

THE RED SEA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL COMPLETES ROSTER OF FESTIVAL FAVOURITES

*The nine films announced round out the 19 strong **Festival Favourites** section of international film festival hits from the year*

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – 5 December 2021 – The Red Sea International Film Festival (RedSeaIFF), the inaugural edition of which will take place 6-15 December, today announced the nine films completing its **Festival Favourites** section, in addition to the previously announced ten films in this section.

Festival Favourites celebrates the very best of international cinema, comprising of diverse and disruptive films that have received universal critical and audience acclaim on the festival circuit this year. These films compliment the RedSeaIFF's mission of expanding the presence of international films in Saudi Arabia, and specifically the goal of increasing the chances that local audiences get to see the very best films of the year.

Kaleem Aftab, Director of International Programming for the RedSeaIFF, said: "The films that complete the **Festival Favourites** section are some of the very best films from the past year and represent some of the most dynamic and ground-breaking elements of filmmaking, whilst also being truly beloved films by critics and audiences alike. We anticipate that these films will open a new world of cinema to Jeddah audiences."

Antoine Khalife, Director of Arab Programs and Film Classics of the RedSeaIFF said: "The **Festival Favourites** section celebrates the very best of Arab directors from this year's festival circuit who have created unique stories across many spectrums from magical narratives using symbolism, themes of absurdity, love and desire, those that deal with social issues and also incorporate music as a coping mechanism to survive the traumas of war. We look forward to sharing these films with Jeddah audiences."

A Chiara is the third feature from award-winning Italian-American writer and director Jonas Carpignano. Calabrian town Gioia Tauro is synonymous with the notoriously violent 'Ndrangheta mafia organisation, but it has never occurred to 16-year-old Chiara to wonder about the source of her family's wealth. A reckoning comes when she hears a car explode, then wakes to find her father has vanished and the

papers are calling him a wanted criminal. Now she must make decisions about the future she wants for herself. The film had its world premiere at this year's Cannes Film Festival, in the Directors' Fortnight section, where it won the Europa Labels prize for Best European Film.

Co-directed by Argentine directors Gastón Duprat and Mariano Cohn, **Official Competition** stars Antonio Banderas, Penélope Cruz and Oscar Martínez in this hilarious and cynical comedy about the business of film and the people who pursue it. At his 80th birthday party, a brash billionaire decides he must secure his legacy, and buys the rights to a hit literary novel. He hires an eccentric award-winning director, played by Cruz, and sits back as she casts a vain movie star, played by Banderas, and a supercilious theatre actor, played by Martínez – what could possibly go wrong? The film had its world premiere at this year's Venice International Film Festival.

The Gravedigger's Wife is the feature directorial debut of Finnish-Somali director and writer Khadar Ayderus Ahmed. Guled is distraught when told that his wife Nasra will die without an operation costing the unimaginable sum of 5,000 dollars. In desperation, he returns to his estranged mother's village to beg for help. The deceptively simple story encompasses such topics as the health crisis in Africa, the clash of generations and the impact of globalisation, but its central focus remains the power of love. The film premiered in International Critics' Week during this year's Cannes Film Festival, and has been selected as the first ever Somali entry for Best International Feature Film at the upcoming 94th Academy Awards.

Romanian director Radu Muntean's latest film, **Întregalde**, had its world premiere during the Directors' Fortnight programme at this year's Cannes Film Festival. The thriller tells the story of a group of humanitarian workers traveling through a remote area in Transylvania. When they stumble upon a disoriented local and try to help him, things began to go awry. Muntean uses horror tropes to tell a tale of dementia, lost industries, and what really constitutes compassion.

Vortex is the latest feature from Paris-based Argentine director Gaspar Noé. Life is a short party that will soon be forgotten, as the film traces the last days of an elderly couple, played by legendary director Dario Argento and Françoise LeBrun, who are stricken by dementia. Using a split screen, Noé shows them padding between rooms, dimly connected as they drift through the day – until tragedy strikes. The film had its premiere in the Cannes Premiere section of this year's Cannes Film Festival.

Two-time Academy Award-winning Iranian director Asghar Farhadi's latest feature **A Hero** tells the story of divorced father Rahim, who has spent years in prison for failing to pay a debt. When he happens upon a lost handbag containing some gold coins, but he returns the bag to its rightful owner for selfish reasons, the likeable but hapless Rahim becomes an overnight media hero, hopelessly entangled in his own lies.

The film premiered at this year's Cannes Film Festival where it won the Grand Prix, and has been selected as the Iranian entry for Best International Feature at the upcoming 94th Academy Awards.

Feathers is the feature directorial debut of Egyptian writer and director Omar Al Zohairy. The film is at once a dark comedy, a social-realist drama and a fantasy, telling the story of a magic trick that goes wrong at a 4-year-old's birthday party, when the magician turns the family's tyrannical patriarch into a chicken. Feathers fly as the child's mother moves heaven and earth to get her husband back while stepping up to take care of things, he has left undone. Her biggest conundrum, however, is how to treat that pesky chicken. The film premiered at this year's Cannes Critics' Week, with Al Zohairy winning the Critics' Week Grand Prize.

