

Line-Up and Jury Announced for the first Red Sea Shorts Competition

Tim Redford of Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival to helm jury alongside actress Najla Ben Abdallah, and poet and cultural leader Ahmad Almulla

Focussed on work from the Arab world, the winner of the competition receives a Golden Yusr Award and \$50,000 Prize

27 February 2020, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia | The Red Sea International Film Festival announces Tim Redford as President of the jury for the inaugural Red Sea Shorts competition. Redford is a leader in the global short film scene through his work with Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, the Short Film Conference, and Curtocircuito International Festival of Short Films. He is joined by Tunisian actress Najla Ben Abdallah, and Saudi screenwriter and cinema pioneer Ahmad Almulla.

Festival Director Mahmoud Sabbagh commented: "Short films have a special place in Saudi film culture; it is a format that allows for experimentation and expression. The competition also taps into a lively Arab shorts community to showcase the best of next-generation filmmaking. It's exciting to welcome Tim Redford, with his global outlook, to helm the jury for the first Red Sea Shorts program."

With 13 films from seven countries, a theme found throughout the shorts is the effects of shifting social contexts.

The competition, which is open to all Arab directors, represents the pulse of next-generation Arab creativity with a curated selection of short films produced or directed by the most exciting contemporary voices. The line-up explores the limits of what short films can be.

Jury President **Tim Redford** (France) has dedicated his career to diverse film organizations across Europe, especially those supporting short films. Since 2015, he has been part of the executive team for Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival in France, where he co-ordinates the international selection committee, the African Perspectives' program, and the online submission platform Short Film Depot. He also serves on the board of the Short Film Conference, the only non-profit worldwide organization dedicated to the short film community.

Born in Tunis, **Najla Ben Abdallah** (Tunisia) began her career in front of the cameras with TV commercials. In 2009, she featured in her first TV show, the Ramadan TV series "Donia". Her first cinematic role was Lilly in "False Note". In 2015, she starred in the Tunisian film "Thala Mon Amour" by Mehdi Hmili. Following, she starred alongside

Sami Bouajila in Mehdi Barsaoui's film, "A Son," (2019) which had its world premiere at the 76th Venice International Film Festival, where it was nominated for Best Film.

A major contributor to the cultural life of Saudi Arabia, **Ahmad Almulla** (KSA) is a poet, and arts developer and cultural consultant. He has served as Director of the Saudi Film Festival (2008, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019); Director of the Poetry Festival (2015, 2016, 2017); Executive Manager and Member of the board for the Literary Club, Dammam (2006–2010); today, he is a consultant to the Saudi Culture and Arts Society.

Films Overview

...And When Do I Sleep?

Husam AlSayed | KSA | Arabic | 16 mins

Cast: Mustafa Turkistani, Fatima Husein

In the dead of night, vision is warped by insomnia – Adam hears a woman call out, but there is no-one there. Dreamlike and eerie, as if being plunged into a twisted dream.

Barakat

Manon Nammour | Lebanon | Arabic | 14 mins

Cast: Mounir Maasri, Camille Salameh, Rudy Ghafari, Christine Choueiri

An aging man prepares for his grandson's wedding in an ever-changing Beirut. This affecting and elegant drama moves beyond nostalgia to tackle constant transformation, memory and its loss.

Clouds

Muzna Almusafer | Oman | Arabic | 15 mins

Cast: Bandar Alshihri, Hassan Almashani, Amal Bait Noyra

A journey inside a tribal Omani society undergoing rapid transformation in 1978. Dablan faces pressure from his village to kill a leopard - instead, he resolves to set the animal free.

Goin' South

Mohammed Alhamoud | KSA | Arabic | 14 mins

Cast: Fatima AlBanawi, Ayman Mutahar, Alanoud Yousef

Newlyweds pay their first visit to the groom's hometown. Despite a modern approach to dating, discovering they come from two different worlds, their relationship is put to the test.

The Return

Charlie Kouka | Tunis/France | Arabic and French | 22 mins

Cast: Fares Landolsi, Salim Kechiouche, Sondes Belhassen

Returning home after seven years abroad, Tarek meets Khaled, who is everything he isn't: successful, handsome, and helpful. Charlie Kouka immerses the audience into their inner turmoil, to explore the consequences of staying and leaving.

Ongoing Lullaby

Hisham Fadel | KSA | Arabic | 12 mins

Cast: Sarah Taibah

An intimate portrait of daily life for a lonely, yet independent, woman who is hounded by melancholic thoughts and doubts. A personal and moving performance by Sarah Taibah, meticulously captured by Hisham Fadel.

So What if the Goats Die

Sofia Alaoui | Morocco/France | Arabic | 22 mins

Cast: Fouad Oughaou, Moha Oughaou

Abdellah, a solitary mountain shepherd, discovers a village abandoned in supernatural circumstances that destabilize his most fundamental beliefs. A trek through an arid, mountainous landscape stresses an encounter with the fragility of human existence.

Soukoon

Farah Shaer | Lebanon | Arabic | 14 mins

Cast: Hiba Sleiman Alhamad, Lara Ayazri, Ghassan Chemali

With her marriage in turmoil, Mariam discovers she's pregnant. Trapped in a prison of lies and societal pressures, she yearns to break free. A blunt and uncompromising look at sheer perseverance in the face of brutal obstacles.

Sunday at Five

Sherif El Bendary | Egypt | Arabic | 17 mins

Cast: Hadeel Hassan, Khairy Beshara, Ayten Amin, Sedky Sakhr

Selfishness makes Hadeel unstoppable – even if getting what she wants is at the expense of others. Conflating fact and fiction, this is a tale of mind games and manipulation.

The Ghosts We Left at Home

Faris RJ | Jordan | Arabic | 21 mins

Cast: Nadeem Rimawi

Faris RJ patterns unfinished thoughts into a distinctive visual language in this fragmentary and brooding meditation on a man and a city, featuring an utterly compelling performance by Nadeem Rimawi.

The Girls Who Burned the Night

Sara Mesfer | KSA | Arabic | 24 mins

Cast: Jana Qomri, Haya Almari

A small act of rebellion causes tension, then understanding, between teenage sisters Sasabel and Wasan. Impatient to grow-up, they stay awake together through a restless night, exploring dreams and hopes.

The Other Cheek

Sandro Canaan | Egypt | Arabic | 9 mins

Cast: Tarek Abdelaziz, Dora Youssef, Mohey Dorgham

After Nashaat's daughter is viciously attacked by his neighbors' dog, he is indignant to read claims she provoked the attack and takes frustrations out on the perpetrator in this tale of guilt, repentance and revenge.

Ward's Henna Party

Morad Mostafa | Egypt | Arabic | 23 mins

Cast: Halima, Ward, Marina Victor

Halima, a Sudanese refugee, living in Egypt, takes her 7-year-old daughter Ward to work, painting henna for a bride-to-be. The average day takes an unexpected turn when curious Ward sets off exploring.

For more information, please contact: media@redseafilmfest.com

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About Red Sea International Film Festival

The inaugural Red Sea International Film Festival takes place 12-21 March in Al-Balad Historic Jeddah, under the theme "Changing the Script". A platform for expression and discovery through film, the Festival and its year-round initiatives aim to support and help grow Saudi Arabia's emerging film industry, inspire new audiences across the country, and contribute to a richer experience for Saudi Arabia's changing society by encouraging more open cultural exchange. For more information, or to buy tickets, please visit www.redseafilmfest.com

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