



WORKING TITLE AGREES DEAL TO ACQUIRE RIGHTS TO SYRIAN OLYMPIC SWIMMER YUSRA MARDINI'S INSPIRATIONAL TRUE LIFE STORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LONDON, March 17, 2017 –Working Title Films has agreed a deal to acquire the life rights of Syrian swimmer Yusra Mardini's inspirational life story to develop and produce as a feature film.

The project will be produced by Working Title Films' co-chairmen Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner alongside producer Ali Jaafar (The Idol). Yusra Mardini will serve as a consultant on the film. Award-winning filmmaker Stephen Daldry, who previously collaborated with Working Title to great acclaim and success on Billy Elliot and Trash, is attached to direct the project.

The film will tell the true story of Yusra Mardini, an Olympic swimmer and Syrian refugee who made headlines when the story of her heroism while making the perilous journey across the Aegean Sea came to light last year.

Growing up in Syria, where she was a promising swimmer, Yusra Mardini fled Syria with her sister Sara in 2015 after life in the war-torn country had become too dangerous.

The teenage Yusra and Sara travelled to Europe alone and had to contend with numerous life-threatening situations, most notably while on a boat with other refugees to the Greek island of Lesbos. The boat began to sink, endangering the lives of all on-board.

Using their swimming skills, Yusra and Sara heroically jumped into the sea and swam the boat and its occupants to safety, a journey that took over three hours in freezing conditions.

Settling in Berlin, without any other family or friends in the German capital, Yusra and Sara were forced to fend for themselves. While in Berlin, Yusra met a local swimming coach, Sven Spannekrebs, who took her under his wing.

The IOC decided to launch for the first time ever, a Team Refugee to compete in the 2016 Olympic Games. Against the odds, Yusra made it to the Olympics and won her qualifying heat during the games.

Since the games, Yusra has become an impassioned champion and ambassador for refugees across the world, meeting world leaders such as U.S. President Barack Obama and the Pope and delivering a series of keynote speeches at the World Economic Forum in Davos

Said Yusra Mardini: "I am very happy that we have finalized this project and I am really excited

about developing the film. I have a good feeling for the cooperation with Working Title. Many thanks to Ali and Marc for their help and their guidance!”

Said Eric Fellner, "It's rare to find a story whose truth makes it emotionally more powerful than fiction can ever be. The physical, spiritual and geographical journey that Yusra and Sara undertook is quite unbelievable. Through the power of film we feel privileged and enthused to share such an incredible and important story about how lives can be changed through dreams, ambition and desire."

“I am thrilled to be involved in bringing Yusra's extraordinary story to a wider audience through the medium of film,” said Stephen Daldry. “Yusra reminds us of the human cost of the tragedy and the incredible fortitude, perseverance and hope of one young woman who struggles for a future. Yusra’s dream of living in Peace is the story of our time.”

Said Sara Mardini: "I would like to say thank you to Working Title for supporting us and making it possible to tell our story. For me it is very important that our story gets told to inspire people and help them deal with both their big and also small issues in their daily lives. By being a part of this project I will be able to make my dream come true by supporting refugees on a bigger scale."

Said Sven Spannekrebs: "Almost a year ago to the day, Yusra and I held the big press conference in Berlin with over 120 journalists. Since then, the subject of the film has been closely following us. Today, we are happy that we have taken an important step and we are grateful for the support of Ali Jaafar, Marc Heinkelein and Working Title as partners, whom we have been able to trust from the very beginning.”

"In a time of such uncertainty and fear, Yusra's incredible story is a shining reminder that what binds us together is so much stronger than what keeps us apart,” said producer Ali Jaafar. “At its heart, this is the story of someone who had a dream and was able to overcome the most immense obstacles to achieve it. Tim and Eric are the best in the business and are the perfect partners to bring this heart-warming, inspirational story to audiences around the world."

Added Yusra’s manager, Marc Heinkelein from StageField Management:

"We are very glad to have Working Title as a partner, which stands for high quality in telling stories based on real events, and which can ensure through a worldwide release of the movie, that the widest possible audience is able to share this very touching story.”

About Working Title Films

TIM BEVAN and ERIC FELLNER have been co-chairs of Working Title Films, one of the world’s leading film production companies, since 1992. Working Title has made more than 100 films that have grossed over \$6 billion worldwide. Its films have won 11 Academy Awards® (for Tom Hooper’s *Les Misérables*; James Marsh’s *The Theory of Everything*; Tim Robbins’ *Dead Man Walking*; Joel and Ethan Coen’s *Fargo*; Shekhar Kapur’s *Elizabeth and Elizabeth: The Golden Age*; and Joe Wright’s *Atonement* and *Anna Karenina*), 37 British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) Awards, and prizes at the

Cannes and Berlin international film festivals.

Bevan and Fellner have been honored with the Producers Guild of America awarded them its David O. Selznick Achievement Award in Theatrical Motion Pictures, the PGA's highest honour for motion picture producers. They have been accorded two of the highest film awards given to British filmmakers: the Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema award, at the BAFTA Awards and the Alexander Walker Film Award at the Evening Standard British Film Awards. They have also both been honored with CBEs (Commanders of the Order of the British Empire).

The company's commercial and critical hits include *The Interpreter*, *About a Boy*, *Notting Hill*, *Elizabeth*, *Fargo*, *Dead Man Walking*, *Bean*, *High Fidelity*, *Johnny English*, *Billy Elliot*, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, *Love Actually*, *Shaun of the Dead*, *Pride & Prejudice*, *Nanny McPhee*, *United 93*, *Mr. Bean's Holiday*, *Hot Fuzz*, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, *Burn After Reading*, *Frost/Nixon*, *Atonement*, *Senna*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, *Anna Karenina*, *Les Misérables*, *I Give It A Year*, *About Time*, *Rush*, *Two Faces of January*, *Trash*, *The Theory of Everything*, *Legend*, *Everest*, *The Programme*, *The Danish Girl*, *Grimmsby*, *Hail Caesar!* and *Bridget Jones's Baby*.

Working Title's upcoming slate includes *The Snowman* directed by Tomas Alfredson starring Michael Fassbender, Rebecca Ferguson and Val Kilmer and *Baby Driver*, directed by Edgar Wright starring Lily James, Ansel Elgort, Kevin Spacey and Jamie Foxx, *Darkest Hour*, directed by Joe Wright starring Gary Oldman, Lily James, Ben Mendelsohn and Kristin Scott Thomas, *Victoria and Abdul*, directed by Stephen Frears starring Judi Dench and Ali Fazal, *Untitled Entebbe Project*, directed by Jose Padilha starring Rosamund Pike and Daniel Bruhl, *Untitled Hatton Garden Project* starring Michael Caine, Jim Broadbent and Ray Winstone and TV series *Gypsy* for Netflix, starring Naomi Watts, Billy Crudup and Karl Glusman.

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