

EMIRATI FILMMAKERS TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT ABU DHABI FILM FESTIVAL

Abu Dhabi, UAE – 9 Oct. 2012: This year's Abu Dhabi Film Festival will reflect the growing talent and influence of UAE filmmakers in the region's film industry.

For the first time UAE Nationals will join international filmmakers on juries judging films in competition. A record number of submissions have been received from Emirati filmmakers with these films also competing against the very best of international cinema and to top this, the Festival has its first UAE National Director.

Ali Al Jabri, the first Emirati to hold the prestigious post of Festival Director, said he was proud to see the quality and diversity of work emerging from the local industry and urged others to follow their lead.

"It's very exciting to see Emiratis telling their stories through film and to see such interesting work come out of a relatively small community," he said. "I hope other Emiratis will be as proud as I am. This should act as an inspiration to others considering filmmaking as a career."

Joining international filmmakers on Festival juries this year include Nawaf Al Janahi, who directed feature films SEA SHADOW (World Premiere at ADFE 2011) and THE CIRCLE (2009), as well as a number of internationally acclaimed short films. Al Janahi joins the 'New Horizons' jury this year. Ahmad Hasan Ahmad, an award-winning UAE filmmaker with more than 30 short films, music videos and commercials to his credit, joins the 'Short Film Competition' jury.

Shorts filmmakers bridge the Festival sections, for example Yassir Al Yassri with his film MURK LIGHT which has been selected both for the Emirates Film Competition and the International Short Film Competition, showing that Emirati film makers are competing on a level with international productions in all sections.

Local director Nujoom Al Ghanem, whose features AMAL (2011) and HAMAMA (2010) have screened in international festivals, returns to the Emirates Film Competition with SALMA'S DINNER (2012). Al Ghanem is an Emirati poet and an award-winning film director who has qualifications in film production from Universities in both Australia and the USA. She has produced nine films including shorts and documentaries.

A number of Emirati films were selected for the Emirates Film Competition in the Short Narrative section: Eisa Al Sabousi with HAMAD (2012) and Hana Makki with THE JOURNEY (2012). Mohammad Fikree, whose film CHILDREN (2012) is in the Student Short Narrative Competition is a real one-man studio who does everything himself, without funding support. Aishe Al Hammadi shows her second film ENOUGH IS ENOUGH (2012) in the Student Short Documentary Competition of the EFC.

Mr Al Jabri said he expected this to be a flagship year for the Emirates Film Competition. "The competition is entering a new era, with new leadership from Saleh Karama and our new partner, Dolphin Energy, and we are starting that era with women filmmakers comprising more than 50% of participants in the competition after receiving a record number of submissions. It's an exciting period for Emirati filmmakers given the Government's increasing support of the industry."

This is the first year the Abu Dhabi Film Festival has been presented under the management of TwoFour54, as part of the plan to strategically align the festival alongside Abu Dhabi's other media initiatives and related events, reinforcing Abu Dhabi as the creative hub for the region supporting film production.

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