

The Fifth Edition of the Abu Dhabi Film Festival Kicks Off with Free Waterfront Screenings

Abu Dhabi, UAE – FOR RELEASE ON OCTOBER 14, 2011

Today marks the first of six free public screenings at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival's new open-air cinema at the Fairmont Bab Al Bahr. Tonight's film is *Stockholm East*, by Simon Kaijser da Silva, starring internationally acclaimed Scandinavian stars Mikael Persbrandt (of Academy Award® winner *In a Better World*, a hit at last year's ADFE) and Iben Hjejle (*High Fidelity*). Waterfront screenings takes place at 7:30 p.m.

The Festival's outdoor cinema was officially unveiled at yesterday's Opening Night, a red-carpet event attended by leading figures of the Arab and Middle Eastern film world. The list of film talents from the Gulf was led by Huda Al Khatib Janah, Dr. Habib Ghuloom, Haifa Hussein and Mohammed Al Mansour. Mahmoud Abdel Aziz, Khaled Abol Naga, Faris Alhilo, Bushra, Sami Kaftan, and Maher Salibi also walked the red carpet.

In case you missed last night's event, a second screening of the opening film *Monsieur Lazhar*, by Philippe Falardeau, takes place tonight at 6:00 p.m., VOX Cinema 6, Marina Mall.

This evening the Festival also hosts **two red-carpet Gala Screenings at the Abu Dhabi Theater**, one of the most scenic cultural venues with a magnificent view of the city's skyline. Both screenings will be followed by Q&As with the filmmakers and actors in attendance.

The first Gala Screening of the night is *Chicken With Plums*, which will be attended by actress Maria de Medeiros and director Marjane Satrapi, as well as JB Dunckel and Nicolas Godin of the French band Air. Satrapi came to international prominence through her debut feature *Persepolis (2007)*, an adaption of one of her graphic novels. Her first live action feature is a delirious fairy tale about world renowned violinist Nasser Ali Khan (Mathieu Amalric), a man who is stuck in a loveless marriage and whose precious instrument has met a violent end. Also starring the marvelous Golshifteh Farahani. 6:30 p.m., Abu Dhabi Theater.

The second Gala is *The Ides of March*, directed by George Clooney and featuring an all-star cast including Clooney, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Paul Giamatti, Jeffrey Wright and Ryan Gosling. The film also stars Evan Rachel Wood, who will be in attendance tonight. Also walking the red carpet is celebrated Indian actor Saif Ali



Khan, who is set to receive Jaeger-LeCoultre's Glory to the Actor Award ahead of the screening. *The Ides of March* is a tale of double-dealing on the campaign trail, at once a specific look at American party politics and a universal consideration of the old adage about power and corruption. 9:00 p.m., Abu Dhabi Theater.

The Festival's first panel discussion, **Making Movies in Abu Dhabi**, sees representatives from some of the key organizations of Abu Dhabi's rapidly expanding film industry present an overview of their initiatives and explore the opportunities and challenges facing local filmmakers. Panelists include: Mohammed Al Otaiba, head of ImageNation Abu Dhabi; David Shephard, director of the Abu Dhabi Film Commission; Wayne Borg, Deputy CEO of twofour54 and Marie-Pierre Macia, director of ADFF's SANAD film fund. Fairmont Saker Ballroom A, 14:30

The **first screening in the Our World Competition** for films devoted to broadening awareness of significant environmental issues takes place this evening. One of ten films competing for the \$15,000 Our World Award is *The City Dark*, Ian Cheney's new film featuring stunning astrophotography, dazzling animation and a haunting score. Talking with astronomers, cancer researchers and philosophers, Cheney ponders what humans really lose to light pollution. *The City Dark* is shown at 6:00 p.m., VOX 3.

The **Narrative Competition** kicks off with the Middle East premiere of *Death for Sale*, by SANAD grantee Faouzi Bensaïdi. Set in the seedy Moroccan port city of Tétouan, the film tells the story of three young men seeking to escape a cycle of helplessness and poverty by robbing a jewelry store. This incisive and intricate portrayal of a marginalized city is bolstered by the raw energy of its young cast. 3:30 p.m., VOX

To mark the **150th anniversary of the great Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore**, the Festival is pleased to present a special screening of *Charulata*, a 1964 masterpiece of Indian cinema based on Tagore's novella *The Broken Nest*. Directed by Satyajit Ray, the first Indian filmmaker to earn worldwide recognition, the film is set in 1870s India. The intelligent and cultured Charulata pines away while her work-driven husband devotes more energy to his newspaper than to their marriage. When he invites his cousin to keep her company, the results prove heartbreaking for all three. Screening at 6:30 p.m., VOX 1.

