

FILM SUPPORT IN THE GULF COUNTRIES

INTRODUCTION

Film production in the gulf states is a relatively new cultural phenomenon. The Arab country with the most flourishing film industry is Egypt. Film artists and producers in Gulf countries look at Egypt.¹ More than 3,000 movie films were produced there compared to some 700 films in the rest of the Arab world.² In the post war period the cinema presented the second important industry of the country whereas markets in other Arab countries were flooded by European products.³ Viola Shafik explains the reason for the historical development of the Egyptian film industry in comparison to those of other Arab countries as follows:⁴ "The reasons why Egypt alone succeeded in establishing a national film industry are various. Egypt had a dynamic multicultural life in which native Egyptians always played an important role, and which remained relatively undisturbed by colonial authorities."

Feature film production in the Gulf region took up only reticently. The first movie film in Bahrain was produced in 1989, whereas in the UAE and Saudi Arabia audiovisual production centres on short films and TV, presenting a strong market with considerable resources, talents, technicians and crews.⁵ Movie film theatres cannot not be operated in all countries, for example in Saudi Arabia film theatres meet with objections from Muslim religious scholars. Gulf money plays an important role in the film industry, however, not necessarily in the film industry of the Gulf countries. Investments in Egyptian films do not come for free, for example they caused a certain prodishness to Egyptian products.⁶ Also Bollywood, Europe producers and the US studios compete for money from the Gulf. For example in the UK a USD 313 million movie fund was set up to attract MidEast investors for the booming British movie film industry.⁷ On the other hand, Arab money may be helpful to avoid stereotypes in movies, showing Arabs as heartless, brutal, uncivilized and religious fanatics. An analysis prepared in 2003 of some 900 Western films showed that only five percent of those films with Arab characters were free of such stereotypes.⁸

Bassam Al Thawadi considers that more Arab money should be put into the Gulf film industry. A film, which he produces, may be shown in only eleven film theatres around the Gulf.⁹ "Countries need to do a lot more to do in order to establish a film industry. The support of film festivals is not enough." In particular, Saudi Arabia would have to open its market in order to attract enough investments. Tim Smythe, referring to the UAE film industry, observed:¹⁰ "In reality, a country can only develop a sustainable local film industry if there are enough cinema screens and a large enough population for a film to recoup its investment in its country of origin – both from cinema and second tier releases on TV and DVD. As with many countries throughout the world, this is not a possibility." Accordingly, public money has to be spent for subsidising local production and incentivising international production. Every USD spent through incentives may bring a return up to USD 5 for the local economy. In 2011 the film industry contributed some USD 40.8 million to the economy of Dubai. This was mainly due to more TV shows and commercials being shot. The

¹ Walid AL AWADI (director of *Tora Bora*) in a BBC interview with Simon ATKINSON: "Can the Gulf Film Industry Thrive?", 17/04/2012.

² Walter ARMBRUST: Cinema and Television in the Arab World, see Chapter 25 of *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 6, Muslims and Modernity: Culture and Society since 1800, Cambridge University Press 2010.

³ Viola SHAFIK: "Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity", The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo 2007, p. 9.

⁴ Viola SHAFIK, note above, p. 12.

⁵ Mohammed SENDI (director of *Fatin Drives Me Crazy*) in a BBC interview, note 1 above.

⁶ Viola SHAFIK, note 3 above, p. 42.

⁷ Twickenham Film Group announced the creation of the solely Middle East-backed Oasis Film Fund, part of the Twickenham Film Group of companies, see *The National*, 15/03/2012.

⁸ Jack G. SHAHEEN: "Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People", in *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, July 2003, vol. 588, no. 1, pp. 171 to 193.

⁹ See Walid AL AWADI, note 1, above.

