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The American Turkish Society
and Moon and Stars Project
305 E. 47th Street New York, NY 10017
www.americanturkishsociety.org
www.moonandstarsproject.org

The 12th New York Turkish Film Festival Closes

New York, NY [December 20, 2010]-- Presented by The American Turkish Society and Moon and Stars Project, the New York Turkish Film Festival drew as many as 1,500 spectators during its two-week run. Held at the SVA Theatre on December 3-5 & 10-12, the 12th New York Film Festival comprised 12 feature films, 11 short films, and discussions with visiting filmmakers and actors. The festival also featured workshops on various aspects of filmmaking and a short film program held at the NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. The festival's opening reception and closing party gave the audience an opportunity to meet visiting artists and other film enthusiasts. With a number of sold-out screenings and additional programs in Ithaca, Madison, Milwaukee and Seattle made possible by a generous grant from the Turkish Cultural Foundation, the festival sought to present the best of Turkish cinema in the U.S.

Generating the highest interest were Ilksen Basarir's story of the rocky relationship between a hearing girl and a deaf man, praised by critic Joe Bendel "as a well put-together package" with "high gloss [cinematography] and electro-ambient score," and Taylan Brothers' *Vavien*, a dark comedy that portrays the transformation of an unhappily married man. Part of the festival's documentary series, *On the Way to School* follows a young Turkish teacher for a year in a predominantly Kurdish village and shows the challenges he encounters in forging a connection with his students. The film sparked an interesting debate among viewers in a post screening Q&A with directors Orhan Eskikoy and Ozgur Dogan. Director Inan Temelkuran was similarly available for questions following the screening of his movie *Bornova Bornova*, which explores the lives of three friends in Izmir's slowly degenerating neighborhood Bornova.

Held at The American Turkish Society offices, the festival also included workshops by actors Mert Firat (*Love in Another Language*) and Sermet Yesil (*Kosmos*) and directors Ilksen Basarir (*Love in Another Language*) and Inan Temelkuran (*Bornova Bornova*). Focused on screenwriting, directing and acting, the workshops allowed a diverse group of attendees to engage one-to-one with the visiting artists from Turkey and exchange ideas. In addition, during its closing weekend, the festival featured a panel discussion with the filmmakers and actors, centered on the transformation of societal change and its reflection in Turkish cinema. Stephen Wise of Lotus Editions commented on the festival program, "The results are impressive, with a crop of well crafted, dialogue driven, low budget movies — that rise to the level of art, and may help to reunite a society."

The festival closed with a short film program presented in conjunction with the Institute for Artists and Global Change at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. The program featured 8 short films from or about Turkey, selected in collaboration with Hisar Short Film Selection and !f Istanbul. The program included widely acclaimed shorts such as *Chienne D'Histoire* (aka *Barking Island*; winner of Best Film at the 63rd Cannes Film Festival) which tells the true story of Istanbul in 1910 when the city is overrun by stray dogs; *Unutma* (*Forget Me Not*) which explores the theme of death in old, dispossessed photographs; and *Esma* which features the tale of a young woman who divorces her husband to save her family.



The success of this year's festival owes to generous grants from the Turkish Cultural Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts and New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, as well as support from sponsors: The Marmara Manhattan, Paragraf Basım, Turkish Culture and Tourism Office in New York, and Turkish Kitchen as gold sponsors; MTS Logistics, Ramerica International, and UPM-Kymmene Kağıt Ürünleri as silver sponsors; and various organizations and individuals as adopt-a-film sponsors. In addition, several supporting organizations and a dedicated corps of volunteers were instrumental in making the festival possible.

The American Turkish Society, founded in 1949, is America's oldest not-for-profit organization seeking to enhance economic, political, and cultural ties between Turkey and the United States. The Society also initiates and sponsors a variety of education and arts & culture programs, providing fellowships, grants, and other opportunities for cultural exchange between the two countries. Founded in 2002, Moon and Stars Project is dedicated to highlighting the changing face of Turkish arts and culture and establishing a two-way cultural interaction between the United States and Turkey.

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For additional questions or inquiries regarding the event, contact: Doga Kayalar Polat, Tel. (212) 583 7617 Email: d.kayalar@americanturkishsociety.org or doga@moonandstarsproject.org.