Tonight's screening of *Between Heaven and Earth*, by Salah Abu Seif, is the first of eight films the Festival is presenting as part of its retrospective **Mahfouz – Man of Cinema**, a tribute to the seminal Egyptian author Naguib Mahfouz, the first Arab to



receive a Nobel Prize for Literature. Based on a screenplay co-written by Mahfouz, the film centers on a group of people representing the whole of Egyptian society – among them a movie star, a thief, a madman, a cook and a pregnant woman – who find themselves trapped in an elevator for 12 hours. The film screens at 9:00 p.m., VOX 3.

Opening this year's **Documentary Feature Competition** is

Cave of Forgotten Dreams, the visionary director Werner Herzog's breathtaking first foray into 3-D filmmaking. Granted access to the site of the oldest known cave paintings in the world, Herzog exploits 3-D technology to make this astonishing archaeological find come alive in riveting detail. *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* is shown at 4 p.m., VOX 5.

The Documentary selection also includes *Tahrir 2011: The Good, the Bad & the Politician*, by Tamer Ezzat, Ayten Amin and Amr Salama, supported by the Festival's SANAD film fund. One of the first films to come out of the Egyptian revolution, it focuses on the events that began on January 25, 2011, when a new generation of Egyptians turned a one-day demonstration into what became a full-out revolution aimed at overthrowing the regime's grip on power. This screening takes place at 6:15 p.m., VOX 8.

Fightville, by celebrated documentary directing team Michael Tucker and Petra Epperlein, is a fascinating, if at times bloody, look at two young mixed martial arts fighters who just might have what it takes to become UFC champions. Gorgeous cinematography and candid interviews make for an inspiring tale of discipline and focus. The film's international premiere takes place at 9:00 p.m., VOX 8.

The selection for the **New Horizons / Afaq Jadida Competition** for first- and second-time feature filmmakers, includes *Rough Hands*, Mohamed Asli's follow-up to his acclaimed debut *In Casablanca, Angels Don't Fly*. Set in Casablanca, the film follows a barber – with an underground business pushing paperwork through government officials – who conspires to help a neighbor emigrate to Spain and reunite with her fiancé. 6:45 p.m., VOX 4.

Alms for a Blind Horse, by Gurvinder Singh is a highly aesthetic debut film set at the margins of Punjabi society, where the repressed and exploited have been conveniently cast away. Revolving around a small-town family who get swept up in a power struggle when a neighbor's home is demolished, *Alms for a Blind Horse* builds an atmosphere of helplessness, simmering discontent and unfulfilled desire. The film's international premiere is tonight at 9:30 p.m., VOX 4.



Peter Schildt's *A Thousand Times Stronger*, part of the **Showcase Program**, is a bright coming-of-age story set at a Swedish high school, where the boys dominate the girls, the girls submit to the boys, and ironclad cliques form according to who's hot and who's not. Enter Saga, the globe-trotting, worldly-wise new girl who turns the whole school on its head. 4:00 p.m., VOX 2.

Sacrifice is a richly designed and wrenchingly emotional historical drama from Academy Award®-nominated director Chen Kaige, whose *Farewell, My Concubine* won the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1993. An epic power struggle between feudal princes counterpoised with the very human tale of one ordinary man, the films screens at 8:45 p.m., VOX 6.

Today's program also includes a great opportunity to gauge the pulse of filmmaking in the GCC countries. The **tenth edition of the Emirates Film Competition (EFC)** starts with two programs of short films. EFC 3 Student Short Narratives starts at 3:15 p.m., VOX 4. The second screening, EFC 1 Short Narratives 1, begins at 7:00 p.m., VOX 2.

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

The Abu Dhabi Film Festival (formerly the Middle East International Film Festival) was established in 2007, with the aim of helping to create a vibrant film culture throughout the region. Presented each October by the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH) under the patronage of H.E. Sheikh Sultan Bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, Chairman of Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage, the event is committed to curating exceptional programs to engage and educate the local community, inspire filmmakers and nurture the growth of the regional film industry.

With its commitment to presenting works by Arab filmmakers in competition alongside those by major talents of world cinema, the Festival offers Abu Dhabi's diverse and enthusiastic audiences a means of engaging with their own and others' cultures through the art of cinema. At the same time, a strong focus on the bold new voices of Arab cinema connects with Abu Dhabi's role as a burgeoning cultural capital in the region and marks the Festival as a place for the world to discover and gauge the pulse of recent Arab filmmaking.

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