

THE RED SEA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PARTNERS WITH FINAL CUT & SUPPORTS FIVE FILMS SET TO MAKE A MARK AT THE VENICE FILM FESTIVAL

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – 25 August 2022: The Red Sea International Film Festival (RSIFF) has partnered with Final Cut, the Venice Production Bridge programme that supports films in post-production from African and the Middle East nations of Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, which will hold its tenth edition at this year's festival. Additionally, five films funded by RSIFF will be presented during the Venice Film Festival which runs from 31 August to 10 September. The 79th edition of the festival welcomes ten Arab and Middle Eastern films set to make their mark on the Lido di Venezia from some of the region's most exciting filmmakers.

Along with the newly formed partnership, the Red Sea has backed two projects in the Final Cut line up they are; dark comedy *'Inshallah A Boy'* from Amjad Al Rasheed and *'The Cemetery of Cinema'* a documentary directed by Thierno Souleymane Diallo, which along with six other projects will be shown to producers, buyers, distributors, post-production companies and film festival programmers. The Red Sea will also be presenting a financial reward to the winning project.

The four films being unveiled at the oldest film festival in the world have benefited from the crucial support of the Red Sea Fund which was launched to nurture Arab and African filmmakers and provide funding at key stages of production, post-production and development. This is part of the RSIFF's mission to champion emerging and established filmmakers to bring authentic, untold narratives from the past, present and future to global audiences.

Presented in Orizzonti Extra, the Festival's official international competition dedicated to films that represent the latest aesthetic and expressive trends is s Iraqi writer-director Ahmed Yassin Al Daradj's debut feature *'Hanging Gardens'* featuring Wissam Diyaa, Jawad Al Shakarji, Hussain Muhammad Jalil, and Akram Mazen Ali. The film which follows As'ad, a 12-year-old rubbish picker, who adopts an American sex doll from the Baghdad dumps, crosses into a perilous red zone, finding himself caught in the crossfire. The film won Venice's 2021 edition of Final Cut for the best film in post-production. Running in the same section is Iraqi writer-director Ahmed Yassin Al Daradj's debut feature *'Hanging Gardens'* featuring Wissam Diyaa, Jawad Al Shakarji, Hussain Muhammad Jalil, and Akram Mazen Ali. The film which follows As'ad, a 12-year-old rubbish picker, who adopts an American sex doll from the Baghdad dumps, crosses into a perilous red zone, finding himself caught in the crossfire. The film won Venice's 2021 edition of Final Cut for the best film in post-production.

Lebanese-French director Wissam Charaf's *'Dirty, Difficult, Dangerous'* will feature in Giornate degli Autori, a successful independent sidebar of the Venice Film Festival renowned for the quality of its film selection. Roaming the streets of Beirut searching for metal objects to be recycled, Ahmed, a Syrian refugee, thought he'd find love with Mehdiya, an Ethiopian domestic. But in this city, such a love story

seems almost impossible. Will this couple be able to find the way to freedom given that Ahmed suffers a mysterious illness that slowly turns his body into metal? The film stars Clara Couturet, Ziad Jallad, Darina Al Joundi, and Rifaat Tarabay,

French-Algerian director Damien Ounouri and Algerian actress, scriptwriter and producer Adilia Bendimerad present *'The Last Queen'* a full-scale costume drama in the Giornate degli Autori programme. The film is set in the Mediterranean port city of Algiers in 1516, it revolves around the heroic female figure of Zaphira, who stood up to the infamous pirate Barbarossa after he killed her husband King Salim Toumi, took control of the city and demanded her hand in marriage. As well as co-directing Bendimerad stars and is joined by Dali Benssalah and Tahar Zaoui.

Moroccan director and writer Yasmine Benkiran's debut feature *'Queens'* will close the selection of the Venice International Film Critics' Week, the sidebar of the Venice Film Festival, playing out-of-competition. Set in Casablanca, the film follows a trio of women (Nisrin Erradi, Nisrine Benchara, Rayhan Guaran) with the police on their tail they embark on a long escape that takes them across the rugged red terrain and flower-filled valleys of the Atlas to finally reach the Atlantic coast.

Pascal Diot, Head of Venice Production Bridge said: " The Venice Production Bridge is honoured to have the additional support of the Red Sea International Film Festival for our Final Cut in Venice workshop and more generally to have such a privileged relationship. The RSIFF has become in a very few years an unavoidable player in the MENA region and one of the key investors and supporters of Arab cinema and new immersive content. "

Mohammed Al Turki, CEO of the Red Sea International Film Festival said: "We are thrilled to form a partnership with the Venice Film Production Bridges 'Final Cut' programme to strengthen our commitment to filmmakers from the region to bring more projects to fruition so they can make the selection at the world's most prestigious festivals. The calibre of films presented from the region this year is remarkable and are guaranteed to make their mark on global audiences."