

## 17th Annual Festival of Films from Iran in Chicago

Contributed by Administrator  
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The Gene Siskel Film Center presents 17th Annual Festival of Films from Iran, September 30 through October 29. One of the major showcases for new Iranian cinema in the Western world, this year's festival presents thirteen features, all Chicago premieres. This year we note the increasing number of women entering the film industry in Iran with a selection of four new features directed by women.

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This year we note the increasing number of women entering the film industry in Iran with a selection of four new features directed by women. Chicago favorite Tahmineh Milani is represented by CEASE FIRE, a feminist comedy that has become the biggest box office draw in the history of Iranian cinema. Award-winning Rakhshan Bani-Etemad's brand new film MAINLINE comes to us direct from its international premiere in the Toronto Film Festival. Enseih Shah-Hosseini's second feature GOOD-BYE, LIFE is an unusual action-drama based on her own experiences as a war correspondent covering the Iran-Iraq war. Newcomer Mona Zandi Haghighi proves she is a talent to watch with her first feature FRIDAY AFTERNOON.

The Gene Siskel Film Center annually scouts Iranian films at the Fajr Film Festival in Tehran, where a large number of newly completed Iranian productions receive their world premiere. We maintain ongoing contact with producers, directors, and distributors in order to create a comprehensive look at trends, themes, and new talent through this festival. We're pleased to present the Chicago premieres of new films by a number of directors whose careers this festival has been following, including Bahman Farmanara's A LITTLE KISS, Alireza Amini's TIME FROZE, Nasser Refaie's ANOTHER MORNING, and Maziar Miri's GRADUALLY. . . Oscar-nominated Majid Majidi's THE WILLOW TREE, which was withdrawn from last year's festival at the last minute due to a print availability problem, premieres here in advance of its U.S. release.

The Gene Siskel Film Center thanks the many individuals, companies, and agencies in Iran and in the U.S. whose invaluable efforts, good will and support have made this year's festival possible. Special thanks to Farabi Cinema Foundation, an agency which promotes Iranian cinema around the world, and its international affairs director Amir Esfandiari and his staff, especially Reza Tashakori. Special thanks to Mohammad Atebbai of Iranian Independents for advice and cooperation. Thanks to Alireza Shahrokhi and Ali Haji Ghasemi, CIMA Media International; Katayoon Shahabi and Ziba Shahpoori, Sheherazad Media; Mohammad Reza Safiri, Cinematran; and New Yorker Films.

The Festival of Films from Iran would not be possible without the vital interest and generous support of many friends including: Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa, Artistic Consultant; Amir Normandi, Community Affairs Consultant; Simin Hemmati-Rasmussen, Cultural Affairs Consultant; Hossein Khandan, Cinematran; Mohammad Pakshir; and Narimon Safavi of the Gene Siskel Film Center Advisory Board. Chicago Public Radio is the exclusive radio sponsor of the 17th Annual Festival of Films from Iran. Barbara Scharres

## ANOTHER MORNING

(SOBHI DIGAR)

2006, Nasser Refaie, Iran, 90 min.

With Majid Jalilian, Raya Nasiri

Saturday, October 28, 6:15 pm

Sunday, October 29, 5:00 pm

"Told with great economy, this simple story becomes the canvas for painting scenes of everyday life, many of which reveal the underbelly of Iranian society."--Deborah Young, Variety

Taking off in a new direction, award-winning director Refaie (EXAM) spins his story around an Everyman in the form of a shell-shocked office worker fumbling to pull his life together after the death of his wife. Refaie positions his character at the center of a great tableau of Tehran life that encompasses pedestrians playing out their daily dramas in shop and restaurant windows, street vendors, prostitutes, drug dealers, and cops. Favoring image over dialogue, ANOTHER MORNING has been cited by critics for boasting the visual flair of a silent movie. In Persian with English subtitles. 35mm. (BS)

## CEASE FIRE

(ATASH BAS)

2006, Tahmineh Milani, Iran, 110 min.

