



***The Red Turtle*, described as a ‘wordless wonder’ is closing night gala**

6 critically acclaimed films from Cannes, Berlin & Sundance confirmed in first selection for 4th Ajyal Youth Film Festival

*Line-up includes MENA premieres of Cannes Palme d’Or winner **I, Daniel Blake** from Ken Loach, Asghar Farhadi’s **The Salesman**, Michaël Dudok de Wit’s **The Red Turtle** and Babak Anvari’s **Under the Shadow**; Golden Bear winner at Berlin **Fire at Sea** and Sundance favourite **Hunt for the Wilderpeople** to enjoy Qatar Premiere*

Doha, Qatar September 28, 2016: Doha Film Institute today announced its first line-up of six films, including the closing night gala, selected to the fourth Ajyal Youth Film Festival to be held from November 30 to December 5, in Doha, Qatar.

The selection celebrates excellence in world cinema today and includes films from acclaimed filmmakers such as Ken Loach, Gianfranco Rosi, Asghar Farhadi, Taika Waititi, Michaël Dudok de Wit and newcomer Babak Anvari, who are some of the most powerful voices within the international film community.

Fatma Al Remaihi said: “We are delighted to announce the first selection of films that will screen at Ajyal Youth Film Festival this year, featuring a diverse and captivating showcase of award-winning feature films and documentaries including four Middle East premieres. The six films present a wonderful showcase of how today’s filmmakers use the medium to present stories that touch a chord within you. The emotional context of these movies is intense while their visual aesthetics present new perspectives for emerging filmmakers.

“Each of the six films that arrive in Doha has made its mark for their impactful content, cinematic treatment and compelling narrative, and have won critical acclaim. They will provide extraordinary insights on global cinema for our young jurors and audiences in Doha.”

Described as a ‘wordless wonder’ and a touching cinematic ode to the cycle of life, acclaimed Dutch-British animator Michaël Dudok de Wit’s **The Red Turtle (La Tortue rouge)** [France, Belgium, Japan, 2016] will be the closing gala of this year’s Ajyal Youth Film Festival, marking the film’s MENA premiere. *The Red Turtle*, a visual poetry in cinema, narrates the story of a man who tries to escape from a deserted island and must battle a giant turtle. It premiered in the Un Certain Regard section of the 2016 Cannes Film Festival and won the Special Jury Prize.

Also making a beeline for Doha following critical acclaim at international film festivals is **I, Daniel Blake** (UK, France, Belgium/English/2016), the winner of the Palme d’Or at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival, and the Audience Award at the Locarno International Film festival. Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Ken Loach, the film is about the life of a middle aged carpenter who applies for state welfare, which gets entangled in red tape. He meets a single mother with two children who are facing a similar predicament. It stars English stand-up comedian, writer and actor Dave Johns in the title role. The film will screen at Ajyal in the competition section in the Bader segment.



Not to miss is ***Fire at Sea (Fuocoammare)*** [Italy, Italian, 2016] directed by Gianfranco Rosi, the winner of the Golden Bear at the 66th Berlin International Film Festival and Italy's official submission to the 2017 Academy Awards. Set in the island of Lampedusa, a frontline in the migrant crisis, the compelling documentary charts the risky Mediterranean crossing of 'refugees' against the background of the ordinary life of the islanders. In his acceptance speech, Rosi had said: "It is not acceptable that people die crossing the sea to escape from tragedies." The film will screen in Ajyal Competition in the Bader segment.

Iran's official entry to the 2017 Academy Awards, and winner of the Best Screenplay and Best Actor Awards in the official competition section at Cannes 2016, Asghar Farhadi's ***The Salesman*** will make its MENA debut at Ajyal 2016. ***The Salesman*** is produced by Memento Films Production and Asghar Farhadi Production and co-produced by Arte France Cinema in association with Memento Films Distribution and the Doha Film Institute. Forced out of their apartment due to dangerous works on a neighboring building, a young couple Emad and Rana move into a new flat in the center of Tehran. An incident linked to the previous tenant will dramatically change the young couple's life. The Salesman stars Shahab Hosseini (A Separation) and Taraneh Alidoosti (About Elly).

Screening in the Mohaq competition section at Ajyal is ***Hunt for the Wilderpeople*** (New Zealand/English/2016) directed by Taika Waititi. The film has won eight international honours already including the Audience Award at Edinburgh International Film festival, and was a sensation at the 2016 Sundance Film festival, where it premiered. Based on a book by Barry Crump, the film stars Sam Neill (*Omen III, The Piano*) and Julian Dennison, and charts the story of a rebellious young city kid who is sent to live with his foster parents; the two go missing in the wild New Zealand bush leading to a national manhunt.

Under the Shadow (USA/English/2016), a thriller by Babak Anvari, screens at Ajyal by marking the opening of the festival's first Midnight Screening. A DFI grantee project, the film is about a mother and daughter who struggle to cope with the terrors of the post-revolution, war-Tron Tehran of the 1980s. Adding to their woes, a mysterious evil begins to haunt their home. The film stars Narges Rashidi and Avin Manshadi, and has won international film festival awards for best film and best actress and is the United Kingdom's official entry to the 2017 Oscars.

The 2016 Ajyal Youth Film Festival bridges gaps and brings generations together ('ajyal' is Arabic for 'generations') through activities and events designed to inspire creative interaction among the various sectors of the regional community. The festival also includes the Ajyal Competition with entries in the Mohaq (New Moon), Hilal (Crescent), and Bader (Full Moon) segments evaluated by young Ajyal jurors aged 8 to 21 years. Applications for Ajyal Competition are now closed.

Ajyal Youth Film Festival also features the Bariq (Sparkle) programme for jurors-in-training, aged 4 to 7 and their families, Special Screenings, Thematic Tributes, Cinema Under the Stars, and the Creativity Hub.

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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.

Doha Film Institute

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