

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Ten years of the Baumi Script Award: Edward Berger and jury honour Pakistani filmmaker Saim Sadiq for "Little Men"**

Düsseldorf/Cannes, 15 May 2024: **The Baumi Script Development Award**, endowed with 20,000 euros, goes to Pakistani filmmaker **Saim Sadiq** for his treatment 'Little Men'. In the anniversary year, Oscar winner **Edward Berger** took the place of guest juror.

"Saim Sadiq is an exciting new filmmaker. We are honouring an award winner for a film project that Baumi would probably also have been very interested in and that takes his passion for world cinema into account," said this year's guest juror Edward Berger.

#### **Jury statement:**

In Saim Sadiq's 'Little Men', the protagonist Nael explores whether it is possible to respect a past love without betraying the present relationship. He tells the story of what modern masculinity could look like. Saim Sadiq's treatment already impresses with visually strong cinematic images and a clearly localised story that nevertheless deals with universal themes such as migration, origin and identity with great urgency. We want to support with the Baumi Award the project's further concrete preparations such as research and casting and hope to see the film in cinemas soon.

#### **About the film:**

Nael, a Pakistani and now naturalised US citizen, lives happily in a relationship in New York City. Until he offers to marry his ex-love from Pakistan to enable the emigration from their crisis-ridden homeland. As Nael enters the process of a fraud marriage, past and present merge and Nael begins to explore the possibility of belonging to two lovers and two worlds.

#### **About the award winner:**

Saim Sadiq is a Pakistani screenwriter and director who won the Jury Prize in the 'Un Certain Regard' section at the Cannes Film Festival in 2022 for his debut film 'Joyland'. Many other international festival participations and worldwide cinema releases followed. The film was the first official Oscar submission from Pakistan and made it onto the shortlist. Saim Sadiq studied anthropology at Lahore University and earned his Master of Fine Arts at Columbia University in New York City. His first short film 'Nice Talking To You' was selected for the 2018 SXSW Festival and was shortlisted for BAFTA Best Student Film. His graduation project, the short film 'Darling', was honoured with the Orizzonti Award for Best Short Film at the Venice Film Festival in 2019.

#### **About the award:**

The Baumi Script Development Award is being presented for the tenth year in memory of film producer and distributor **Karl 'Baumi' Baumgartner**. The €20,000 prize was established by the donors **Martina and Sandra Baumgartner**, **Pandora Film**, the company 'Baumi' co-founded, and the **Film- und Medienstiftung NRW**. Writers can apply for the award with an English-language treatment. A jury

consisting of the founders and an international guest juror, who changes every year, selects a story idea from the submissions.

The winner of the first Baumi Award was the Egyptian **Omar El Zohairy** (guest juror **Fatih Akin**), whose award-winning project '**Feathers of a Father**' premiered at Cannes' Semaine de la Critique in 2021. Syrian director **Soudade Kaadan** (guest juror **Martina Gedeck**) was honoured with the Audience Award for Best Film in the Orizzonti section at the Venice International Film Festival in 2022 with her award-winning project '**Nezou**'. In 2023, Georgian Baumi Award winner **Dea Kulumbegashvili** received the Special Jury Award in the Venice Film Festival competition with '**April**' (then titled '**Historia**', guest juror **Ildikó Enyedi**). The Afghan filmmaker **Sharbanoo Sadat** (guest juror **Maren Ade**) and the German-Kosovar director **Visar Morina** (guest juror Ildikó Enyedi) were able to go into shooting with their award-winning projects last year.

Other Baumi Award winners are the Polish filmmaker **Kuba Czekaj** (guest juror **Aki Kaurismäki**), the German author **Martin Rehbock** (guest juror **Bent Hamer**), the South African **Amy Jephta** (guest juror **Małgorzata Szumowska**), the Hungarian director **Dénes Nagy** (guest juror **Andreas Dresen**). Last year, Mexican filmmaker **Mariana Saffon** received the Baumi Award from guest juror **Pan Nalin**.

Special thanks go to **Katja Clos** for creating the graphics and logo, **Friederike Zeit** for designing and producing the award sculpture and **Fritz Erler** for programming the website.