With Mohammad Reza Golzar, Mahnaz Afshar

Saturday, October 7, 8:15 pm

Sunday, October 8, 3:00 pm

Full-tilt Iranian comedies are seldom seen beyond the nation's borders, but Tahmineh Milani is a pioneer once again with the international launch of a film that has become the all-time box office champ in Iranian theaters. Based tongue-in-cheek on the self-help tome Recovery of Your Inner Child, CEASE FIRE follows the marital strife of two newlywed yuppies. He's a jealous hunk, but she's a spoiled spitfire. Between them, they turn an enviably lavish home into a ravaged playpen as they tear the comic trappings from Milani's underlying feminist message--a woman's right to autonomy. In Persian with English subtitles. 35mm. (BS)

## FRIDAY AFTERNOON

(ASR-E JOMEH)

2006, Mona Zandi Haghighi, Iran, 80 min. With Roya Nonahali, Haniyeh Tavasoli

Saturday, October 28, 8:15 pm

Sunday, October 29, 3:00 pm

Awarded Best First Feature and a Special Jury Award at the 2006 Fajr Film Festival, FRIDAY AFTERNOON proclaims fresh talent as Mona Zandi Haghighi joins Iran's growing ranks of female directors. A woman long estranged from her family maintains a quiet but not-quite-respectable life with her teenage son until her sister succeeds in tracking her down after a 15-year search. A dark family secret proves difficult to bring to light, even as its legacy continues to impact both sisters and the newly rebellious boy. In Persian with English subtitles. 35mm. (BS)

## FROM AFAR

(AZ DOURDAST)

2006, Ramin Mohseni, Iran, 100 min.

With Jamshid Hashempour, Kourosh Tahami

Saturday, October 21, 6:00 pm

Sunday, October 22, 5:00 pm

Three stories connected by the theme of spiritual search traverse time, building to a spellbinding conclusion. In "Book Burning," an aged scholar risks all to save ancient manuscripts from the fires of invading barbarians, while a modern-day Tehran student is forced to sell his trove of rare books to pay the rent. In "Breathing," a businessman in ill health becomes obsessed with tracking down both the subject and the artist of a haunting painting. In "Dawn," the death of a man's father impels him to visit a barely remembered landscape from his childhood. Jamshid Hashempour (A LITTLE KISS, THE FIFTH REACTION) and Kourosh Tahami each play three roles. In Persian with English subtitles. 35mm. (BS)

## GOODBYE, LIFE

(aka GOOD NIGHT, COMMANDER)

(SHAB BEKHEIR FARMANDEH)

2006, Ensieh Shah-Hosseini, Iran, 93 min. With Ladan Mostofi,

Mohammad Mokhtari

Saturday, October 14, 8:00 pm

Sunday, October 15, 3:00 pm

Based on the director's own experiences as a female war correspondent, GOODBYE, LIFE dramatically unfolds the tragedy of combat from a woman's perspective. A journalist in the throes of a divorce pulls strings to be sent to the front in the Iran-Iraq war. Secretly hoping to go out in a blaze of glory, she humiliatingly discovers her own panic in the face of chaos and carnage. The moment of truth dawns when the writer is pinned down under fire with a hard-boiled commander who disdains both her gender and her mission. In Persian with English subtitles. 35mm. (BS)

## GRADUALLY. . .

(BE AHESTEGI)

2006, Maziar Miri, Iran, 74 min.

With Mohammad Reza Foroutan, Niloufar Khoshkholgh

Saturday, October 14, 6:15 pm

Sunday, October 15, 5:00 pm

A young wife leaves her child with her parents and abruptly goes missing with the mortgage money. Her frantic husband abandons his job to hunt for her, but leads come to a dead end and love begins to evaporate in the face of malicious innuendo by family and neighbors. Desperate for closure, he identifies a faceless corpse in the morgue, but Miri's (UNFINISHED SONG) mysterious and mood-drenched story is far from over. Long after the man and his little daughter have embarked on a new life, the clues continue to appear. In Persian with English subtitles. 35mm. (BS)

## A LITTLE KISS

(YEK BOUS-E KOUCHOULOU)

2005, Bahman Farmanara, Iran, 100 min.

With Reza Kianian, Jamshid Mashayekhi

Saturday, September 30, 6:00 pm

Sunday, October 1, 5:00 pm

"Bahman Farmanara continues carving a defiantly personal path in Iranian cinema."--Deborah Young, Variety

Few directors contemplate mortality as entertainingly as Farmanara, and angels and ghosts freely haunt A LITTLE KISS, which, like his international hit THE SMELL OF CAMPHOR, THE SCENT OF JASMINE, roams the realm of the metaphysical. A failed expatriate novelist returns to Iran after 30 years to face his mirror image in the form of his much-published best friend who never left. A bittersweet road trip through some of Iran's most breathtaking terrain becomes an inner journey with differing destinations for two men who each have something to regret. In Persian with English subtitles. 35mm. (BS)

## MAINLINE

(KHOONBAZI)

2006, Rakhshan Bani-Etemad and Mohsen Abdolvahab, Iran, 78 min. With

Bitra Farahi, Baran Kosari

Saturday, September 30, 8:00 pm

Sunday, October 1, 3:15 pm

Iran's most internationally honored woman director follows UNDER THE SKIN OF THE CITY and GILANEH with a film that ventures into equally dangerous territory. Although tales set in an underground drug culture have become common in Iranian popular cinema, Bani-Etemad delves beneath the surface of a middle-class tragedy with exceptional feeling in this drama of a mother's harrowing efforts to clean up her heroin-addicted college-student daughter before the girl's fiancé returns from abroad for the wedding. The director's own daughter Baran Kosari stars. In Persian with English subtitles. 35mm. (BS)

## MARRIAGE IRANIAN STYLE

(EZDEVAJBEH SABK-E IRAN)

2006, Hassan Fathi, Iran, 110 min.