Tunisian writer and director Leyla Bouzid's second feature **A Tale of Love and Desire** (French: *Une Histoire D'amour et de Désir*) follows Ahmed, who is French of Algerian origins and grew up in the Parisian suburbs. On a bench at university, he meets Farah, a young Tunisian full of energy recently arrived from Tunis. While discovering a body of Arabic literature he never knew existed, Ahmed falls in love with Farah, and although consumed by desire, he tries to resist it. The film had its premiere as the closing title of Cannes Critics' Week this year.

Broken Keys is the feature directorial debut of award-winning writer and director Jimmy Keyrouz. In a Middle Eastern town seized by the Islamic state in 2014, where modern ways of living and music have been banned, Tarek, a young musician, struggles to fix his piano, after it was destroyed by terrorists. Tarek plans to pay a smuggler to get him to Europe, but he can only fund his escape if he sells the piano, the only valuable thing he has left. The film was selected as the Lebanese entry for the Best International Feature Film at the 93rd Academy Awards.

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

Editors Notes:

Red Sea International Film Festival

The inaugural edition of the Red Sea International Film Festival in partnership with the MBC GROUP, Saudia Airlines and VOX Cinemas is set to bring the best in Arab and World Cinema to the UNESCO world heritage site of Jeddah Old Town from December 6-15, 2021.

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.

About MBC GROUP:

MBC GROUP is the largest and leading media company in the Middle East & North Africa region that enriches people's lives through information, interaction and entertainment. In 2002, nearly a decade after the launch of MBC1 in London, in 1991, MBC GROUP moved its headquarters to Dubai Media City, United Arab Emirates.

Today, MBC GROUP includes over 17 leading TV channels: MBC1 (general family entertainment); MBC2 & MBC MAX (24-hour western movies); MBC3 (children's edutainment with a mix of both local productions and western acquisitions); MBC4 (entertainment for young families with a female-focus); MBC ACTION (an indigenous adrenaline-packed channel targeting young males with local and homegrown productions); MBC VARIETY (Western films and general entertainment with uninterrupted broadcasting); MBC DRAMA (24/7 Arabic drama) & MBC+ DRAMA (a joint pay-TV channel between MBC and OSN); MBC PERSIA (general family entertainment dubbed and subtitled in Farsi); WANASAH (24-hour Arabic music channel); MBC MASR & MBC MASR2 (general family entertainment geared towards the Egyptian family); MBC BOLLYWOOD (delivering the freshest in Bollywood content geared towards the region via an Arabized interface); MBC USA (on "Dish Network" in the US); MBC IRAQ (a premium channel aimed at the entire Iraqi family), MBC5 (new satellite channel dedicated to the Maghreb); all of them benefit from MBC STUDIOS which produces the region's most compelling premium content for cinema, television and on-demand platforms. MBC GROUP also includes two FM radio stations: MBC FM (Gulf music) and Panorama FM (contemporary Arabic hit music).

Furthermore, part of MBC GROUP is Shahid and its premium subscription-based service Shahid VIP, the world's leading Arabic streaming platform, home to highly rated original productions from the Arab world, a wide range of exclusive movies and premieres, as well as the top watched live Arab TV channels.

About Saudi Arabian Airlines (SAUDIA):

Saudi Arabian Airlines (SAUDIA) is the national flag carrier of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Established in 1945, the company is one of the Middle East's largest airlines.

SAUDIA is a member of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the Arab Air Carriers Organization (AACO). It has been one of the 19 member airlines of the SkyTeam alliance since 2012.

SAUDIA has received many prestigious industry awards and recognitions. Most recently, it was ranked a Global Five-Star Major Airline by the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX) and the carrier was awarded the Diamond status by APEX Health Safety powered by SimpliFlying.

For further information on Saudi Arabian Airlines, please visit www.saudia.com

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About Majid Al Futtaim

Founded in 1992, Majid Al Futtaim is the leading shopping mall, communities, retail and leisure pioneer across the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

A remarkable business success story, Majid Al Futtaim started from one man's vision to transform the face of shopping, entertainment and leisure to 'create great moments for everyone, every day'. It has since grown into one of the United Arab Emirates' most respected and successful businesses spanning 17 international markets, employing more than 43,000 people, and obtaining the highest credit rating (BBB) among privately-held corporates in the region.

Majid Al Futtaim owns and operates 29 shopping malls, 13 hotels and four mixed-use communities, with further developments underway in the region. The shopping malls portfolio includes Mall of the Emirates, Mall of Egypt, Mall of Oman, City Centre malls, My City Centre neighbourhood centres, and five community malls which are in joint venture with the Government of Sharjah. The Company is the exclusive franchisee for Carrefour in over 30 markets across the Middle East, Africa and Asia, operating a portfolio of more than 375 outlets including City+, the region's first checkout-free store, and an online store.

Majid Al Futtaim operates more than 600 VOX Cinemas screens as well as a portfolio of world-class leisure and entertainment experiences across the region including Ski Dubai, Ski Egypt, Dreamscape, Magic Planet, Little Explorers and iFLY Dubai. The Company is parent to a Fashion, Home and Specialty retail business representing international brands such as Abercrombie & Fitch, Hollister, AllSaints, lululemon athletica, Crate & Barrel, Maisons du Monde, LEGO and THAT, a Majid Al Futtaim fashion concept store and app. In addition, Majid Al Futtaim operates Enova, a facility and energy management company, through a joint venture operation with Veolia, a global leader in optimised environment resource management.

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