

THE RED SEA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL RAISES THE CURTAIN ON ITS INAUGURAL EDITION

Haifaa Al-Mansour, Laila Eloui, Catherine Deneuve, Yousra, HEND Sabry, Anthony Mackie, Clive Owen, Hilary Swank, Thierry Frémaux, Michele Morrone, Yaqoub AlFarhan, Mila AlZahrani, Yassir AlSaggaf and Godus Brothers among the stars at the landmark opening event

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – 06 December, 2021: The Red Sea International Film Festival (RedSeaIFF) in partnership with VOX Cinemas, MBC GROUP and Saudia Airlines raised the curtain this evening with the Festival's first ever red carpet for its opening film, award-winning British director Joe Wright's 'Cyrano' in Jeddah's UNESCO World Heritage Site old-town (Al Balad), nestled on the eastern shore of the Red Sea.

The global film industry descended on the Festival's Opening Ceremony, with Arab stars and filmmakers including Hany Abu-Assad, Amira Diab, Mohamed Henedy, Inas ElDeghedy, Saba Mubarak, Nelly Karim, Imed Marzouk, Lebleba, Hala Sedki, Najib BelKadhi and Elham Shaheen.

International talents included: Anthony Mackie, Catherine Deneuve, Vincent Cassel, Clive Owen, Thierry Frémaux, Hilary Swank, Michele Morrone, Stephen Dorff, Jon Kortajarena, Alejandra Onieva, Tina Kunakey, Alessandra Ambrosio, Candice Swanepoel, Sara Sampaio, Irina Shayk, Sasha Luss, Alton Mason, Rick Yune, Sonia Ben Ammar, Shanina Shaik, and Lena Perminova in attendance.

Saudi filmmakers and actors were out in force to celebrate the landmark occasion, the line-up included hosts of the evening Yaqoub AlFarhan and Fatima Al Banawi, and in attendance: Waheed Jamjoom, Hassan Assiri, Yousef Al Jarrah, Khalid Alfarraj, Yassir Alsaggaf, Ali Kalthami, Mohammed Abu Hamdan, Faisak Al Dokhy, Mohammed Aldokhy, Ibrahim AlKhairallah, Alaa Faden, Godus Brothers, Mila AlZahrani, Elham Ali & Khalid Saqr, Meshal Aljasser, Baraa Alem, Khalid Alharbi, Alanoud Saoud, Saad AbdulAziz, and Abdullah Dhahran.

Also in attendance were all members of the Red Sea: Features Competition Jury: Jury chair, Academy Award-winning director Giuseppe Tornatore, Cherien Dabis, Hind Sabri, Daniela Michel and Abdulaziz Alshlahei, as well as members of the Red Sea: Shorts Jury, Ahd Kamel and Khader Ayderus.

During the ceremony the Festival honoured three outstanding women for their extraordinary contribution to cinema and to drive the Festival's mission to celebrate incredible women in film. From Saudi Arabia, multi award-winning filmmaker Haifaa Al-Mansour, Academy Award and BAFTA nominated French actress Catherine Deneuve and acclaimed Egyptian actress Laila Eloui.

The Festival also honoured Jack Lang, President of the Institut du Monde Arabe and former Minister of Culture and Minister of Education, in recognition of his incredible efforts to promote relations between Saudi Arabia and France and integral role in building a cultural bridge between the Arab world and France.

The first edition boasts 138 feature films and shorts from 67 countries in 34 languages from both established and emerging talent, with a number of filmmakers and actors in attendance for many of the films. The slate of new Saudi films will be shown alongside the best of new international cinema, featuring 27 new films from an exciting wave of Saudi filmmakers.

Mohammed Al-Turki, Chairman of the RedSeaIFF Festival Committee, said: "It is a true honour to host such a wealth of both international and Arabic talent at our Opening Ceremony, in a celebration of filmmaking unlike any other that the Kingdom has seen before. Over the next ten days, we will honour the very best of filmmaking from our region and beyond, and we could not have wished for a better way to begin, than tonight. The Festival is a watershed moment for our burgeoning Saudi film industry, and the Opening Ceremony has set a high bar of what is to come in our Festival's future."

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.