¹⁰ Tim SMYTHE: "There Is no UAE Film Industry", *Middle East Campaign*, 18/01/2010.

total budget for feature films and television shows achieved some USD 20 million in 2011, with millions more made up from TV advertisements and photo shoots at landmarks such as the Burj Khalifa, whereas "the majority of filming requests originated from Dubai, with 115 from Europe, and 12 from other Middle Eastern countries."¹¹

NATIONAL FILM MARKETS

National film markets of gulf states are relatively small. For example, the population of the UAE amounts to some eight million, more than the half of which originates from the subcontinent so that the majority of the population may be more interested in Bollywood productions. Since the national market is small, there are few possibilities for independent filmmakers to obtain funding. There are no film support schemes comparable to those of European countries. With this particular regard the absence of a tax system in the UAE could be deplored, because there is no need to establish tax shelters for film production and distribution, the configuration of which is an endless story in other parts of the world. Media authorities and film festivals of the gulf states developed their own schemes, which are often bound up with film festivals. And still Arab filmmakers may have to look for funding elsewhere: "With so many filmmakers trying to tell their stories, funds and studios alike have to be selective in what they finance."¹²

A CHANGE OF THE FINANCING STRUCTURE?

A boost for the film industry of Gulf states may emanate from amendments of the financing structure. In the US, France or the UK financing structures rely on relatively large production volumes and draw upon an established star system that facilitates relatively reliable revenue estimates from sales specialists.¹³ Film production in the Gulf finds it much harder both to attract capital, and to deliver the kind of security and returns that encourage repeat investments. Tom Harberd recommended:¹⁴ "But in terms of attracting and nurturing private investors, I think there are four key actions: send a clear message about industry aspirations for profitability and sustainability; lower barriers to entry in terms of capital requirement; adjust investment risk profiles to be more favourable; enable the spread of investment over reasonably-sized portfolios of quality projects." The author recommends to enlarge the film support schemes of public bodies, which should assemble quality projects in portfolios so that more institutional investors could be attracted: "Rather than solely financing individual pictures, potentially reinforcing a culture of dependence on soft-money (and the oft-associated erosion of entrepreneurship and innovation), public funding bodies might also consider awarding finance with more of a focus on corporate development and long-term growth".

FILM FESTIVALS

The large number of film festivals in the Gulf countries ensures that films travel, and by attracting the public interest they open the minds of the general public and create an interest in the own national production. With at least six festivals a year, the Gulf's budding film industry is making a place for itself on the international stage.¹⁵ The most important festivals are Abu Dhabi (October), Doha Tribeca (November), Dubai (December), and the Gulf Film Festival (April).

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR PROJECT SUPPORT

Certainly, film makers credentials and his abilities play an important role as a selection criteria of projects. Other criteria are the originality of the work, creative merits, feasibility and the marketing potential. The regard of cultural aspects may be important: the film should address key cultural

¹¹ AMEinfo of 18/02/2012: "Dubai Earns over USD 40 Million from Film Industry".

¹² See Badar SALEM: "Film Financing in the Region: The More the Better", in Variety Arabia, October 2012, at 20, quoting Michael GARIN, CEO of Image Nation.

¹³ Tom HARBERD: "Gulf Film Industry: Innovative Thinking Is Required", in Variety Arabia, October 2012, pp. 28 et seq.

¹⁴ Tom HARBERD, note above.

¹⁵ ANSAMED of 13/09/2012.

concepts important to those living in the country where support is requested.¹⁶

CULTURAL ASPECTS

During a discussion organised by the Dubai Press Club with participants from the TV production industry new trends in Arab drama were discussed. It was felt that Gulf drama should move away from traditional and repeated themes.¹⁷ Actors complained that the lack of courage in adopting new values plays a key role in the deplored stagnation. Obviously, ethical standards may limit the possibilities for production. The New York Times observed critically:¹⁸ "Dubai, its rival Abu Dhabi and other Persian Gulf cities face enormous hurdles as they try to diversify their economies by fostering creativity and becoming entertainment capitals. Chief among those hurdles: they operate under Islamic law. Hollywood does not. So far, the oil-rich countries have proved more able to pay for fancy media productions and to build expensive film facilities than to actually lure production to the Middle East, as economic efforts run up against their traditional values and censorship."

