

## Abu Dhabi Film Festival Announces First Round of Selections of SANAD Grants for Arab Filmmakers

**Abu Dhabi, UAE — May 16, 2011**

The Abu Dhabi Film Festival (ADFF) announced today eleven projects selected to receive development and post-production funding from SANAD, the festival's fund for filmmakers from the Arab world. Established by ADFF in 2010, SANAD provides support for feature-length narrative and documentary projects. Each year, SANAD awards a total of US\$500,000 in grants to upcoming and established filmmakers in two categories: development funds of up to US\$20,000 and post-production funds of up to US\$60,000 per project. The eleven projects selected to date were submitted for SANAD's first application cycle of 2011. Another round of selections will be chosen from among applications for the second cycle (deadline July 1<sup>st</sup> 2011).

Well-known filmmakers including Jocelyne Saab (Lebanon), Hala Alabdallah (Syria) Abderrahmane Sissako (Mauritania), Samir (Iraq) and Malek Bensmail (Algeria) are among the directors of the selected projects.

ADFF Executive Director Peter Scarlet said, "We are truly happy that this first selection includes important veteran filmmakers such as Sissako and exciting newcomers like Safinez Bousbia, whose *El Gusto* will be screened at our upcoming festival in October. It also gives us great pleasure to see that projects that have received SANAD development grants in 2010 are moving forward towards production. For example, Mohamed Al-Daradji's *The Train Station* has now been selected for the sixth Cinéfondation Atelier in Cannes. His first feature, *Son of Babylon*, already celebrated its world premiere in Abu Dhabi, and Al-Daradji received the Variety Award for Best Middle East Filmmaker of the Year at the 2010 festival."

The head of SANAD, Marie-Pierre Macia, said, "The selection process is no easy task since we receive a huge number of high-quality projects. But it boosts our hope and enthusiasm to see some of our post-production projects going on to international success. We are very proud of Leila Kilani whose *On the Plank*, which received a post-production grant in 2010, has been selected for this year's Directors' Fortnight in Cannes. With Further SANAD-funded films due to come out in 2011, audiences have a whole host of new films by Arab filmmakers to look out for this year. We are looking forward to the projects that will be submitted for the second cycle of SANAD, which closes July 1."

"The Abu Dhabi Film Festival is proud of its ongoing support for Arab cinema through SANAD and the SANADLab, added Eissa Saif Al Mazrouei,

Director of Special Projects at ADACH. "In this first round of selections, we are extending post-production funding to Hala Alabdalla's *As If We Were Catching a Cobra*, which received a SANAD development grant in 2010. Being able to help this film through various stages along its path to completion is a strong reflection of ADFF's commitment to our region's filmmakers. We were also very pleased to find a strong project that is a UAE production with an Emirati producer: *No Direction Home*, directed by Guy Brooks and John Hollingsworth and produced by Rashid Al-Marri. Another of the selected projects with a strong connection to the UAE is Stefanie Brockhaus' *Miss Hissa Hilal*, which is about the struggles of a Saudi Arabian poet woman who came to fame through Abu Dhabi's prestigious *Million's Poet* TV show (watched by more than 30 Million people on Arab television.), held at the Al Raha Beach Theater, home of the Abu Dhabi Film Festival."

SANAD 2011 funded projects to date:

### **Development Projects**

#### **Narrative**

- *I Am Nojood, 10 Years Old and Divorced*, by Khadija Al Salami, Yemen
- *Mettou*, by Abderrahmane Sissako, Mauritania/France
- *Origins*, by Malek Bensmaïl, Algeria

### **Development Projects**

#### **Documentary**

- *Iraqi Odyssey*, by Samir, Switzerland/Iraq/Germany
- *Miss Hissa Hilal*, by Stefanie Brockhaus, Saudi Arabia/Germany
- *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*, by Mais Darwazeh, Jordan
- *No Direction Home*, by Guy Brooks and John Hollingsworth, UAE/Palestine/Jordan
- *Woman in Mediterranean Sea* (working title), by Jocelyne Saab, Lebanon/France
- *Yasmina and Mohammed*, by Regine Abadia, Algeria/Lebanon/France

### **Post-production Projects**

## **Documentary**

- *As If We Were Catching a Cobra*, by Hala Alabdalla, Syria/France
- *El Gusto*, by Safinez Bousbia, Algeria/Ireland/France

## **ABOUT SANAD:**

SANAD (the term means "support" or "help" in Arabic) is an integral part of the Abu Dhabi Film Festival's commitment to independent, auteur and original filmmaking in the Arab world. Much more than just a film fund, SANAD is dedicated to providing year-round support and advice to grant recipients. Through the SANADLab, ADFFF works closely with SANAD grantees, running workshops and panel discussions, and scheduling meetings with film experts and mentors during the festival each October.

In 2010, SANAD awarded development and post-production grants to 27 productions, 11 of which were debut features. Altogether, 20 narrative and 7 documentary films received SANAD grants.

Projects can be submitted for the second application cycle until July 1, 2011 via the ADFFF website: [www.abudhabifilmfestival.ae/SANADFund](http://www.abudhabifilmfestival.ae/SANADFund).

## **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.

To contact the Press Office, email [press@adff.ae](mailto:press@adff.ae) or call +971 2 556 4590.

Pictures can be downloaded from our FTP server.

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