

Jordan workshop helps build alliances

Human Film (UK) is a Leeds-based production company that is committed to furthering understanding on critical human issues through film. Its cutting-edge productions challenge perceptions and raise questions about personal beliefs, conscience and ethics. "Our work has the potential to affect and inspire," states Mohamed Al-Daradji, Iraqi-Dutch screenwriter, producer, director and cinematographer of the award-winning feature *Ahlaam*, and one of Human Film's committed filmmaking trio. Producer Isabelle Stead and Producer/ Editor Danny Evans complete the energetic team.

Human Film ran its first intensive film production workshop in Amman in October 2007, aimed at building alliances for the Iraqi film industry. Stead explains: "Mohamed came up with the idea of training his Iraqi crew for *Um-Hussein*, our next feature. We had been working closely with The Royal Film Commission of Jordan (RFC) and they jumped at the chance of being involved in a workshop, as it meant providing training for their own future filmmakers and fostering relationships with Iraqi filmmakers."

Thirteen Iraqi students were selected on their talent and production experience by Human Film's sister company, Baghdad-based Iraq Al-Rafidain, while the RFC selected ten Jordanian students. A pre-requisite was the participation of at least three women from each country.

"HRH Princess Reem Al Faisal is a member of the RFC's board and her involvement was really inspiring," Stead continues. "She presented students with their graduation certificates and instilled in them the importance of pursuing dreams. She announced that from 2008 the RFC will host an annual four-week film workshop teaching both 35mm and 16mm."

HIVOS, the French Embassy in Amman and Leeds Metropolitan University were amongst a number of other

sponsors. Richard Lawton, Kodak EI Manager, Middle East & Africa, provided film stock and Sten Walegren at KODAK IMAGECARE-accredited lab The Gate/KCL in Lebanon provided the Jordanian students with four days' lab experience. "Assistant lab supervisor Antoinette Akiki and her team guided them through the darkroom process to the final cleaning," says Walegren who notes that the planned one light became a full grade. Colourist Charbel Mouawad who handled the telecine transfer was impressed with the quality of the students' work. "The Gate/KCL wishes the students all the best with their film and hopes to see them back as filmmakers in the near future!" exclaims Walegren.

Storytelling through film

"The film will be screened at festivals and will expose the students' talents at an international level. We hope it will encourage them to build film industries in their respective countries," states Stead. "Through film we continue to cross bridges between religion, ethnicity, social and human issues and engender understanding and debate," says Al-Daradji. "Kodak and The Gate put a smile on the students' faces and hope in their hearts. Their contributions have helped the next generation of filmmakers to discover the importance of storytelling through film."

"We wouldn't have been able to run the workshop without Kodak's contribution," concludes Stead. "They were behind us in every way. Richard Lawton was absolutely terrific and really helped us when we ran into problems. Sten was amazing too and everyone at The Gate was extremely helpful."

For further information on Human Film visit <http://www.humanfilm.co.uk>

1 Portuguese Cinematographer Joao Ponces de Carvalho on a workshop film set.