But what are the implications of these cultural aspects? Some guidance may be derived from the **Arab Satellite Broadcasting Charter: Principles for Regulating Satellite Broadcasting Transmission in the Arab World of February 2008**. Even though the Charter is applicable only to cross-border satellite broadcasting, its Principles are applicable to movies, which are transmitted in this manner. Accordingly, the Charter provides a legal instrument, which familiarizes a producer unaware of these issues with basic ethical rules. The Principles accept the freedom of expression as a cornerstone of artistic activity, and they propagate this principle as a cornerstone of Arab media. However, Article 5.1 of the Principles establishes a proviso "that such freedoms are practiced with full responsibility, for the protection of the supreme interests of Arab countries and the Arab world. The entities shall respect the rights of others and the commitment to media professionalism and ethics."

According to Article 6 of the Principles providers and content must observe the following standards:

- the respect of human dignity and the rights of others;
- the respect of individual privacy;
- the avoidance of inciting hatred based on ethnic, colour, racial or religious discrimination;
- the consideration of professional ethical codes;
- complying with the religious and ethical values of Arab society and the maintenance of its family ties and social integrity;
- refraining from insulting God, revealed religions, prophets, religious sects and religious symbols;
- elimination of material which would promote smoking and/or alcohol drinking.

Also Article 6 of the Principles is applicable to content. Thus movies should not damage social harmony, national unity, public order or traditional values. Programming should also "conform with the religious and ethical values of Arab society and take account of its family structure".

This Principle imposes an obligation upon providers to draft rules with regard to:

- the maintenance of Arab identity against the negative impact of powers of globalization;
- the objectivity, honesty and respect for the dignity and national sovereignty of states and their people, and refraining from insulting their leaders or national and religious symbols.

Wadah Khanfar, the director-general of Al Jazeera, criticized the Charter and said that a code of ethics should emerge, and be governed, from within the profession and not be imposed externally by political institutions. He considered that the adoption of the charter caused a risk to the

¹⁶ See Michael GARIN of Image Nation, referred to by Badar SALEM: "Film Financing in the Region: The More the Better", in: Variety Arabia, October 2012, pp. 20 et seq. at 22.

¹⁷ See Variety Arabia of 12/08/2012: Experts Discuss New Trends in Arab Drama.

¹⁸ Brian STELTER: "Still in Development - A Film Culture in Dubai", New York Times of 30/08/2009.

freedom of expression in the Arab world.¹⁹ But also achieving unanimity between professionals of so many different countries may not be easy.

BAHRAIN

The Bahraini government exercises film support activities through the Bahrain Cinema Company BSC and its subsidiary comprise "the Group". The Company is a public Bahraini shareholding company. The principle activities of the Group are screening of films, sale of video and music cassettes, compact discs, advertisements and operation of restaurants and providing leisure and amusement related services.²⁰ In 2012 the Ministry of Culture of Bahrain and the Gulf Film Festival agreed upon the establishment of a partnership. The aim of this partnership is to avoid double financing and to make use of synergies through the showing of films in Manama within the Gulf Cinema Nights Festival, which are presented to festival goers of the Gulf Film Festival in Dubai.²¹ The Gulf Cinema Nights Festival features 18 regional films.

In August 2012 the Bahraini Ministry of Culture launched a new fund, which is seen as a positive step to improve the country's developing film industry, strengthen the production level of youth films and promote national talent in the field.²² By means of the new initiative, a committee of local and international film experts will select a number of Bahraini filmmakers and support those chosen with up to \$10,000 for every film. The Bahrain fund to support filmmaking falls under a new ministry programme to invest in local cultural infrastructure. Most young Bahraini filmmakers resort to financing their films with modest budgets and out of their own pockets. Now the fund will contribute towards financing and covering technical costs such as editing, filming and other aspects. To qualify for funding, the film's director must be a Bahraini national, the film can be no longer than 30 minutes and it must support Bahraini tourism, identity and culture in some way. In June Twickenham Film Group plans to create a film academy and production facilities in Bahrain.²³

KUWAIT

Kuwait's culture is not very much based upon films: "Cinema is perhaps one of the elements of culture in Kuwait that gets the least recognition. Though things ay have picked up a little in recent years, there is stilla long way to go for Kuwaiti film", Joana Saba observed.²⁴

