

PRESS RELEASES

RELEASE 5

Red Sea International Film Festival announces 12 projects selected for development at the Red Sea Lodge

Projects selected by an international committee from over 120 submissions

*12 teams of filmmakers from across the Arab world to undergo intensive development workshops in collaboration with **TorinoFilmLab***

Production funding totaling one million dollars available for two projects

30 September 2019, Jeddah: The Red Sea International Film Festival has announced the 12 winning projects for development at the inaugural Red Sea Lodge.

An international committee chose the winning teams out of 120 submissions, drawn from 16 countries. Female directors helm a third of the 12 successful projects, and over a quarter have female producers.

The selection includes six Saudi teams alongside projects from Jordan, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, and Lebanon, demonstrating a commitment to furthering new work from the Arab world. The twelve teams of filmmakers include emerging directors making their first or second feature films, as well as more established names presenting new ideas and concepts.

The films will compete for two US\$500,000 production prizes, with a world premiere opportunity at the Red Sea International Film Festival 2021.

The Red Sea Lodge is committed to the new wave in Arab cinema. Designed to train and mentor the next generation, it develops artistic and creative development, as well as production and promotion strategies.

Organized in collaboration with the acclaimed **TorinoFilmLab**, the comprehensive program includes three workshops in Jeddah's historic district. Led by industry experts in directing, cinematography, sound, and post-production, the Lodge will explore every stage of filmmaking, from script consultations to a commercial focus on financing, sales, and audience engagement.

The program creates meaningful industry opportunities for all participants, commences in October 2019 and will culminate during the Red Sea International Film Festival in March 2020.

The committee comprised of industry veterans, including: Mahmoud Sabbagh (Festival Director, Red Sea International Film Festival), Julie Bergeron (Head of the Red Sea Souk), Antoine Khalife (Director of the Arab Program, Red Sea International Film Festival), Jane Williams (Head of Industry, TorinoFilmLab), and Savina Neirotti (Executive Director, TorinoFilmLab).

They were supported by a team of readers, including Fahad Alestaa (Saudi Scriptwriter and Film Critic), and leading media figure Layaly Badr (Arab Radio & TV Network). Saudi producer Jumana Zahid leads the Festival's development program, as Manager of the Red Sea Lodge.

Through unique storytelling styles, the Saudi projects set themselves against significant socio-political and economic underpinnings, including the discovery of oil and the siege of the Holy Mosque in 1979. The projects also diversely explore women's struggle and modern-day challenges to mental health, such as loneliness and isolation.

The selected projects:

Saudi Projects

1. Practicing Polygamy

Directed and written by Malak Qouta

Produced by Bentley Brown

An animated feature-length documentary exploring the customs, traditions, and daily reality of polygamy in Saudi Arabia.

2. Dr. Adly's Smile

Directed by Ali Alsumayin

Written by Fatima Albanawi

Produced by Sarah Elnawasrah

Who saves who when there is family turmoil? When Dr. Adly's mental health declines after getting divorced, his daughter Basma puts her life on hold to rescue him from his own delusions.

3. Four Acts of Disruption

Directed and written by Hussam Alhulwah

Produced by Mohammed Alhamoud

As Arab Bedouins and foreign prospectors meet, the future of the newly founded Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will be shaped. This conflict of vision and tradition is told through the stories of Saudi Ayad and American geologist Roy.

4. When the Star is Falling

Directed and written by Mohammed Salman Alsaffar

Produced by Mousa Althonian

One woman, one kingdom, many interconnected narratives. Short, linked vignettes jump through time and place to tell the story of a culture and a life shaped by diverse landscapes – from the traditions of the desert to the modern tumult of the city.

5. A Trip to Disney

Directed and written by Maha Alsaati

Produced by Hussain Slam

The journey of a jilted lover. Abandoned in Saudi, a woman travels to Florida, anxious to encounter the man who has left her behind. Finding herself in the Disney empire, she discovers she is not his princess.

6. Sharshaf

Directed by Hend Alfahhad

Written by Manal Alawebeel

Produced by Talal Alharbi

Tracking the shockwaves of the 1979 Grand Mosque Seizure, a catastrophe that curtailed social and cultural freedom in Saudi Arabia, through the life of a typical middle-class woman, Haila and her love of film. This is the story of a nation and a generation.

Arab Projects

1. Inchalla it's a Boy (Jordan)

Directed and written by Amjad Alrasheed

Produced by Aseel Abu Ayyash

Grieving the sudden death of her husband, Nawal must confront the realities of inheritance laws which rule that, without a son, she stands to lose the home she bought for herself and her daughter.

2. A Journey of Bullets and Bread (Egypt)

Directed and written by Mohammad Hammad

Produced by Mohammed Hefzi and Kholoud Saad

When a chance encounter between wild Awad and the shy, intellectual Youssef forges an unlikely friendship, their lives become tangled in acts of fate and betrayal.

3. Scheherazade Goes Silent (Palestine)

Directed and written by Amira Diab

Produced by Raya Aburub

Tragedy forces Shams to confront choices amid strict expectations. As she prepares to star in a dance piece based on 1001 Nights, she must live with decisions that put her at odds with her society.

4. The Basement Notes (Lebanon)

Directed and written by Hadi Ghandour

Produced by Habib Attia and Molka Mheni

In defiance of militant forces who have captured their city, three brothers form a band. As their music spreads underground, a desire for recognition puts their lives at risk.

5. I Am Arzé (Lebanon)

Directed by Mira Shaib

Written by Louay Khraish

Produced by Zeina Badran.

Desperate for money to buy the scooter that will allow her to work, single mother Arzé steals a gold bracelet from her sister Layla. Now she's got wheels, she's getting along better with her son Kinan – until he discovers the scooter is stolen.

6. The Arabic Interpreter (Iraq)

Directed and written by Ali Kareem

Produced by Khalid Abu Sharif

Hassan is a frustrated actor; unable to find work in the theatre, he takes a job as an Arabic-German Interpreter so he can stay in Berlin. Listening to the refugees' harrowing stories, Hassan relives the wars he experienced in Iraq.

For more information, please contact:

nouf.almugairin@redseafilmfest.com

Red Sea International Film Festival