

## A SHOWCASE OF ORIGINAL VOICES & EXCITING STORYTELLING TO SHINE RED SEA SHORT COMPETITION

*18 short films of which 8 are directed by female filmmakers will screen in the Festival's inaugural **Short Competition***

**Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – 09 November 2021** – The Red Sea International Film Festival (RedSeaIFF), which will have its inaugural edition from 6-15 December, is today announcing the 18 films of which 8 are directed by female filmmakers that will screen in the **Red Sea: Short Competition**.

The **Short Competition** celebrates the best contemporary short filmmaking from Arab storytellers. The slate showcases the most diverse and innovative stories coming from the region, with the competition highlighting films from student directors, first-time filmmakers, and artists from different disciplines.

Antoine Khalife, Director of Arab Programs & Film Classics at the RedSeaIFF, said: The Arab filmmakers in the selection approach their subjects in a very subtle yet forceful manner. Some confront the unspoken others tackle the complexities of war and crime, there are themes of nostalgia focusing on families loved and lost and aspirations of becoming an astronaut. This unique selection of shorts shines a light on the voices that are shaping the future of the Arab filmmaking industry.”

Kaleem Aftab, Director of International Programming at the RedSeaIFF, added: “Short films are a great way to discover new and exciting voices – it’s where innovative storytelling is born. The Competition is a diverse selection of authentic works that champion African, Asian and Arab filmmakers and enable them to share their work on a big screen before a wider global audience.”

***Carnivorous Bean Sprout***, written and directed by South Korean Sae-Rom Seo, uses clay figures and an animated 2D background. Seo’s punchy black comedy tells the story of a freak of vegetable nature, exciting both to scientists and members of the public craving danger. First it thrills, then it kills.

Distinctive Japanese animator Yoriko Mizushiri writes and directs **Anxious Body**, where her intimate, meditative images of the body reach deep into the subconscious. Hand-drawn images of shapes in our world – living, artificial, geometrical and sinuous – are brought together, giving birth to something new.

**Seeking Aline** is written and directed by Senegalese filmmaker Rokhaya Marieme Balde. Rokhaya returns home to Dakar to make a film about a local historical figure. Gradually, as she conducts interviews, discusses the project with her team and shoots dramatised scenes on location, audiences learn the story of Aline Sitoe Diatta.

**New Abnormal** is the latest short written and directed by Thai independent filmmaker Sorayos Prapapan, whose award-winning short films have screened at festivals in Venice, Locarno, Rotterdam and Clermont-Ferrand. Based on true stories and following several characters, this film reflects both on life during the Covid-19 pandemic and the effects of the Emergency Decree in Thailand.

**Astel** is written and directed by Senegalese filmmaker Ramata-Soulaye Sy. Her short tells the story of the end of the rainy season in Fouta, Senegal where Astel accompanies her father, only to encounter a shepherd who disrupts their peaceful existence.

**All The Crows In The World**, written and directed by Yi Tang, was the winner of the Short Film Palme d'Or at this year's Cannes Film Festival. It tells the story of a high school girl, Shengnan, who is invited to a mysterious party by her cousin, filled with sleazy middle-aged Chinese men. Among these people, Jianguo feels so different.

**I Am Innocent**, written and directed by Saudi filmmaker Malak Quota, is an experimental film that questions the nature of innocence. When a woman deemed guilty for killing a young girl is executed, the film juxtaposes the purity of childhood innocence against the desperate pleas of a convicted adult.

Georgian TV journalist, producer and host Gvantsa Meparishvili makes her directorial debut with her short **Number 26**. Ski school instructor Nika tries to hide an accident on the slopes that happens on his watch. When it becomes obvious that student Number 26 is missing, Nika confesses the truth to his girlfriend Nata. Together, they must share the responsibility of this dreadful secret.

**Children's Game** is the latest short written and directed by Moroccan director Rim Mejdi. Kamilia is an eleven-year-old girl who's not afraid of anyone. One day, while playing football on the street, she suffers a traumatic experience, turning the street that used to be her playground into the arena for her struggles. Kamilia is determined not to succumb to the darkness.

**By the Sea** is the latest short written and directed by Palestinian director Wissam Jafari. Struggling with both the occupation and the pandemic, a woman left alone with her son insists on having a semblance

of normalcy by baking a cake to mark a special occasion. This film is an original take on a woman's fight to keep her family together under unusual circumstances and against all odds.

The latest short written and directed by Lebanese-French director Hadi Mousally is ***Space Woman***. In Tripoli, northern Lebanon, 64-year-old Maha retires from teaching and confronts her loneliness as a divorced woman whose children have left to live abroad. The company of her loyal neighbours is no longer enough for Maha to fight her boredom, and she descends in her world of daydreams – a magical and emotional journey that reaches the heart and stimulates the imagination.

***From The Mountain*** is the latest short written and directed by Faisal Attrache. The fiery leader of the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925 fights to keep the revolution alive in exile. When the struggle for independence comes at the expense of his displaced family's safety, he must decide to sacrifice either his family or his country.

***Last Day of Sun***, written and directed by Tunisian-Canadian filmmaker Kays Mejri. In 1987, Ben Ali has come to power in Tunisia, heralding the dawn of a new era. Police detective Ayed is investigating the murder of a small boy, a case that will open a Pandora's box of hidden horrors.

The second short from Palestinian writer and director Said Zagha, ***Lovesick in the West Bank*** tells the story of Hasna and Nabil, an elderly Palestinian couple, who are surprised when a young American tourist asks if he can stay in their house for a few hours, saying he got lost on his way to Jerusalem. When the Israeli army imposes a curfew on the village, Hasna wonders about their random visitor.

Animated short, ***The Pyramid***, is written and directed by Egyptian filmmaker Mohamed Ghazala. Ghazala tells the witty story of an ancient Egyptian man who tries to build an inverted pyramid.

***Zawal*** is the fourth short from Saudi Arabian director and writer Mujtaba Saeed. 8-year-old Adam breaks out of a designated quarantine area for refugees to find himself in a mutated world. There begins a gripping journey from which he will emerge transformed.

In ***What Remained***, Egyptian writer and director Rogina Bassaly tells the story of Sharif and Laila. When religion comes between them, it brings their love story to an end. Sharif moves on with his life, but Laila can't, and then they meet again. The film is an ode to the golden age of Egyptian cinema, centring on the seamstress of Souad Hosny.

***Tala's vision*** is written and directed by Jordanian filmmaker Murad Abu Eishah and winner of the Student Oscar 2021, the award given to film students by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. At 8 years old, Tala is not allowed to go outside: violence can erupt at any time. Her only link with the world is

television, until the new regime bans televisions, and her father throws it out. When wily Tala steals another television and keeps it in secret, the results are disastrous.

The inaugural edition of the Red Sea International Film Festival will run in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia from December 6-15, 2021.

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### **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 programme 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.