OMAN

The Omani Film Society²⁵ is the public organisation, which works in the field of the movie film industry. Its objectives are the reunification of the film industry professionals under one umbrella and the protection of their interests and rights; to strengthen the movie film industry; to support the distribution of Bahraini film works in the Arab world and internationally; to support Omani film makers who participate at conferences and film festivals. Oman is a fascinating filmmaking destination.²⁶

Muscat Festival for Cinema

The Muscat Festival for Cinema²⁷ is dedicated to the Arab cinema, but there is also a competition of foreign films, on short documentaries and a film workshop. This years' edition screened 72 Arab and foreign films.

¹⁹ Reported by Andy SENNITT in Media Network 15/02/2008.

²⁰ See <http://www.bahraincinema.com>.

²¹ AMEinfo of 04/08/2012: "Ministry of Culture of Bahrain to showcase regional talent in association with the Gulf Film Festival".

²² Bahrain News of 12/08/2012: "Bahrain launches new fund for filmmakers".

²³ Variety Arabia of 11/06/2012: "Bahrain to open the doors to its first film academy".

²⁴ Joana SABA: "Filmmakers Get Chance to Express Themselves. Film Industry Being Promoted in Kuwait", Arab Times, updated 01/11/2012.

²⁵ Omani Film Society, see <http://www.omanfilm.net/society/en/index.php>.

²⁶ Mike Dearham: "Oman - a great filmmaking destination", OERonline, March 2006, see http://www.oeronline.com/php/2006_march/main9.php.

²⁷ See <http://festival.omanfilm.net/en/index.php?yid=3>.

QUATAR

The Doha Film Institute²⁸ coordinates the national film support policy. The Institute operates a production unit, which is open for international projects with the involvement of trainees and internship students from its Gulf Development Unit. Doha Film Institute Financing supports film makers, and it establishes contacts between regional and international talent. The Doha Film Institute Financing is also concerned with the development of a sustainable film financing model.

MENA Grants

The MENA grants program is directed towards the support of Arab film projects and the regional industry.²⁹ Up to the exploitation stage different phases of the creation of movie films, which must have a minimum duration of 40 minutes, are supported with maximum amounts. For example the development with up to USD 20,000, production with up to USD 100,000, post-production with up to US 60,000 and prints or advertising with up to USD 20,000. Grants for the support for documentaries are smaller, likewise those for experimental and essay films and for short films. In order to be eligible the applicant must be a director, screenwriter and/or producer from the MENA region.³⁰ Between USD 5,000 to 10,000 are paid in support of the production of short films and USD 1,000 up to 5,000 for post-production. The Doha Film Institute's websites provide information about submission requirements.³¹ The Doha Film Institute will draft a Film Financing Grant Agreement to be signed by the chosen grantee. The Grant Agreement will include contract duration, grant amount, financial requirements, payment schedule, delivery of picture lock, regulations for premiering the picture, Doha Film Institute's credit requirements, country of production credit requirements, delivery of broadcast copy, terms relating to first negotiation on next feature, the educational and non-commercial use of picture, general provisions, implementation and amendments, required reports, and additional deliverables.

Doha Tribeca Film Festival

The Doha Tribeca Film Festival offers a showcase "Made in Qatar" is a showcase of films made in Qatar:³² "The films in the selection will surprise viewers with their thematic intensity and narrative style. Most importantly, it offers glimpses of life in Qatar and will resonate with the local community." The 2012 edition of the Doha Tribeca Film Festival comprises the screening of more than 87 films including those in the Arab Film Competition, Made in Qatar, Contemporary World Cinema and Special Screenings.

Alnoor Holdings' Fund

The Alnoor Holding of Qatar created a USD 200 million fund for the financing and production of up to 15 movie films. The Holding will invest USD 40 million, the remaining sum coming from private investors of Arab countries. Film projects will be selected on the basis of ethical considerations:³³ "Fund managers hope to finance ethically based, family-friendly projects. They will likely avoid pics that deal explicitly with sex, politics or other contentious subjects." For example,³⁴ Alnoor Holdings established a joint venture with Kalinos Holdings, one of the largest media groups in Turkey to produce a 'Hollywood' style movie and a high quality series on the

²⁸ See <http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/institute>.

