

## **ADFF 2011 Presents Vibrant Series of Master Classes, Panels and Discussions**

Film World Luminaries to Share Stories, Experiences and Expertise with ADFF Audiences

Abu Dhabi, UAE – October 9, 2011

In 2011, the Abu Dhabi Film Festival (ADFF) is offering a packed program of special events featuring leading filmmakers, industry professionals, musicians and critics. Free and open to the public, the event series includes master classes with the likes of Todd Solondz, Abderrahmane Sissako and French electronic music duo Air as well as a discussion with Michael Brandt and Derek Haas, the writers of *The Double*, which is having its world premiere at ADFF.

Addressing an eclectic range of subjects, including the effect of the Arab Spring on filmmaking, the relationship between Naguib Mahfouz and cinema, the future of independent productions in the Arab region and filming in the desert, the series provides a unique chance for film lovers and festival guests to get insights into the art and business of the movies. The lineup of events offers an array of opportunities to meet successful film professionals, ask questions and hear exciting behind-the-scenes stories, complementing ADFF's rich program of films.

ADFF's special events are held in the Fairmont Bab Al Bahr's Saker Ballroom A.

The series kicks off on Friday, October 14, with **Making Movies in Abu Dhabi**, a panel discussion exploring the city's rapidly expanding film industry, as well as the opportunities and challenges facing filmmakers seeking to finance and produce features in the Gulf region. The event features some of the key players responsible for this explosive growth and runs from 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

On Saturday, October 15, the Festival presents two highly anticipated master classes. The first, held by the revered Mauritanian writer/director Abderrahmane Sissako (*Life on Earth*, *Bamako*), one of the leading voices in world cinema today, delves into the subject of improvisation in filmmaking. **Measured Improvisation: A Master Class with Abderrahmane Sissako** takes place from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Also taking place on October 15 is **Scoring the Moon: A Master Class with Air**, held by the French duo Nicolas Godin and Jean-Benoît Dunckel, who were selected to compose and perform a new score for the Cannes premiere of the landmark full-color restoration of Georges Méliès's 1902 masterpiece, *A Trip to the Moon*, which is screened as part of Saturday's Family Day lineup (4:00 p.m., VOX 5). Air are no strangers to the film world, having won critical and popular acclaim for their score to Sofia Coppola's 2000 debut *The Virgin Suicides*. Co-presented by the French Embassy in Abu Dhabi, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.

On Sunday, October 16, the industry panel **Beyond Hollywood and Bollywood: The**

**Future of Independent Cinema in the Region**, SEES experts from international sales companies and regional distributors discuss the types of films they are drawn to, their relationships with film festivals and the decision-making process behind deals for films in the MENA region. Held from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

**From Script to Screen: Writing and Directing** is a special event with Michael Brandt and Derek Haas, the writing team behind such hit films as *Wanted* and *3:10 to Yuma*, presenting a candid discussion of how they broke into the business, the benefits and challenges of writing with a partner, and advice on writing and directing. Their latest writing collaboration, *The Double*, which is set to make its world premiere at ADFF on Saturday (October 15, 9:30 p.m., Abu Dhabi Theater), marks Brandt's directorial debut and stars Richard Gere, Topher Grace and Martin Sheen. This event takes place from 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 16.

One of the highlights of ADFF's special events this year is **A Master Class with American Filmmaker Todd Solondz** (*Welcome to the Dollhouse*, *Happiness*), who has been pushing the boundaries with his acerbic observations on family conflict and tortured romance for more than 15 years and is in Abu Dhabi to present his latest work, *Dark Horse*. Join this remarkable filmmaker for an intimate discussion of his craft and career on Monday, October 17, 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., co-presented by the U.S. Embassy, Abu Dhabi.

Monday also brings a roundtable discussion about **The Arab Spring and Its Effects on Filmmaking**. How have filmmakers and regional cinema fared in response to the political and social upheaval? Have rules of production changed? Are we to expect a new artistic paradigm? An open conversation about these and other questions with acclaimed regional filmmakers takes place on Monday, October 17, from 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

As part of the Festival's retrospective of the seminal Egyptian writer and Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz, ADFF presents a roundtable discussion investigating Mahfouz's relationship with cinema. **Naguib Mahfouz: Man of Cinema** takes place on Tuesday, October 18, at 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

On Wednesday, October 19, acclaimed documentary filmmaker Fredi Devas hosts **From the Freezer to the Furnace**. Devas, who worked on the upcoming BBC documentary *Frozen Planet* for years, is now filming the new series *Wild Arabia*, also for the BBC. This event is a rare opportunity to preview clips from *Frozen Planet* and is set to cover many of the novel filming techniques Devas used to capture spectacular wildlife and landscapes in polar and desert regions. Co-presented by ImageNation and Abu Dhabi Film Commission, this event takes place from 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

For many filmmakers, short films provide a necessary springboard to generating interest and securing funding for a feature project. But what are the challenges of making the leap? **From Shorts to Features** is a panel discussion featuring a diverse group of directors, who share their

experiences, offer advice for budding filmmakers and discuss current trends in the short film industry. This talk takes place on Thursday, October 20, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Above guests and events are subject to change. Please visit [www.adff.ae](http://www.adff.ae) for the latest details about the Festival's complete program.

## **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.*

*ADFF 2011 is made possible in part through the generous support of its partners: MAKE UP FOR EVER (Principal Partner); Jaeger-LeCoultre and Emirates Motor Company/Mercedes-Benz (Major Partners); Etihad Airways, VOX Cinemas, TwoFour54, YahLive, Blackberry and Abu Dhabi Media (Official Partners); CNN, Radio 1, Radio 2, OSN, MUBI, Synaxis Media and Variety (Media Partners) and Masdar (Our World Partner).*

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