



‘Hunt for the Wilderpeople,’ ‘The Eagle Huntress’ and ‘The Salesman’ win Best Film Awards at 4th Ajyal Youth Film Festival

***‘Riceballs,’ ‘King’s Day’ and ‘Mariam’ adjudged as Best Shorts by young
Ajyal Jurors***

Doha, Qatar; December 5, 2016: The fourth Ajyal Youth Film Festival presented by the Doha Film Institute announced the winners of its Ajyal Competition, voted by Ajyal Jurors in three categories – Mohaq (jurors aged 8 to 12), Hilal (voters aged 13 to 17) and Bader (voters aged 18 to 21). The winners are:

- **Mohaq:**
Best Film - *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (New Zealand) by Taika Waititi
Best Short – *Riceballs* (Australia) by Shingo Usami
- **Hilal:**
Best Film: *The Eagle Huntress* (Mongolia, UK, USA) by Otto Bell
Best Short: *King’s Day* (The Netherlands) by Steven Wouterlood
- **Bader:**
Best Film: *The Salesman* (Iran, France) by Asghar Farhadi
Best Short: *Mariam* (France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia) by Faiza Ambah

There were 38 films in the Ajyal Competition this year; in the Mohaq programme there were four feature-length films and nine shorts; in Hilal – five feature-length films and six shorts, and in Bader – five feature-length films and nine shorts. Each of the Ajyal juries voted for the Best Film prize to their favourite short and feature-length films for a total of six awards.

The winners were honoured at the closing night ceremony that was followed by the MENA premiere of *The Red Turtle* (France, Japan), directed by Academy Award-winning Dutch animator Michaël Dudok de Wit.

Earlier, the festival also awarded the winners in the ‘Made in Qatar’ programme that included 17 films by Qatari directors and those who call Qatar home. The winners were:

- Best Narrative: *Kashta* directed by AJ Al Thani
- Best Documentary: *Amer: An Arabian Legend* by Jassim Al-Rumaihi
- Special Jury Award: *Al-Johara* by Nora Al-Subai
- Honorary Jury Award: *More Than Two Days* by Ahmed Abdelnaser



On the final day, actor Meg Ryan also addressed the Ajyal Jurors, speaking about her first feature-length directorial debut ***Ithaca*** (USA), a film that underlines the power of speaking out clearly against a world forever embroiled in conflict.

Taika Waititi's ***Hunt for the Wilderpeople*** intertwines off-the-hook wit, brilliant performances and a heartwarming story to provide a new take on the wilderness adventure story. Lead actor Julian Dennison, 14 years old, attending Ajyal, said: "It's the first time I have been to Qatar and its amazing here. There is a great sense of culture and it's great to be part of the festival concentrating on youth and get the next generation involved - spreading universally great films made in the Middle East."

The opening film of the fourth Ajyal Youth Film Festival, ***The Eagle Huntress*** is a heartwarming celebration of the passion of one very determined young woman, and of the wonderful ability of the human spirit to rise to a challenge. Director Otto Bell, the protagonist Aisholpan and her parents were in attendance at the festival.

Asghar Farhadi's ***The Salesman*** is a complex story of two people at odds in a space contaminated by mistrust; it had won the Best Screenplay and Best Actor Awards at Cannes earlier this year.

Riceballs is a touching story of Josh who mourns the loss of his mother while ***King's Day*** is about two boys who have been set other plans by their dad even as everyone else is celebrating the holiday. ***Mariam*** is about the protagonist whose life becomes very complicated when France passes a law that bans Muslim women from wearing headscarves in public institutions. Director Faiza Ambah said ***Mariam*** has helped bring perception shifts about Muslims, and puts forth the message that women empowerment is really about the freedom to exercise one's choice.

This year, the Festival featured the first Ajyal Talks, a series of open discussions with social influencers. Khaled Khalifa, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Regional Representative to the States of the Gulf Co-Operation Council, led a discussion on 'Why Refugees Matter,' on the current global displacement crisis with a focus on the situation of Syrian refugees.

"Imagine if every one of you looks at humanitarian work as an endeavour that you want to engage with. We will have millions of people from around the world that are working for humanity. Probably in the future if this happens, then we will not have refugees. Maybe we will have a better world. That's the only hope. I look at you now and I have something hidden... a hope that the desire and enthusiasm that I heard in the room before I entered, could be translated into something else. It shouldn't end today. If you feel compassion, you shouldn't stop, do something," said Khaled Khalifa.

Mohammed Al Hajji, who led the Ajyal Talks on 'Ten Things I Learned in my Twenties,' said social media has a transformational impact on how content is produced for television and film. "Movie houses and production teams get their ideas and inspiration from what is hot in social media. It is today the generator, driver and vehicle of ideas that contribute to film and television content."



The fourth Ajyal Youth Film Festival also featured Midnight Screenings, the SONY Cinema Under the Stars, Special Screenings, Family Weekend activities and the Geekdom: Video Game Exhibition.

Katara is the Cultural Partner and Oxy Qatar is the Principal Partner for the 2016 edition. Qatar Tourism Authority is the Signature Partner of the festival this year. For more details on the Ajyal Youth Film Festival, please visit www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival

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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.

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