²⁹ See <http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/financing/grants/guidelines>.

³⁰ The MENA region comprises the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

³¹ See <http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/financing/projects/submit-a-film>.

³² H.E. Issa Bin Mohammed AL-MOHANNADI, press release of 23/10/2012, see http://www.godubai.com/citylife/press_release_page.asp?pr=67618

³³ Variety of 30/10/2009: "Alnoor bows film fund".

³⁴ See <http://www.alnoor.com.qa/media.html>.

Great Caliph Sultan Muhammad Al Fatih. The transaction was the largest media venture between the Arabic world and Turkey. It amounts to an initial investment of USD 50 million for the movie.

Al Jazeera International Documentary Film Festival

The Al Jazeera International Documentary Film Festival³⁵ is organised by the Aljazeera TV network and channel.³⁶ The Al Jazeera Network is one of the world's leading media corporations, encompassing news, documentary and sport channels. Al Jazeera started out more than fifteen years ago as the first independent news channel in the Arab world dedicated to covering and uncovering stories in the region.³⁷ Al Jazeera gained worldwide recognition as an independent broadcaster, owned by the state of Qatar.

SAUDI ARABIA

With regard to media policy it has been said³⁸ that Saudi Arabia has made an immense effort to control the flow of information in the Arab world and assure positive coverage of its politics and society. This effort has involved saturating the Arab viewer in Arab and Western entertainment in the form of dramas, quiz shows, comedies, films, and "soft religion" and only as much politics as is necessary. Recently, and after a lapse of some 30 years, a public film screening took place in Saudi Arabia.³⁹

UAE

The UAE consists of seven emirates, which have hereditary emirs as rulers and a president of the federation. Foreign investors are welcome, however, the company law excludes that foreigners may not own fifty or more percent of a company, a rule common to other Gulf countries. This rule is also applicable to film projects. But some emirates, namely Dubai, established so-called free zones, where foreigners may acquire 100% of a company. Such free zones are the Dubai Studio City,⁴⁰ Dubai Media City,⁴¹ Dubai Internet City,⁴² and the Dubai International Media Production Zone.⁴³ These free zones establish an infrastructure to attract media houses from around the world, in particular since the UAE do not impose taxes. Also the emirate of Ras Al Khaimah has a Media City.⁴⁴ After some reticence Abu Dhabi established a free zone with the Media Zone,⁴⁵ which aims at attracting investments from the global media business, but which works also with the task to foster the national film industry.

DUBAI

Dubai International Film Festival

The Dubai International Film Festival⁴⁶ is the leading festival of the Middle East. Its flagship competitions are the Muhr Arab, Muhr Asia Africa and Muhr Emirati segments and its diverse out of competition segments dedicated to contemporary regional and world cinema, children's cinema and Indian cinema. The Muhr Arab competition is also the most successful global launch pad for the region's cinema. During its 2011 edition it drew more than 1,760 film entries from 106 nations, and shortlisted 171 films representing 56 nations. Festival films are also eligible for a host of premier industry prizes. The Festival's competitions offer a combined purse in excess of USD

³⁵ See <http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmtalk/film-festivals/the-8th-aljazeera-international-documentary-film-festival>.

³⁶ See <http://www.aljazeera.com>.

³⁷ See <http://www.aljazeera.com/aboutus/2006/11/2008525185555444449.html>.

³⁸ Andrew HAMMOND: "Saudi Arabia's Media Empire: Keeping the Masses at Home", Arab Media & Society, Issue 3, Fall 2007, The American University in Cairo.

³⁹ David BATTY in The Guardian of 15/10/2012.

⁴⁰ See <http://www.dubaistudiocity.ae>.

⁴¹ See <http://www.dubaimediacity.com>.

⁴² See <http://www.dubaiinternetcity.com>.

⁴³ See <http://www.impz.ae>.

⁴⁴ See <http://rakmediacity.ae>.

