

# THE RED SEA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL HANDPICKS THE VERY BEST FROM THE FESTIVAL CIRCUIT

*The most acclaimed films of the year from around the world announced as part of the Festival Favourites section of the Festival*

**Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – 5 December 2021** – The Red Sea International Film Festival (RedSeaFF), the inaugural edition of which will take place 6-15 December, today announced the first round of titles of the most inspiring, diverse, and distinctive films of the year hand-picked from around the world. The films are included within the newly announced **Festival Favourites** section and truly celebrate the breadth of cinema, bringing stories from around the globe to Jeddah with the mission to increase audiences' chances to see the very best films of the year.

The **Festival Favourites** section is an expansive round of the hits from this year's international festival circuit, comprising films that have received both audience and critical acclaim and are in contention this awards season, as well as a select sampling of experiential and escapist films.

Antoine Khalife, Director of Arab Programs & Film Classics of the RedSeaIFF said: "Our hope with the Festival Favorites section is that audiences can discover new films that will instantly become classics for them, with deeply resonant stories that they want to return to time and time again. The majority of these films will be premiering in the Arab region, and we are honoured to be able to showcase some truly incredible films from this year's festival circuit."

Kaleem Aftab, Director of International Programming for the RedSeaIFF, added: "We hope that after the past year, the Festival Favorites section can help celebrate the diversity of stories from across the world. From deeply personal documentaries to equally moving works of fiction, each film in this section speaks authentically to the very best cinema has to offer. We anticipate that these films will continue to succeed critically and receive universal acclaim, and we are thrilled to be able to show them to Saudi audiences."

Greek director Christos Nikou makes his directorial debut with **Apples**, which he also co-wrote with Stavros Raptis. As an unpredictable, sweeping pandemic causes people to develop sudden amnesia, a man finds himself enrolled in a recovery program designed to help him build a new life. The film was chosen as the Greek entry for Best International Feature Film at the 93rd Academy Awards.

**As In Heaven** is directed and adapted for the screen by Tea Lindeburg, from the 1912 novel by Marie Bregendahl, "En Dødsnat" ("A Night of Death"). On a day at the end of the 1800s, 14-year-old Lise's life

is changed forever when her mother goes into labour, and it quickly appears that something is wrong. The film had its world premiere in the Discovery section of this year's Toronto International Film Festival, with Lindeburg going on to win the Silver Seashell for Best Director at the San Sebastian International Film Festival.

Iranian writer and director Firouzeh Khosrovani's latest documentary ***Radiograph of a Family*** tells a deeply personal story, as Khosrovani depicts her parents' love story, which takes them from the Shah era to the Islamic Revolution and the hardships during the Iran-Iraq War, up to the present day – all in their home in Tehran. The story is a product of Iran's struggle between secularism and Islamic ideology. The film had its world premiere at the 2020 International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam, where it was awarded Best Feature-Length Documentary.

American director Tony Stone's ***Ted K***, which he also co-wrote with Gaddy Davis and John Rosenthal, tells the story of Ted Kaczynski, most well known as the Unabomber. Based on Kaczynski's diaries and writings, Stone's film is a kaleidoscopic true crime journey into the life of one of America's most complex and eccentric killers, raging at the forces of both the inescapable technological society that plague Kaczynski alongside his inner demons. The film premiered at this year's Berlin International Film Festival.

***The Stranger*** is the feature directorial debut of Syrian writer and director Ameer Fakher Eldin. In a small village in the occupied Golan Heights, the life of a desperate unlicensed doctor, who is going through an existential crisis, takes another turn when he encounters a man wounded in the war in Syria. The film had its world premiere in the Venice Days section of this year's Venice International Film Festival, with Eldin winning the festival's Edipo Re Award.

French writer and director Lucile Hadžihalilović's English language debut ***Earwig*** tells the story of Mia, a girl with teeth of ice, living somewhere in mid-20th century Europe. Albert is employed to look after Mia, who never leaves their apartment, until the day Albert is instructed that he must prepare the child to leave. The film premiered in the Platform section of this year's Toronto International Film Festival, with Hadžihalilović going on to win the Special Prize of the Jury at the San Sebastian International Film Festival.

***The Innocents*** is the second feature from Norwegian writer and director Eskil Vogt. The thriller follows four children who become friends during the summer holidays, who discover they have hidden powers. While exploring their newfound abilities in the nearby forests and playgrounds, their innocent play takes a dark turn and strange things begin to happen. The film was selected to compete in the Un Certain Regard section of this year's Cannes Film Festival.

Written and directed by acclaimed Brazilian filmmaker Karim Ainouz, ***Mariner of the Mountains*** is his latest documentary, and his most personal to date. Accompanied by the memory of his recently deceased mother to whom he addresses an imaginary letter, Ainouz takes us on a journey to his parent's homeland, crossing the Mediterranean by boat and embarking on his first journey to Algeria, the country where his father, whom he never met, is from. The film played as a special screening at this year's Cannes Film Festival.

***The Sea Ahead*** is the feature directorial debut from Lebanese writer and director Ely Dagher who scooped the Palme d'Or for his short *Waves 98*. The film tells the story of Jana, who returns to Beirut after years living abroad, bearing the burden of some unnamed traumatic experience, to find that Beirut feels both familiar and strange. For those who leave their homes, only to return, nowhere provides real

solace. The film had its world premiere at this year's Cannes Film Festival, where Dagher was nominated for the Caméra d'Or for Best First Feature Film.

Award-winning Egyptian writer and director Mohamed Diab's latest feature **Amira**, tells a fictional story grounded in remarkable fact, that more than 100 Palestinian children have been fathered by prisoners, using sperm smuggled out of jail to the men's waiting partners. Amira has grown up believing this, but that belief is shattered when tests show her father, Nuwar, to be infertile. Amira premiered at this year's Venice International Film Festival, competing within the Orizzonti competition.

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 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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**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](http://www.saudia.com)

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