

## 'Art for Freedom' unites musicians from 20 countries to support Gaza

### Arts & Culture Desk

IRNA - In an innovative initiative to raise awareness about the historic events in Gaza and strengthen the resilience of the Palestinian people against Zionist aggression, the first 'Art for Freedom' festival is set to take place in Tehran from February 20 to 25, 2024. Organized under revolutionary and anti-imperialist themes, the festival will showcase performances by artists affiliated with resistance groups.

Keyvan Amjadian, the festival's director, highlighted the urgency of bringing the global community closer to the struggle of the Palestinian people in the face of Zionist atrocities, coinciding with the birth anniversary of Imam Mahdi in mid-Sha'ban, the 15th day of the eighth lunar month (Feb. 25).

Participating groups in singing, choir, and folklore, known for their steadfastness against Western dominance, will present their performances.

Among the countries competing in the festival are South Africa, Algeria, Uganda, Indonesia, Belarus, Yemen, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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- Printing House: Iran Cultural & Press Institute



irandaily.ir | newspaper.irandaily.ir | IranDailyWeb

Vol. 7476 ● Thursday, January 4, 2024 ● 100,000 rials ● 8 Pages

# Iran sells rights of 'The Lion Skin' to India, Russia

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Ali Sartipi, a film producer and CEO of FilmNet, said that the rights of the recently produced Iranian series 'The Lion Skin' were sold to India and Russia.

The rights were sold on the sidelines of the sec-

ond national exhibition of Iran's comprehensive audio and video media (Raseta), held from January 1 to 3, ISNA wrote.

He said that the time has come for the exhibition to be recognized in the international arena, considering the internationalization of the exhibition as a

gateway to new opportunities for global collaboration. Sartipi expressed optimism about the potential for joint activities and exports, emphasizing collaboration with international entities.

He said, "We are witnessing positive developments in this field. The interna-

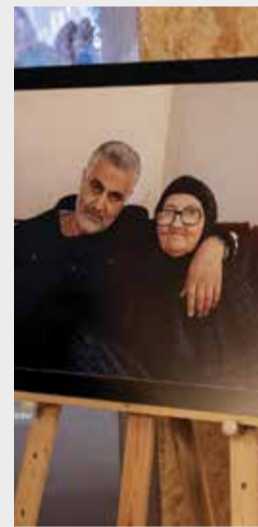
tional demand for series like 'The Lion Skin,' especially in countries like India and Russia, indicates the readiness for the exhibition to become global." Discussing the importance of collaboration, Sartipi emphasized the need for platforms to improve.

He stated, "When plat-

forms collaborate, and there is a supportive working environment, positive things happen. Our goal is to stimulate the job market within the platform domain. Despite challenges, we, like other platforms, work with determination and overcome obstacles through

interaction and communication."

Sartipi acknowledged that positive interactions have elevated the level of television production. However, he highlighted the high expectations of today's audience, emphasizing the daily pursuit of higher quality.



A symphony entitled, 'When Comrades Start Prayers,' one of the biggest artistic works produced about the personality of Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, was performed on Jan. 2, 2024, in Tehran's Vahdat Hall. The event was attended by Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili and the martyr's family.  
● MARZIEH MOUSAVI/IRNA

# Universal overtakes Disney as highest-grossing studio at 2023 box office

Thanks to Mario, J. Robert Oppenheimer and M3GAN, Universal Pictures ranked as the highest-grossing studio at the 2023 box office. The company's slate — a range of 24 films that included 'The Super Mario Bros. Movie,' 'Oppenheimer' and 'M3GAN' — collected \$4.907 billion in worldwide ticket sales. Universal's victory is notable because it marks the first time since 2015 that Disney was not the global box office leader, Variety reported.

Disney slid to second place in terms of market share as its 17 new films, 'Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3,' 'Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny' and 'The Little Mermaid' among them, raked in \$4.827 billion globally. In a note to press, the studio partially attributed the \$80 million difference

to the fact that Disney released seven fewer movies than Universal in 2023. It also went on to stress that Disney had the most titles of any studio in the top 10 this year, with four of the highest-grossing global releases and three of the biggest domestic releases. But for the first time in a long time, Disney didn't have one of the top three movies — those spots belong to Warner Bros.' 'Barbie' (\$1.4 billion) and Universal's 'The Super Mario Bros. Movie' (\$1.3 billion) and 'Oppenheimer' (\$950 million). It's also the first time since 2014 (except for the pandemic-stricken 2020 and 2021) that none of Disney's movies crossed the \$1 billion benchmark. Disney indeed remains a box office powerhouse, but the reality is that most of the studio's 2023 tentpoles failed to live up to



expectations. 'Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3' (\$845 million) was the only clear triumph. Otherwise, a string of underperforming sequels and remakes ('Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania,' 'The Marvels'

and 'Haunted Mansion,' to name a few) resulted in the studio ceding the box office crown to Universal. It should be noted that many of Disney's modest wins or even outright flops would be classified

as smash successes for its rivals. The problem is that Disney movies are hugely expensive — typically carrying production budgets of \$200 million to \$250 million — so they have high bars to clear in terms

of profitability. So while 'Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania' ranked as the 10th-highest grossing movie of the year with \$476 million, it still ended up losing money for the studio in its theatrical run. Universal endured a few misfires as well, but none were as painful. The vampire comedy 'Renfield' limped to \$26 million globally, 'Book Club: The Next Chapter' failed to reach \$30 million worldwide (the first film hit \$100 million in 2018) and the animated 'Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken' barely hit \$45 million. Although 'Fast X' cost \$340 million and barely broke even, the film grossed \$704 million, enough to stand as the fifth-biggest movie of the year. While Universal and Disney were closely gunning for No. 1, they were punch-

ing far above the rest. Warner Bros. landed in a distant third place with \$3.84 billion globally — led by 'Barbie,' 'The Nun II' and 'Wonka.'

Sony and Paramount haven't reported final grosses for 2023, but each studio reportedly brought in \$2 billion globally to round out the top five.

With 'Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse,' the Denzel Washington threequel 'Equalizer 3' and Ridley Scott's 'Napoleon' among its 2023 lineup, Sony has a slight edge with an estimated \$2.09 billion worldwide.

Paramount, whose major releases were 'Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part One,' 'Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves' and 'PAW Patrol: The Mighty Movie,' ended the year with an estimated \$2.03 billion globally.