

## **Red Sea International Film Festival announces 2021 Red Sea Lodge Participants**

*12 Projects selected for 8-month program mentoring Saudi and Arab directors, producers and writers, developing inventive feature films*

*Two teams will be awarded \$100,000 production grants at the inaugural Red Sea International Film Festival*

### **25 March 2021, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**

The Red Sea International Film Festival has announced the 12 Arab projects selected for development at the Red Sea Lodge 2021. Six projects are from Saudi Arabia alongside projects from Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and Lebanon. Half of the projects are helmed by female directors, with three women in producer roles.

The emerging storytellers will convene four times digitally and finally in-person in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, at the inaugural Red Sea International Film Festival, where the 12 filmmaking teams will pitch to international production companies. An independent jury will award two projects production grants of \$100,000. The two awarded films will have the opportunity to world premiere at the Red Sea International Film Festival in 2022.

The 8-month monitoring program is organized in collaboration with the acclaimed TorinoFilmLab, leaders in international talent development. Teams will explore every stage of filmmaking, from script consultations to a commercial focus on financing, sales, and audience engagement. The comprehensive program includes workshops with expert tutors and international film professionals to further develop 12 original projects.

The selection committee comprised a list of leading industry experts, including Savina Neirotti (Executive Director, TorinoFilmLab), Jane Williams (Head of Industry, TorinoFilmLab), Antoine Khalife (Director of the Arab Program, Red Sea International Film Festival), Kaleem Aftab (Director of International Programming, Red Sea International Film Festival) and Edouard Waintrop (Advisor, Red Sea International Film Festival).

They were supported by a team of readers, including Faisal Alharbi (Film Producer and Director) and Deema Azar (Film Producer and Script Consultant). Saudi producer Jumana Zahid leads the Festival's development program as Manager of the Red Sea Lodge.

The selected projects include biopics, romance, fantasy and journeys of self-discovery, and range across significant socio-political themes, looking at contemporary interpersonal challenges of marriage and family, mental health struggles and the pain and beauty of love. There are also explorations of major moments of societal transformation, including the expansion of the Mongol empire and early oil speculation.

The selected projects are:

## **Saudi Projects**

### **Fiery Eyes**

**Director and writer: Abduljalil Al-nasser**

**Producer: Ayman Jamal**

Set in the 1940s, amid the vast deserts of the newly established Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Batla finds herself in a tense conflict with the men of her tribe after her husband goes missing.

### **Hala's Aziz**

**Director: Jowaher Alamri**

**Writer: Jowaher Alamri and Jude Elmasoud**

**Producer: Mohammed Sendi**

Trapped in a marriage to a toxic narrow-minded man, a desperate wife decides to leave their crippling relationship, leading both to go on life-changing journeys.

### **Raoya – The Bookkeeper**

**Director: Mahmoud Zaini**

**Writer: Ieva Radina**

**Producer: Omar Mugeem**

It's the 12th century, and the Mongol empire is expanding across the world. During the siege of Baghdad, a young girl finds herself trapped in a strange world inhabited by flightless birds.

### **The Photographer of Madina**

**Director: Dalyah Bakheet**

**Writer: Afnan Bawyan**

**Producer: Saleem Homsy**

Based on the true story of Khadija, a female photographer from Medina who opens a studio for women, the first in Saudi Arabia.

### **Within Sand**

**Director: Moe Alatawi**

**Writer: Moe Alatawi**

**Producer: Mohammad Alghamdi**

Snam, a 23-year-old tobacco merchant, is ambushed by thieves in the desert, leaving him with only a dagger. He encounters a lone wolf on his desperate search for a way home.

## **Zeba**

**Director: Abrar Abdulaziz**

**Writer: Bashayer Abdulaziz**

**Producer: Bakr Alduhaim**

In 1938, at the port of Jeddah, three generations of women journey towards Mekkah, much to their Afghani family's chagrin.

## **ARAB PROJECTS**

### **The Zarqa Girl**

**Director: Zaid Abu Hamdan**

**Writer: Zaid Abu Hamdan**

**Producer: Ahmad Abu Koush**

In Zarqa, Jordan, an abandoned girl grows up to become the biggest and most feared thug in the city. Based on a true story.

### **Seeking Haven for Mr. Rambo**

**Director: Khaled Mansour**

**Writer: Mohamed El-Hosseiny**

**Producer: Rasha Hosny**

30-year-old Hassan lives with his mother and Rambo, his dog and only friend, in an old and impoverished Cairo district. After a neighbor proposes a dogfight, Hassan must flee with his trusted companion.

### **The Sea Needs to Heave**

**Director: Zain Duraie**

**Writer: Zain Duraie**

**Producer: Alaa Alasad**

Nadia has a special bond with her eldest son Basil, a 17-year-old genius. However, Nadia ignores the warning signs of a mental health problem when Basil begins to behave erratically.

### **The Day of Wrath: Tales from Tripoli**

**Director: Rania Rafei**

**Writer: Rania Rafei**

**Producer: Jinane Dagher**

A hybrid-documentary recreating five uprisings from different periods in history. A portrait of Tripoli through its collective desire for change.

**Road 250****Director: Haya Alghanim****Writer: Haya Alghanim****Producer: Nadia Ahmad**

After years of living abroad, Dima, the daughter of a diplomat, returns to Kuwait, where she has to adapt to her new surroundings and classmates in an all-girls school.

**It's a Sad and Beautiful World****Director: Cyril Aris****Writer: Cyril Aris****Producer: Georg Neubert**

Lebanese couple Nino and Soraya seemed destined to live happily-ever-despite the harsh world around them. But things go awry after Soraya unexpectedly falls pregnant.