

INTERMEZZO FILMS



4 A 4 PRODUCTIONS

Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival
Documentary Films – Competition

BEFORE SUMMER ENDS

A FILM BY MARYAM GOORMAGHTIGH





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SYNOPSIS

After five years of studying in Paris, Arash has struggled to adapt to life in France and has decided to return to Iran. In the hope of changing his mind, his two friends take him on one last trip across France.









INTERVIEW

MARYAM GOORMAGHTIGH

Where did the idea for this road movie come from?

I started this film almost four years ago, when I first met Arash, Ashkan and Hossein. I was at a point in my life where I felt the desire and need to reconnect with my origins. My mother is Iranian and I was taking Persian classes at the Institute for Oriental Languages - a language that was never passed on to me and I wanted to learn it. That was when I met them. One snowy winter's evening, I went into a café and I saw these three incredible guys chatting in Persian. We started talking; we got on well. When we met up again, I took my camera along and they quickly got used to it.

Like a documentary?

At first my idea was to make a film about them – they were like fragments of Iran to me - but instead it became a film I made with them. As our meetings evolved, they became more and more enthusiastic about these filmed interviews, as a means for them to question their reasons for being in France and the situation they were in. Everything in the film is based on the many discussions we had. I used them to write the film. The military service that looms over Hossein, for example, was something we talked about a lot. He was facing the dilemma of choosing between returning to Iran to do his military duty or face never being able to set foot in his country again. Arash put on a lot of weight to be exempt from the service and has to keep it on to avoid being called up. These are serious situations, but as it's part of their daily lives, they try to laugh about it. That sense of humour is very Iranian.

When did you realise your film would also be a fiction?

It was an extensive process. I filmed them without really knowing what we were going to do with the takes. I wasn't even sure if it was just a personal inquiry or a real desire to make a film. When Arash decided he was going to return to Iran, because he was unhappy in France, I realised that I had a point of departure, which was dramatic enough to create a film around the story of their friendship. Then I added an element of suspense with Arash's love interest, which might change his mind about staying in France. An element of a love story. But first and foremost it's a film about friendship and separation. Of course the imminent separation that looms over these three friends talks of the more profound separation we feel when we live far away from our country; that sense of being uprooted.

Were all scenes improvised?

I had vague ideas for scenes, that's all. To me the approach was still that of a documentary, because there were no scripted dialogues. The meeting with the two girls for example: I set it up, but I had no idea what was going to happen. It was a gamble. I wanted for my three characters to meet these two French women along the way, especially Arash who had certain prejudices. I knew Charlotte. She had confided in me that she had a weakness for chubbier men, so I thought to myself: "Ok, let's see what might happen with Arash." After that, everything I filmed was real and unplanned.

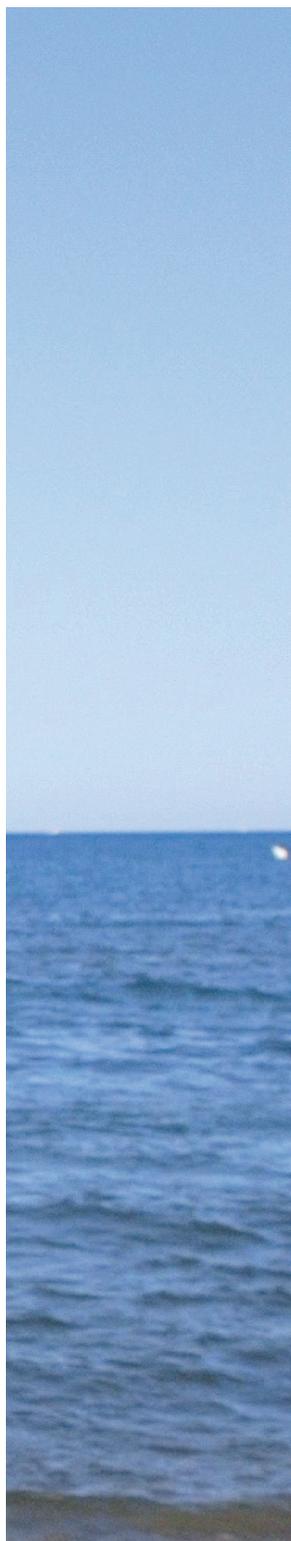
Arash, Ashkan and Hossein travel across France, through small villages, camping sites, local festivities and fairgrounds, was it a culture shock for them?

