

RED SEA FUND RECEIVES ADDITIONAL \$4M TO SUPPORT ARABIC FILMMAKERS

Funding from Saudi Film Commission will support 40 additional films from Saudi and Arabic filmmakers

Committees announced to select projects that will receive funding from the Red Sea Fund, now totalling \$14 million

Cannes – July 09, 2021: The Red Sea International Film Festival has announced today that it will receive an additional \$4 million to its Red Sea Fund from the Saudi Film Commission. The figure will support the development of 40 new compelling films from Saudi and Arab filmmakers.

The Red Sea Film Festival Foundation established the Red Sea Fund, now totalling \$14 million, in early 2021 to produce 100 feature films and short projects as well as episodics with directors from the Arab World and Africa. The new funding, announced today at the Saudi Pavilion at the 74th edition of the Cannes Film Festival, will help empower a larger pool of talented filmmakers from the region with development, production and post-production assistance, helping to bring their work to fruition.

The fund, which is currently open for submissions, will be distributed across an exciting and unique selection of short and feature-length fiction, documentaries, animation, and episodic projects. It will also restore up to 10 classic films from the Arab world. The fund has been designed to accelerate the growth of the burgeoning industry and launch a new generation of filmmakers, as well as providing assistance for established creatives.

Three committees of industry professionals have been selected for each section of funding. Dora Bouchoucha, producer and founder of Nomadis Images, and director of Manarat Film Festival in Tunisia, will preside over the committee that will award development funding and will be joined by Viola Shafik, filmmaker and curator, Lamia Chraibi, producer and founder of La Prod, director and producer Amjad Abu Alala, and Ayman Jamal, founder and producer of Barajoun Entertainment.

Gianluca Chakra, distributor and founder of Front Row Filmed Entertainment will preside over the committee that will select projects for production funding, alongside producer Karim Aitouna, founder of Haut Les Main Productions, Faisal Baltuyoor, director, producer, and founder of Cinewaves Films, Ahmed Shawky, Middle East Head of Development of Viu and Deana A. Nassar-Fernandez, Program Director for the Middle East Media Initiative.

The committees for the awarding funds for post-production will be headed by Edouard Waitrop, Artistic Director of the Red Sea International Film Festival, along with producer and film commissioner Georges David, Habib Attia, Producer and Managing Director of Cinetele Films, Chadi Abo, director, producer and founder of HECAT Studio and Ahmed Abdalla, director, screenwriter, editor, and photographer.

Edouard Waitrop, Red Sea International Film Festival Artistic Director said: “To join the efforts of the Red Sea Fund with those of the Saudi Film Commission will open new opportunities for filmmakers of the region. It will make a possible substantial new investment to develop and produce short films, features, and documentaries and the restoration of up to 10 classic movies from the Arab world. The commitment

will extend to supporting filmmakers working with virtual technologies and animations. A new breath will be given to a cinema in full revival; a sign of the metamorphosis of the cinema of the Arab World and Saudi Arabia.”

This support is in addition to funding awarded to Saudi and Arab filmmakers through the Red Sea Lodge which has had a hugely positive impact in supporting diverse projects awarding production grants of \$500,000 to ‘*Sharshaf*’ by Hind Alfahhad and ‘*Bullets & Bread*’ by Mohammed Hammad.

The fund, aimed at the Kingdom's emerging filmmakers, backed by the Saudi box-office hit ‘*The Book of Sun*’ by the Godus Brothers and the upcoming ‘*40 Years and One Night*’ by Mohammed Alholayyil. The Red Sea Film Festival Foundation has previously invested in ‘*Becoming*’, an omnibus film directed by five emerging Saudi female directors. Additionally, it has restored nine key works by the acclaimed Egyptian surrealist filmmaker Khairy Beshara.

The Red Sea Fund is part of the Red Sea Film Festival Foundation’s commitment to the regional screen sector, which will also include launching the inaugural Red Sea International Film Festival that will take place from December 6 -15, 2021, including its marketplace, the Red Sea Souk from December 8-11, 2021.

The Red Sea fund is now open.

Editors Notes:

Red Sea International Film Festival

The inaugural edition of the Red Sea International Film Festival is set to bring the best in Arab and World Cinema to the UNESCO world heritage site of Jeddah Old Town.

The Festival will showcase a compelling slate of new and diverse films, alongside a retrospective program celebrating the masters of cinema as well as introducing audiences to exciting new voices from the region and beyond. The Festival will provide a platform for Arab filmmakers and industry professionals from around the world to connect, host feature and short film competitions, and present a series of events, masterclasses, and workshops to support emerging talent.

The Red Sea International Film Festival will take place from December 6 -15, 2021.

Red Sea Film Festival Foundation

The Red Sea Film Festival Foundation is an independent, non-profit organization created to support the film industry in Saudi Arabia in the production, distribution, and education of cinema. Established in 2018 by the Kingdom's first Minister of Culture, Prince Badr bin Farhan Al Saud, the Red Sea Foundation's official mandate is to promote film culture in Saudi. The initiatives support the ambitious plans for Saudi in the entertainment industries as part of the Saudi Vision 2030, with its pillars of a vibrant society, an ambitious nation and a thriving economy.