra hosts over 200 international industry experts from 41 countries who will mentor 44 films, including feature narratives, documentaries, web series and shorts by emerging talents. The projects chosen are from 23 countries underlining Qumra's mission to support filmmakers from the region and beyond in their script-to-screen journey.

Qatar Museums, the Museum of Islamic Art and M7, Qatar's epicentre for innovation and entrepreneurship in fashion, design, and tech, are the Cultural Partners of Qumra 2023. The event is supported by Alwadi Doha – MGallery Hotel Collection as Official Hotel Partner; Darwish Holding (FNAC/SONY) as Official Electronics Partner; Qatar Airways as Official Airlines Partner; Aldo Coppola and Blumen Floral Art and Design. The Friends of Qumra this year are Sarajevo Film Festival, British Council and The French Embassy. The event is promoted by I Love Qatar, Qatar Living and Doha News. Qommunication is the Social Media Partner, while Deadline and Screen Daily are the Media Partners.

Ticket for the Qumra Screening is priced QR35 and can be bought online at www.dohafilminstitute.com

Members of the public can also buy the Qumra Pass to gain full access to the Qumra programme or buy a Qumra Pass Online for the master classes or individual screenings only.

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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 Youth 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.

About Qumra

Directors and Producers attached to DFI supported projects in development and post-production are selected to participate in the event. They will include a number of emerging filmmakers from Qatar, as well as recipients of funding from the Institute's Grants Programme. The robust programme will feature industry meetings designed to assist with propelling projects to their next stages of development, including master classes, work-in-progress screenings, bespoke matchmaking sessions and tailored workshops with industry experts. This creative exchange will take place alongside a programme of public screenings curated with input from the Qumra Masters.

The event is organised in three main sections: The **Qumra Master Classes** are daily sessions; each led by one of the Masters. The participating filmmakers have full access to these sessions, which are also open to accredited industry guests to attend in an observational capacity. The **Qumra Meetings** are a series of one-on-one meetings, workshops and tailored mentoring sessions between representatives from the selected projects and seasoned industry experts. The **Qumra Screenings** are open to the public and feature projects funded by the Institute through its grants and co-financing initiatives.