

Palestinian Auteur Elia Suleiman Discusses New Film ‘It Must Be Heaven’

Doha, Qatar; 20 November 2019: Award-winning Palestinian auteur and director of the 7th Ajyal Film Festival’s opening night film *It Must Be Heaven*, Elia Suleiman spoke about how his work connects to current international events and relates to audiences through the language of silence.

“The film touches on many current events from globalisation to revolution, as the main character felt drawn to experience and become part of everything that is going on in the world. His feelings throughout the film are genuine as he is faced with fragility and alienation irrespective of where he goes,” Suleiman said at a press briefing.

On the choice to limit dialogue throughout the film, Suleiman said: “I wanted the audience to experience silence as a language separate from sound. Relying solely on pictures and removing the oftentimes clichéd dialogue to tell a story allows for a different kind of cinematic experience.”

Suleiman is a Nazareth-born filmmaker, director and actor, who won wide acclaim as well as the Cannes Film Festival Jury Prize for his 2002 tragicomedy ‘*Divine Intervention*’. In his works, Suleiman masterfully uses his penetrating gaze and expressive body language to distil the soul of Palestinian identity.

Winner of the Jury Special Mention and FIPRESCI Critics’ Award at this year’s Cannes Film Festival, and Palestine’s entry for Best International Feature Film at the 92nd Academy Awards, *It Must Be Heaven* (France, Qatar, Germany, Canada, Turkey, Palestine/2019) is an internationally-acclaimed odyssey of identity, nationality and belonging, which poses one fundamental question: Where is the place we can truly call home? Speaking just four words in the entire film, Suleiman skilfully touches on the art of silent comedy roaring into the 21st century.

Tickets for the 7th Ajyal Film Festival are available for purchase at the Ajyal Main Box Office located in Katara Building 10; at the Ajyal Box Office at VOX Cinemas Doha Festival City for screenings taking place at VOX Cinemas; and from the Novo Cinemas Box Office for screenings at Novo Cinemas, the Pearl. For ticket purchase and up-to-date information on the Ajyal Film Festival, please visit:

<https://www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival/ticketinformation>

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2019 Ajyal Film Festival’s Official Partners include: **Katara Cultural Village** – Cultural Partner; **Qatar National Tourism Council** – Principal Partner; **Novo Cinemas, Ooredoo** – Strategic Partner, **St. Regis Doha** - Signature Partner.

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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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