With Dariush Arjmand, Shila Khodadad

Saturday, October 7, 6:00 pm

Sunday, October 8, 5:15 pm

"A model of subdued charm. . . a fascinating glimpse into how pop culture can sometimes do an end run around global crises."--Robert Koehler, Variety

East threatens to meet West over the dead body of an irate papa in this romantic comedy exploring what happens when a nice Iranian girl falls in love with a foreigner, and not just any old brand of foreigner, but a visitor from the Great Satan. Despite the objections of her crusty rug-dealer dad, Shirin takes a job in the travel agency owned by her progressive uncle (Saeed Kangarani, returning to the Iranian screen after 25 years in exile). Against all odds, it's love at first sight when an awkward American tourist shows up to buy his ticket to Shiraz. In Persian with English subtitles. 35mm. (BS)

SOMEWHERE TOO FAR  
(JAYEEDAR DOUR-DAST)  
2006, Khosro Masoumi, Iran, 98 min.  
With Hadi Dibaji, Marzyieh Khoshtarash

Monday, October 16, 6:00 pm  
Wednesday, October 18, 8:30 pm

When a shy stranger falls in love with the mute daughter of the gangster boss of a timber-poaching empire, his future brothers-in-law set the unhandy fiancé a test that degenerates into a violent debacle in which a government forest guard is killed. Told in flashback as the unlucky man languishes in custody for a murder he didn't commit, SOMEWHERE TOO FAR builds a tense and colorful story set in a macho rural culture where survival of the fittest appears to be the only law. In Persian with English subtitles. 35mm. (BS)

TIME FROZE  
(ZAMAN MI-ISTAD)  
2006, Alireza Amini, Iran, 80 min.  
With Haniyeh Tavasoli

Monday, October 9, 8:15 pm  
Wednesday, October 11, 6:00 pm

A glittering white landscape serves as the background for a tour-de-force performance by Hanieh Tavassoli as a pregnant teenager who embarks alone on a dangerous winter crossing of the Afghan border to search for the father of her child. Like director Amini's LETTERS IN THE WIND, TIME FROZE makes a disembodied voice the compelling center of his story. With the outcome ever more in doubt in the wintry wilderness, childhood is forged into womanhood for a girl whose tenuous hold on reality is maintained by her one-sided conversations with her missing fiancé, with God, and with her unborn baby. In Persian with English subtitles. 35mm. (BS)

TO BE A STAR  
(SETAREH MI-SHAVAD)  
2006, Fereydoun Jeyrani, Iran, 98 min.  
With Ezatollah Entezami, Andisheh Fouadvand

Saturday, October 21, 8:00 pm  
Sunday, October 22, 3:00 pm

Director Jeyrani pulls out all the stops in this behind-the-scenes drama, the first film in a showbiz trilogy set in Tehran's film world. A wheelchair-bound father and former actor (Entezami) sees runaway ambition transform his pretty aspiring film-actress daughter into someone he no longer knows. A lowly production assistant (Fouadyand) is not beyond sleeping her way to a career. She wheedles a small role for her father on her current job, but the old man is neglected, abused, and, finally, wracked with shame. A bang-up conclusion features the great veteran actor Entezami in a stunning soliloquy. In Persian with English subtitles. 35mm. (BS)

THE WILLOW TREE  
(BEEDE-E MAJNOON)

2005, Majid Majidi, Iran, 95 min.  
With Parviz Parastouie, Roya Teymourian

Monday, October 2, 8:00 pm  
Wednesday, October 4, 6:00 pm

A medical miracle has bitter repercussions when a professor blind from childhood regains his sight, only to shame his wife and family with his obsessive pursuit of one of his students. Majidi fleshes out this story of midlife crisis with lush metaphors and mystical reveries that comprise a complete change of pace for the Oscar-nominated director (THE CHILDREN OF HEAVEN). Building to an explosive conclusion, THE WILLOW TREE is imbued with an intense sense of the spiritual. In Persian with English subtitles. 35mm. (BS)