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For immediate release

Red Sea Film Festival restores two rare films by late Saudi photographer Safouh Naamani.

Restored version of "The Pilgrimage to Mecca" (1963), and "Glimpses of Jeddah"; a film composed of archival footage starting from 1954, will both premiere at the inaugural Red Sea International Film Festival, March 12-21, 2020.

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Dec. 18, 2019 – The Red Sea International Film Festival will honor Saudi photographer and cinematographer Safouh Naamani (1926-2016), one of the pioneers of color photography in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The festival will publicly present for the first time a rare documentary made by Naamani in 1963 on the journey to Hajj, in addition to a movie compiling never before seen film footage of the city of Jeddah, taken with Naamani's personal camera between 1954 and 1968.

"The Pilgrimage to Mecca" is a 35-minute color documentary film, developed at the William Palmer laboratory in San Francisco, about the pilgrimage to Mecca, filmed during the 1963 Hajj season.

Naamani used his extensive knowledge of the holy city of Mecca to deliver an authentic perspective. The documentary captures Mecca's inspiring landscapes and religious rituals while presenting the journey of pilgrims to Mecca. Previously, the film has screened in private or limited shows, and so will now be presented publicly for the first time.

"This discovery rewrites the history of national cinema in our country," Festival director and CEO, Mahmoud Sabbagh said. "Discovering a film that was made in 1963 and that is

complete in all aspects and production adds an original element to the story of Saudi cinema."

The festival also presents for the first time a cinematic panorama of the city of Jeddah, captured by Naamani between 1954 to 1968 on his 16mm camera. The rare collection of footage documents the history of urban transformations that the city went through during the fifties and sixties.

The Red Sea International Film Foundation was able to develop and restore five reels of raw film belonging to Naamani at a film restoration lab in Munich, Germany. The restored footage has been edited into a short 30-minute film, which will debut at the 2020 festival.

Scenes from the film "Glimpses of Jeddah" range from the celebrations of the return of King Saud after receiving medical treatments abroad in 1954; as well as footage of commercial life in the port of Jeddah. Naamani was also able to capture rare shots of the coastline along the ancient port of Punt. As well as Al-Bay'a square, the Jeddah Palace Hotel, and the Bakashab building. The film also contains rare footage of the creation of Gold Street in 1964.

Sabbagh says, "We are expanding our history with new narratives of Jeddah's metamorphoses through rare cinematic documentation captured by the late filmmaker Sufooh Namaani. It's as if Namaani knew his work would be vital for generations to come".

Naamani is one of the pioneers of photography and filmmaking in Jeddah, KSA. He started selling cameras and photography equipment in 1952 at his family-run "Al Naamani Stores" on King Abdulaziz road, before establishing "Studio Safouh" located in Abdullah Alfaisal building for portrait photography and photographic film development.

Restoring the work of Safouh Naamani and presenting it to a Saudi audience is a key component of the Red Sea Film Festival Foundation, which is tasked with reviving, preserving and highlighting the heritage of Saudi cinema for modern audiences.

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Red Sea International Film Festival