⁴⁵ See <http://twofour54.com/en>.

⁴⁶ See <http://dubaifilmfest.com/en/industry>.

640,000. The Festival is also home to multiple out-of-competition segments including an 'In Focus' segment, master classes, nightly industry discussions and other special events.

Dubai Film Market

The Dubai Film Market⁴⁷ is the leading industry platform for Arab cinema and the business centre of the Dubai International Film Festival. It is the leading industry platform in the world dedicated to Arab cinema, attended annually by over 1,500 industry professionals from more than 80 countries. The Dubai Film Market is the epicentre of the Festival's industry activities and events. The Market is the destination to discover the best in Arab cinema and has established a number of pioneering initiatives to showcase and support Arab film-makers. The Dubai Film Market runs concurrently with Dubai International Film Festival, the most widely-anticipated cultural event in the region, presenting more than 170 films and 45 world premieres. The Dubai Film Market includes Exchange, Dubai Film Connection, Enjaaz, Filmmart and Forum.

Exchange

Exchange⁴⁸ forms the Dubai International Film Festival's training and partnership activities with leading international organisations and institutions including Interchange, a project development and co-production for European and Arab Filmmakers working under the tutorship of EAVE and the TorinoFilmLab.

Dubai Film Connection

The Dubai Film Connection⁴⁹ is the co-production market of the Dubai International Film Festival. Launched in 2007, the DFC aims to raise the visibility of Arab filmmakers and stimulate the growth of film production originating from the Arab world. The Dubai Film Connection brings international and Arab film professionals together to collaborate on the realisation of approximately fifteen selected projects each year. An annual guest list of more than eighty international film industry professionals from over twenty countries are invited to attend the Dubai Film Connection each year. In addition, the combined value of the Dubai Film Connection awards now stands at more than USD 100,000.

Recent requirements for support were:⁵⁰

- Arab nationality or origin of directors;
- previous directing experience of directors;
- previous production experience of the producer;
- the project must be either a fiction feature length film or a "creative feature length documentary";
- the project must be at an advanced stage, that is to say ready to be presented and discussed with potential partners;
- a full draft script and a financial plan;
- materials must be submitted in the English language.

Gulf Film Festival

The Gulf Film Festival⁵¹ is an annual non-profit cultural event that aims to celebrate the highest standards of Gulf cinema. The Festival takes place in April in Dubai, and it has two objectives. First, the Festival aims to develop the local and regional film culture in the Gulf, creating greater opportunities for filmmakers from the region to screen their films and develop future film

⁴⁷ See <http://dubaifilmfest.com/en/industry/dubai-film-market/>.

⁴⁸ See <http://dubaifilmfest.com/en/industry/dubai-film-market/film-exchange>.

⁴⁹ See <http://dubaifilmfest.com/en/industry/dubai-film-market/film-connection/>

⁵⁰ See note above.

⁵¹ See <http://www.gulffilmfest.com/index.php/en/about-gff/>

projects. Second, the Festival aims to celebrate excellence in Gulf cinema and be a destination festival for the international film community to discover state of the art Gulf Cinema. In presenting the best of Arab cinema from the Gulf countries, the Gulf Film Festival will become a destination festival for the international film community to discover state of the art cinema in the region. During its recent edition some 155 films from 40 countries were screened, and over 100 films participated in the Official Gulf Feature Film Competition and the Official Gulf Short Film Competition. This year the Gulf Script Market for Short Film was launched, an industry initiative of the Festival which offers support to budding filmmakers to turn their scripts into films. Script Market had more than 100 submissions.

Enjaaz

Dubai Entertainment and Media Organization, the owner and organizer of both the Dubai International Film Festival and the Gulf Film Festival, extends its support through the Dubai Film Market through its Enjaaz Program.⁵² Filmmakers have the opportunity to apply for post production support for their feature film or documentary film. Additionally, the Enjaaz program was expended to support filmmakers from the Gulf region with the production of short films. Enjaaz distributes grants of between USD 20,000 and 100,000, supporting up to 15 projects each year. Annually, the Festivals pay more than USD 575,000 as prize money and more than USD 400,000 for grants, funding and support. The Enjaaz program has expanded its mandate by additionally providing funding for the production of short films for Gulf filmmakers. The program aims to support a maximum of five short films, successful applicants will be eligible to receive funding up to a maximum of USD 50,000.

