

RED SEA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL CELEBRATES EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN IN FILM

The Festival's inaugural edition will celebrate the contribution of incredible women to film, through a selection of tributes, masterclasses and screenings

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – 1 December, 2021 – The Red Sea International Film Festival (RedSeaIFF), which will have its inaugural edition from 6-15 December, is today announcing a number of celebrations in honour of the ground-breaking contribution of women to cinema, including tributes and masterclasses from some of the most inspiring female names in cinema.

The Festival will honour the first female Saudi filmmaker, **Haifaa Al Mansour**, who is not only one of the most significant names in the Saudi film industry, but has led the way in championing female empowerment across the region. Her feature debut, *Wadjda*, was the first film to ever be shot in the Kingdom, and was nominated for numerous international awards, including the BAFTA Award for Best Film not in the English Language. She has since gone on to direct numerous TV shows and films internationally, including *Mary Shelley* and *Nappily Ever After*, and continues to break ground in filmmaking.

Haifaa Al Mansour explained: "I am incredibly honoured to return home to Saudi Arabia for the first edition of the Red Sea International Film Festival. Those of us who worked tirelessly with dreams of cinema finding a home here know what a truly monumental event this is for the Kingdom, the region and the world. I believe strongly in the power of art to foster positive development and opportunity in our community and hope that this festival serves as a strong foundation for a burgeoning industry that will nurture and amplify our stories and dreams well into the future."

When I started making films years ago, the idea of working as a director seemed outlandish. But I knew that the world was curious to hear from us, to hear our side of the story, and that films from our part of the world would strike a chord with audiences around the world. Now, returning home as an honouree at our first film festival, seems just as unbelievable. It is an incredible honour for me, and such a wonderful opportunity to see the best of up-and-coming talent from the region. The world is still eager to hear from

us, and I am so excited to see the infrastructure of a cinematic industry being built to help realize our cinematic visions. I am so excited to see what comes next!”

Academy Award and BAFTA nominated French actress **Catherine Deneuve** will also be honoured by the Festival. Deneuve is widely considered to be one of the greatest European actresses of all time, and is renowned for her extraordinary contributions to film, most notably her performances in *8 Women*, *Repulsion*, *Belle de Jour*, *Dancer in the Dark* and *Indochine*, for which she was nominated for the 1992 Academy Award for Best Actress. She is a multi-award-winning actress, having won two of her native France’s César Awards, amongst 14 nominations, and has won Venice Film Festival’s prestigious Volpi Cup for Best Actress, as well as many other international awards.

Catherine Deneuve said: “It is always an honour to have your work recognised by the industry, and I am especially grateful for this honour, and the opportunity to be a part of this wider celebration of the contribution of women to cinema. I hope that my work can help inspire young women to chart their own successful careers in this industry, and I hope that this acknowledgement of the contribution of women in cinema in general continues to underscore the importance of having a strong female presence both in front of and behind the camera.”

The Festival will honour Egyptian actress **Laila Eloui**, who is one of the most respected and prolific actresses in the region, having starred in more than 70 films. Perhaps best known for her roles in *I Love Cinema*, *Kalil Mina Al-Hob* *Kathir Mina Al-Unf* and *Girl’s Love*, she has been universally recognised for her work, and is the recipient of both awards in her native Egypt and from international festivals worldwide. Her onscreen presence has continued to delight and uplift audiences, and festivalgoers of the RedSealFF will have the unique opportunity to join Eloui in a masterclass where she will discuss her extensive and storied career.

Festivalgoers will also not want to miss the masterclass delivered by a true Egyptian cinema legend, **Yousra**. The actress, singer and all-around megastar, is not only one of the most recognisable names in the region, but is widely considered to be one of the most exceptional and talented actors of her generation. Her fascinating career has seen her appear in over 80 films, and she has received more than 50 awards worldwide, from local, regional and international festivals.

Alongside these tributes and masterclasses, the Festival will be screening 135 films of which 38% are directed by women.

Shivani Pandya, Managing Director of the RedSealFF, said: “Celebrating the contribution of women to cinema is central to the mission of the Festival. We are honoured to be able to give a platform to local emerging female directors, writers and actors, who have been crucial in the development and progression of the Saudi film industry. Beyond this, we are thrilled to be able to honour the contribution of women to Arab and international cinema, through specific tributes and masterclasses, and are inspired by these women and the work they have done to lead the empowerment of women in our industry.”

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 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.

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.

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