



## **Press release**

# **Sharjah Media City (Shams) Announces Podcast Competition Winners**

- **Three participants won:**
  - AED10,000 cash prize
  - Free permit to establish a company
  - Access to co-working space
  - Free access to recording studio

**Sharjah, December 13, 2021** – Sharjah Media City (Shams) announced the three winners in its Podcast Competition, launched in November 2021 to attract talented and aspiring podcasters to hone their skills and empower them to become professional podcasters in the UAE and the region.

The winners were Muna Al Dhaheri with her podcast '365 days in the Zoo', Joel Michael with 'Pod's Green Earth', and Aiman and Hamzah Khan with 'Mine's worse'.

The Podcast Competition drew more than 130 applicants who had to complete a set of consecutive stages, beginning with registration. The judging panel, which consisted of a distinguished group of experts in podcasting, then shortlisted 30 candidates to attend the exclusive Podcast 101 bootcamp, held in collaboration with Finyal Media on December 9-11 at Shams headquarters.

The bootcamp sought to train qualifying candidates to produce podcasts, select the right topics, and develop the episodes. The training revolved around five themes: developing ideas and concepts, pre-production, recording and editing episodes, distribution and monetisation, and evaluation and analysis.

At the conclusion of the bootcamp, the judging panel selected 10 candidates that met a set of rigorous conditions to perform a list of specified podcast-related tasks. The committee then named the three winners of the Competition.

The panel brings together Mr. Fagr Kassim Ali, Director of Media Sector Development at Shams; Mr. Mshari Alonaizy, Co-Founder and Chief Creative Officer at Finyal Media; Mr. Chirag Desai, Podcast Producer and CEO of Amia Media, and Ms. Lama Nobel, Head of Partnership and Strategy at Podio.

H.E. Khalid Omar Al Midfa, Chairman of Sharjah Media City (Shams), honoured the winners and awarded them a AED10,000 cash prize, along with a free permit to establish a company, access to co-working spaces, and free access to a recording studio.



“Sharjah Media City operates in accordance with a clear vision to strengthen the media sector and advance its mission to support and upskill media professionals and talent, enabling them to play a greater role in the growing and rapidly evolving division in the UAE and the region,” H.E. Al Midfa noted. “The Podcast Competition undoubtedly helped raise awareness about the importance of podcasts in the media community. With this competition, we aspire to help podcasts prosper in the market and enhance their impact and role to educate the society in various fields.”

“We congratulate the winners for their dedication throughout the competition, and we thank them for the outstanding content they created, which marks a starting point for them in the podcasting world,” H.E. continued. “We are committed to training a new generation of professionals who can make a notable impact on the media sector in Sharjah, the UAE, and the region.”

Meanwhile, Leila Hamadeh, CEO of Finyal Media, said: “The Finyal Media team was delighted to be involved in providing the training for Shams’ inaugural Podcast Competition. It is very encouraging to see so many budding podcasters with great ideas and strong creative talent, and bodes very well for the future of the podcasting sector in the UAE. We are certain that many of the participants will go on to build some amazing new shows as a result.”

**-End-**

#### **About Sharjah Media City (Shams)**

Sharjah Media City (Shams) was established in January 2017 by decree from His Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, UAE Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah, as a free zone within the Emirate of Sharjah with its own integrated infrastructure. Shams provides an attractive investment environment for major companies, small and medium enterprises, and startups in the emirate, offering a host of services and facilities that allow entrepreneurs to expand and develop their business. It also provides support for human resources in the media and creative industries.

Shams offers several options for launching a business with benefits include 100% ownership for foreign investors, and all other investment activities. Shams also provides integrated business development solutions, a wide range of commercial activities, and total flexibility in switching commercial activity.

#### **About Finyal Media**

Finyal Media ([www.finyalmedia.com](http://www.finyalmedia.com)) is an award-winning podcast network which provides immersive audio experiences for young Arab listeners across MENA. The company’s mission is to tell stories that help young people reconnect with the Arab world. Finyal Media’s stories bring the region’s culture and heritage to life and range from adaptations of classic stories like 1001 Nights, Juha and Sindbad, which have been re-written for a modern audience, to contemporary drama series such as hit Saudi podcast Alsilah.

Through their podcasts, Finyal Media reach young Arabs in a medium that is digital and on-demand. Their shows have become hit sensations with young audiences, having achieved over 8 million downloads in the Arab world and five #1 hits on the Apple Podcasts charts. Finyal Media was launched in 2019 by three podcast enthusiasts Mshari Alonaizy, Majid Al Qassimi, and Leila Hamadeh.