Eligibility requires projects with:

- a filmmaker of Gulf nationality or origin as defined hereunder;
- being centered on the Arab world, Arab history and/or Arab culture;
- a final script in Arabic or English;
- a detailed budget and production schedule/ timeline;
- being the original work of a sole author or collaboration between two writers;
- Gulf nationality or origin shall mean people from one or more of the following countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Iraq and Yemen.

Applicants must be rightholders of the project and have proven production experience. The script must be registered copyright material. If it is based on another person's life the applicants must attach a statement attesting the author(s) rights to make such an adaptation.

Dubai Studio City and Dubai International Media Production Zone

The Dubai Studio City⁵³ offers the right combination of planned infrastructure, talent pool and the dynamic business environment to support the growth of broadcast, movie, television and music production companies in the Middle East region. The business park offers free zone benefits of 100% business ownership and a tax free income in addition to networking opportunities, venue management services, industry building programmes and government services. Spread across 22 million sq.ft, DSC features pre-built studios, sound stages, warehouses, workshops, office spaces, latest satellite communication facilities, backlots and stage areas. DSC caters to companies offering services from the film and broadcast production value chain such as production & post-production facilities, recording studios and ancillary services. Businesses from the following sectors may apply to become part of the DSC business community: Broadcast, Production, Music and Entertainment. The Dubai International Media Production Zone offers free zone benefits and regulations that facilitate ease of operations. It has a business environment that is uniquely geared towards the needs of graphic art, printing, publishing, and packaging and media production companies.⁵⁴

⁵² See <http://www.gulffilmfest.com/index.php/en/enjaaz-production-support-for-gulf-shorts/> and <http://dubaifilmfest.com/en/industry/dubai-film-market/enjaaz/how-to-apply/>

⁵³ Dubai Studio City, see <http://www.dubaistudiocity.ae>.

⁵⁴ See <http://www.impz.ae/about-impz/history-and-milestones-of-impz>.

ABU DHABI

The Abu Dhabi Film Commission⁵⁵ co-operates with other government backed institutions, including the National Media Council, twofour54, the Abu Dhabi Film Festival and Image Nation.

International Production Incentive

The Abu Dhabi Film Commission offers competitive international production incentives of 30% cash rebate on production spend in Abu Dhabi. The Rebate is a production incentive scheme that provides a refund of up to 30% of Abu Dhabi Qualifying Production Expenditure to international production companies producing part or all of their productions in Abu Dhabi. It will also cover costs relating to the contracting of any UAE registered crew and services for activities in Abu Dhabi. Temporary accommodation costs in Abu Dhabi, as well as airline tickets and freight booked on Etihad Airways, will also qualify for the rebate. Eligible for support are international production companies working with Abu Dhabi registered companies. Also, the Film Commission provides support in finding unique locations, advice on script clearance & permits, equipment, experienced crew, studios and high-end post production facilities.

Media Zone Authority twofour54

twofour54⁵⁶ is a community for Arabic content creation in the media and entertainment sector in the Middle East and North Africa. It was designed to provide a collaborative infrastructure for content creation companies and individuals in the film, broadcast, digital, gaming, publishing and music industries. twofour54 seeks the development of Arabic media and entertainment content, by Arabs for Arabs, and to position Abu Dhabi as a regional centre of excellence in content creation across all media platforms. The aim is to create a collaborative and supportive campus community, stimulating creative and professional partnerships through its three pillars: twofour54 tadreeb, twofour54 ibtikar, twofour54 intaj and its business enabler twofour54 tawasol. twofour54 offers a vocational learning centre, media industry funding and business support and as well production and post-production facilities. twofour54 tadreeb is the region's premier media industry vocational training academy, and one of the key business pillars of twofour54 Abu Dhabi. twofour54 intaj provides state-of-the-art production, post-production, media asset management, broadcast and technical support services. twofour54 ibtikar provides media and entertainment industry funding and support for start-up and early stage businesses and individuals with creative ideas and a passion for success. twofour54 offers key industry infrastructure: a large range of diverse urban locations and landscapes, one stop shop providing prompt government services for all visa/permit requirements or experienced crew and equipment hire supported by state of the art facilities. These include ten fully-HD studios up to 1,000m², twenty three post-production suites and the region's only baselight colour grading facility.

