



UKTI supports Pukka Films in Jordan

Fast facts

Company: Pukka Films

Industry: Creative Industries - film

Target market: Jordan

UKTI services: Market Visit Support,
Significant Assistance,
Introductions

pukkafilms.com
kajakimovie.com



UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) and the British Ambassador to Jordan played a critical role in facilitating the making of feature film Kajaki by Pukka Films. UKTI provided the British company with market knowledge, secured the support of His Majesty King Abdullah II for the project, liaised with the Jordanian Royal Court on behalf of the production team and made introductions to local investors.

Produced by Pukka Films, feature film Kajaki is about a small unit of British soldiers posted in Afghanistan in 2006. As a 3-man patrol sets out to disable a Taliban roadblock, one of them detonates a land mine left behind from an earlier conflict with Russia. His leg is blown off, setting into motion a heroic rescue mission, characterised by bravery, selflessness and loss.

“This film is probably the first that deals with the British Armed Forces post World War 2,” says Gareth Ellis-Unwin, Executive Producer of Kajaki and Chief Executive Officer of Bedlam

Film Productions, the creative team that brought The King’s Speech to audiences around the world. “Based on a true story, its purpose is to celebrate and cherish the bravery of our troops. Many of them are young boys who should have their whole lives ahead of them, but they are prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for their country.”

On location

Pukka Films considered filming Kajaki in Jordan, Morocco or South Africa. One of the executive producers, Alec Mackenzie, had worked in Jordan in the past and introduced Gareth to his connections there. These included the Head of UKTI’s in-country team in Amman, who Gareth contacted for advice in mid-2013. UKTI replied that Jordan would be the ideal backdrop to the story and offered a range of support. His Majesty King Abdullah II had recently told UKTI that he was interested in growing Jordan’s film industry, which boded well for the success of production.

Through UKTI’s in-country networks, the Pukka Films team was introduced to senior officials of the Royal Court, which was useful in ensuring that necessary permissions were granted in a smooth and timely way. UKTI also put the company in touch with local financial backers and with Jaguar Land Rover, who provided vehicles for use during filming. Alec had approached his contacts at the Jordanian Armed Forces and, with further input from UKTI, they agreed to help with site access and allowed Black Hawk helicopters to be featured in the film, saving Pukka Films around £300,000 in production costs. The Ambassador even mentioned Kajaki in social media, helping to raise its profile.

“We were new to Jordan and it was a great advantage to be able to present ourselves not just as a foreign filmmaker on location, but as having the backing of the British government,” says Gareth.

“UKTI took a genuine interest in our project. Their involvement helped us to gain and keep momentum throughout filming.”

Gareth Ellis-Unwin, Executive Producer of Kajaki and Chief Executive Officer of Bedlam Film Productions

“Securing His Majesty’s support was a real game changer, ensuring that people were keen to help and speeding up response times when we made requests. UKTI also took a genuine interest in our project and, knowing the local culture and how things work, they had a true sense of when we should push and when to hold back. Their involvement helped us to gain and keep momentum throughout filming. They came to meet our production teams in person, sometimes with the Ambassador; they shared with us political insights and commercial knowledge that only come with years of experience in the market; and they facilitated important introductions for us.”

Giving back

In June 2014, Gareth travelled back to Jordan to speak at an event hosted by the British Ambassador at his residence, as part of UKTI’s GREAT campaign. He addressed 1200 guests about the important role that the creative industries play in the British economy. As well as drawing attention to Kajaki, this was a useful opportunity to meet face to face with Jordanian business people interested in supporting the film and senior members of the British military.

With encouragement from UKTI, Gareth wrote a white paper for the Jordanians to consider, showing how in the UK and elsewhere government bursaries, grants and tax incentives are having a positive effect on the film industry. UKTI made sure the paper got to the right people in the Royal Court for consideration as plans progress to achieve His Majesty’s vision for the country’s own film industry.

Kajaki is set to make a great impact, not just on cinema-goers but also war veterans. As well as all revenue from ticket sales for the premiere and pre-release screenings, a portion of the profits from the film’s subsequent release will go to military charities that support ex-servicemen and women. The real life heroes of the film have also been

honoured with film premiers being held in their home towns of Leeds, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Bristol.

“Speaking at the Ambassador’s Residence allowed me to highlight the immense financial value that the creative industries bring to Britain,” says Gareth. “I fully endorse His Majesty’s plans to bolster Jordan’s film industry, and I hope that my White Paper will be useful in achieving his aims. Closer to home, we’re proud to be making a significant contribution to good causes that are closely related to the subject matter of Kajaki. In a unique arrangement, we will directly-distribute the film under the banner of Alchemy Releasing. Because we are saving on sales agents’ and distributors’ commissions, the charities will get 10% of a bigger sum. It has been important to us to show how film makes a positive contribution to society, not just in providing entertainment but on a deeper level too. UKTI has been a big part of allowing us to do this.”

The UK and Jordan

Jordan attracts more £1 billion worth of UK exports. It is a gateway between the east and the west and English is widely used as the business language. It is politically stable, with an open business environment, a well-educated and highly skilled workforce, strong banking system and competitive costs of doing business.

Jordanians are always keen to do business with UK companies. Jordan has a number of trade agreements with the European Union (EU). Sizeable contracts have been signed with Shell that have greatly boosted bilateral trade.

For further information about business opportunities in Jordan, please go to gov.uk/ukti

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UKTI was delighted to support Pukka Films in its business overseas.

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