We took off for two and a half weeks in an old Renault Espace we bought online for 900 Euros, a few tents in the boot and the camera. It was Ashkan and Hossein's idea. They wanted to show Arash a different side of France, far from Paris. I had no intention of making them confront "the depths of rural France". I have always spent my holidays in a little village in the Alsace. I am very fond of the countryside and the slightly tacky village celebrations that always end in karaoke. I loved filming the 15th August celebrations (Assumption Day in France) in Noirétable. The carnival floats decked in flowers, the Miss elections and the









local villagers that look like they've come straight out of a photograph taken in the 60s, all dressed in their Sunday best. I think it's beautiful. To me, it evokes many cinematographic references, especially the documentaries of Raymond Depardon.

Do you have a particular film in mind?

To start a project on a whim is always very cinematographic. Alain Cavalier's «Le plein de super» makes me laugh a lot. The actors wrote the film with Cavalier, they made the film together, just like we did. And then I really like «Days and nights in the forest» by Satyajit Ray, the story of four men, who head off into the forest in search of a good time. There's an oriental pace to it, which I love. Arash himself embodies the Iranian rhythm: in his mindset, his presence and his way of talking, which is very poetic.

Your characters don't adhere to the typical male codes of friendship. They are tactile, attentive, emotional, they comfort one another.

Exactly, they don't have this exaggerated manliness, which is often attributed to groups of Eastern men. They're actually very sensitive. When they're in doubt, they consult a collection of poems for guidance. I was immediately seduced by their generosity, their sweetness, tenderness, their modesty. When Arash says that the moon makes him sad, because it reminds him of when he had to leave his school friends behind, it's his way of saying he'll miss Hossein and Ashkan.

Physically, they are very stereotypical, like cartoon characters.

I very quickly saw the cinematic potential this threesome had. They have a real comic appearance. Arash is the mascot! He is very much at ease with his body. It's in no way a hindrance to him. Corpulence in paintings really inspires me and I find Arash's body especially inspiring. When he lay down with his bulging belly, it was a gesture of great generosity towards me, because he knew I was going to film him in a kind and tender way. His presence composed the image in a natural way. When he was in front of the lens, all I had to do was set up the camera and the image was perfectly framed.

Underneath this comedic road movie between friends there's also a very melancholic film about feeling homesick, about being uprooted.

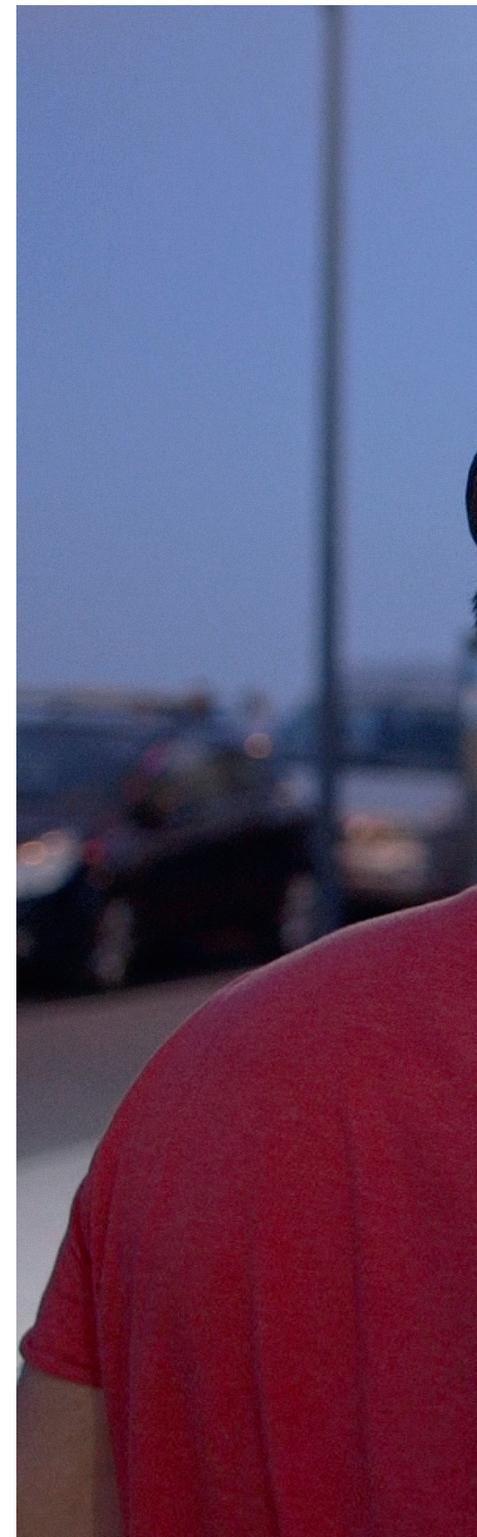
It's a melancholy that affects me too. During the war, my grandmother came to live with us in Switzerland. They kept me at a distance from Iran, but at the same time I was constantly surrounded by Iranian culture at home. A few years later, my grandmother returned to Iran and passed away there. My mother and I couldn't go to the funeral. I wasn't able to grieve for her. When I went to visit her grave years later, I felt a sense of closure. The film also filled a void I had felt. I feel whole again and at the same time I still have this floating feeling. And I know that my mother to this day, when she looks out of her window onto the Alps in the distance, she's really thinking about the Alborz mountains.