Image Nation

Image Nation⁵⁷ is a feature film production and finance company with two divisions: Image Nation International, which carries out strategic joint ventures, which co-produces and co-finances films for a global audience through its international filmmaking division.⁵⁸ Foreign applicants for support must fall within Image Nation International's partnerships. Image Nation International maintains strategic partnerships with a number of major producers. These include Participant Media, National Geographic Films, Hyde Park Entertainment, Parkes/Macdonald Productions, Warner Bros., and Singapore's Media Development Authority. The other division, Image Nation

⁵⁵ See <http://film.gov.ae>.

⁵⁶ See

http://www.abudhabi.ae/egovPoolPortal_WAR/appmanager/ADeGP/Citizen?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=p_citizen_departments&lang=en&did=133550

⁵⁷ See <http://ImageNationabudhabi.com/en>.

⁵⁸ Badar SALEM: "Film Financing in the Region: The More the Better", in Variety Arabia, October 2012, 20 at 21.

Abu Dhabi, deals with Emirati films. This structure aims at the support of the local film industry through developing project and talent within the UAE while supporting them through vital international partnerships and investments.⁵⁹ The company's mission is to build the foundations of a strong local film industry in the UAE. Image Nation Abu Dhabi, the company's local division, produced its first Emirati film in 2011, the coming of age story "Sea Shadow". Image Nation also oversees a number of training and internship programs designed to encourage the growth of local film talent.

Abu Dhabi Media Company

Abu Dhabi Media Company⁶⁰ is one of the fastest growing, multi-platform media and entertainment organizations in the Middle East, operating across the broadcast, publishing, and digital media sectors. The company manages over 20 organisations that serve the UAE through a defined public service role. These organisations target the wider Arab world with clear commercial objectives. As the only media company in the UAE with brands across the entire spectrum of the industry, Abu Dhabi Media performs an important public service by providing media, which entertain, inform and educate the local community. Abu Dhabi Media owns and operates a number of subsidiaries including Image Nation and LIVE, an outdoor broadcast and production company.

Abu Dhabi Film Festival

The Abu Dhabi Film Festival⁶¹ is aimed at helping to create a vibrant film culture throughout the region. 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 spectators a means of engaging with their own and others' cultures through the art of cinema. At the same time the festival attempts to show new voices of Arab cinema.

Funds of the Abu Dhabi Film Festival

SANAD is the Abu Dhabi Film Festival's Film Fund. SANAD has annually USD 500,000 at its disposal. SANAD seeks out bold and remarkable projects from both new and established filmmakers with the aim of encouraging intercultural dialogue and artistic innovation while building stronger networks within the region's film industry. Annually, SANAD has USD 500,000 at its disposal. It makes grants in the following categories: up to USD 20,000 for development and up to USD 60,000 for post production. The Sasha Grant is dedicated towards the development of film scripts, and the prize money amounts to USD 100,000.⁶² The Aflam Qaseera (short films) Production Fund is designed to promote emerging writers, directors and UAE based production companies in creating short films between 5 and 12 minutes for international screenings. Each selected project will be eligible for up to some USD 20,000 production funds per film. During the recent selection twenty proposals were chosen for development, six films have been selected for production. Application is open to UAE national including residents of at least one year and nationals from countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

⁵⁹ Diana LODDERHOSE: "Image Nation rebrands, restructures", in Variety, 03/2011, quoting chairman Mohammed Al MUBARAK.

⁶⁰ See <http://www.admedia.ae/about-us/>.

⁶¹ See <http://www.abudhabifilmfestival.ae>.

⁶² See <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=47761>.