

SILVER SCREEN

Saudi-Egyptian animated film champions

'The Knight and the Princess' is Egypt's first animated feature and was screened at the Malmo Arab Film Festival



A poster of 'The Knight and the Princess'

Arab News | Cairo

The Knight and the Princess," Egypt's first animated feature film, created by a Saudi company, had its world premiere at the third edition of the El Gouna Film Festival and also make its way to the 9th Malmo Arab Film Festival in Sweden.

Scripted and directed by prominent screenwriter Bashir El-Deek and co-directed by Ibrahim Mousa Mostafa, with character designs by late cartoonist Mustafa Hussein, this long-awaited

action-adventure animated comedy is the latest production from leading Saudi-led animation company, Alsaahar Animation.

The animation is a fictionalized account of the adventures of 7th century Basra-born warrior Mohammed Bin Alkassim, who at the age of 15 sets off to save women and children abducted by pirates from merchant ships in the Indian Ocean. His heroic adventures ultimately bring him face to face with king Daher, the tyrannical ruler of North India, and his treacherous sorcerer, Gandar.

The film features a star-studded voice cast, in-

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cluding Egyptian mega stars Medhat Saleh, Donia Samir Ghanem, Mohamed Henedy, Maged El-Kedwany, Abdel Rahman Abou Zahra, Abla Kamel and Lekaa Elkhamsi.

"The Knight and the Princess" was born of a dream to tell an Arab story featuring a real Arab hero and is premised on the belief that "Arab stories are better told from an Arab perspective by Arab talents," according to the press release.

"From the start, when we decided to produce an animated feature, our aim was that the story has to come from our culture, and (be) done by Arab artists," Alabbas Bin Alabbas, founder and president of Alsaahar Animation, said.

"It is self-expression of our history and culture and artistic point of view. We felt we have something to convey to our society and the world at large. Making a decent and respectful effort to tell our story from our perspective was the right thing to do," he added.

Telling these kinds of stories, Alabbas believes, will "naturally...face off with the stereotypes the West intentionally (pushes)."

Alabbas's Cairo-based company has built its reputation over the past three decades producing children's animated series.

Established by Alabbas in 1992 as the Arab region's leading animation production company, the enterprise was inspired by a personal encounter he had years earlier.

"When I was in the US during my PhD program, my son was five-years-old, I was surprised by the



The makers and cast of 'The

great impact of the animating," Alabbas explained. "I decided to travel to TV animation series as there was no animation world," he said.

This was Alabbas's engineering and computing world of animatic his production company.

"After eight years and we felt the urge to take be free of the restriction by TV stations," Alabbas create the new film.

Growing more confidence in animation abilities, Alabbas for the company's first approached screenwriters the idea.

It wasn't smooth sailing. "The quality demanded from the film far exceeded the limited animated TV series," A

SPOTLIGHT

Amr Diab - the first Arab artist to get his very own

The move is a bid to promote the music and culture of the Middle East and North Africa

Arab News | Dubai

Amr Diab is the first Arab musical artist to get his face plastered on a Spotify billboard in New York City's iconic Times Square.

The streaming giant projected a smiling portrait of the Egyptian crooner in one of the most-visited landmarks in the Big Apple in a bid to promote the music and culture of the Middle East and North Africa.

"Today we are celebrating Diab's legacy and we are proud to see him shine so brightly - literally - on the global stage," says Claudius Boller, Managing Director, Spotify Middle East and Africa in an official press statement.

According to Spotify, the legendary singer's music is most streamed in the United States, followed by Sweden, Germany, the UK and Canada.

His album "Nour el-Ain" (Our Eyes



Amr Diab on the Spotify billboard in New York City's iconic Times Square

His album "Nour el-Ain" (Our Eyes Beam) brought him global success and earned him the title of "The Father of Mediterranean Music" for his style of blending Egyptian and western rhythms

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Diab received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Big Apple Music Awards in 2009. At the 2014 World Music Awards, Diab was also awarded Best Egyptian Artist, Best Male Arab Artist, and World's Best Arab Male Artist Voted Online.

He was also one of the first artists to headline a concert in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the Saudia E-Prix in 2018. He was part of a superstar lineup that included the likes of Enrique Iglesias, Jason Derulo, the Black Eyed Peas, One Republic and David Guetta.



Amr Diab

Beam) brought him global success and earned him the title of "The Father of Mediterranean Music" for his style