At one point, Hossein says that he is happier in Iran, but he prefers the person he has become in France. Doesn't this statement summarize the kind of schizophrenia that people uprooted from their homeland deal with?

Yes, totally. At the same time, this sentiment is very universal. There's no doubt that a French person who has left their village behind to live in the capital, feels the same way. For my characters, coming to France was a promise of a new start, of emancipation. They built their lives on this feeling of uprooting, which obliges them to constantly take a stance and make choices. At first impression, Hossein seems to be the most "integrated" because he has found love in France. But perhaps he's also the most tortured of the three. Even though they're all a bit lost and haunted by Iran.

The film makes a point in talking about immigration in an entirely depoliticised and tender way.

Yes, my intention was not to make a film about a subject matter. The desire to make a film for me doesn't start with a subject we want to deal with, but with something else. It just so happened that I fell for these







three men, who to me were characters in a comedy and they were also dealing with serious issues that any uprooted person can relate to. Beyond immigration, the film is about friendship and the relationship between Arash, Ashkan and Hossein somewhere in the long process of adaptation. It was important to portray these people in another light, not with the word “immigrant” stamped across their forehead. They are young guys and anyone can identify with their amorous trials and errors.

For the music you collaborated with the bass player, Marc Siffert.

I wanted that instrument to underline the entire film, because Arash is a bass. He has a way of being, of walking, which is very jazzy. In the car, the guys often listened to Persian music from the 70s – music from before the revolution. It’s funny because they seem nostalgic for a time period they never knew.

You often filmed the sky at night: a shooting star, the moon that gradually waxes, like in a fairytale.

We get the feeling that something is watching over them, much like in a fairytale.

I firmly believe in my lucky star, in chance. I really like the idea of opening the collection of poems by Hafez and be guided by his words. It’s like a bible for the Iranian people, who consult it whenever they face an important decision in their lives. The moon that progressively grows represents the passing of time and the imminence of Arash’s departure. The full moon is also the face of the beloved in Persian poetry, like its waning crescent represents her eyebrow. The shooting star was real! I was filming the sky and it appeared – I really was that lucky !

A scene that really marked you during filming ?

When Arash picks up Charlotte like a bag of potatoes to carry her out to sea. I didn’t expect him to do that. All of a sudden, he turned into Rostam - the giant of Persian mythology was suddenly before me. He literally turned into a hero. I feel like I witnessed him open up, come into his own. He has transformed from the awkward, smoking young guy he was at the beginning of filming. It’s as if the film brought out his heroic side. In any case, I’m not letting them get away. Next time, I want to make a film with them in Iran. They are my three muses, my three graces !





BIOGRAPHY DIRECTOR

Born in 1982 in Geneva, Maryam Goormaghtigh studied filmmaking at INSAS in Brussels, after studying Musicology and History and Aesthetics of Cinema in Lausanne.

After directing a series of short and medium length films, among them *Bibeleskaes*, co-directed with Blaise Harrison and *Le fantôme de Jenny M (55')*, selected at Vision du Réel Festival in Nyon, Maryam Goormaghtigh collaborated on the Arte documentary review *CUT UP*, directing several short films as well as the web documentary *Code Barre* (awarded a Gold Fipa at Biarritz 2012).

Before Summer Ends is her first feature-length film, a documentary-comedy which blurs the definitions of film genres. She is currently writing a feature-length fiction film and in parallel creating a documentary series for Arte Creative, which is planned for release in September 2017.

ARTISTIC CREDITS

Playing themselves

**ARASH
HOSSEIN
ASHKAN
CHARLOTTE
MICHÈLE**

TECHNICAL CREDITS

Direction and camera
Editing
Sound Editing
Mixing
Colour Grading
Assistant Director
Original Music

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