

CAA & MEMENTO INTERNATIONAL  
present

a BUTIMAR and EXTRA A PRODUCTION production

# FREMONT

by Babak Jalali



USA / English, Dari, Cantonese / 88 minutes

Written by Carolina Cavalli & Babak Jalali

Produced by Marjaneh Moghimi, Sudnya Shroff, Rachael Fung, George Rush, Chris Martin & Laura Wagner

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## SYNOPSIS

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*Donya works for a Chinese fortune cookie factory in San Francisco. Formerly a translator for the U.S. military in Afghanistan, she struggles to put her life back in order. In a moment of sudden revelation, she decides to send out a special message in a cookie.*



## LONG SYNOPSIS

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*Beautiful and troubled 20-something Donya, an Afghan translator who used to work with the U.S. government, has trouble sleeping. She lives by herself in Fremont in a building with other Afghan immigrants and often dines alone at a local restaurant watching soap operas. Her routine changes when she's promoted to writing the fortunes at her job at a fortune cookie factory in the city. As her fortunes are read by strangers throughout the Bay, Donya's smoldering longing drives her to send a message out to the world, unsure where it will lead.*

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

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This film is about an immigrant in a new country but, of course, there is no uniform immigrant experience. Each individual has different reasons for leaving and each individual has their own dreams and desires for what the future will hold in their new home. Often, one's past dictates their present and for someone starting from scratch somewhere far from home, the past is never really behind them.

With this film I want to look beyond the idea that there are wild differences between humans. In a world, where so much is made of imagining differences and exaggerating otherness, it's important to look at universal similarities. An immigrant and a non-immigrant share many of the same hopes, dreams and ambitions. The main character in this film, Donya, a feisty young woman and a former translator for the US military, feels she is where she is due to her own life choices. But this does not mean she does not suffer or feel displaced. She is determined to change things. She wants to be busy. She wants to be at ease. She wants to fall in love. And she wants acceptance. Like most other people.

Even though this film looks at the plight of an Afghan translator and her new life in America, the style of the film is not one that is rooted in social realism. Observations of the absurdities of cultural adjustment and feelings of displacement can also be presented through the realm of humor. For although the subjects that are dealt with here can be dark at times, there is humor in darkness too and as a filmmaker, this element of lightness has always been important to me. Showing humor in situations that are bleak doesn't underplay the seriousness or depth of a story. It can make it even more real and add layers. As the saying goes: 'He who cries only has one pain. But he who laughs has a thousand and one pains...'

# DIRECTOR – Babak Jalali

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Babak Jalali was born in Northern Iran and raised primarily in London. His short film, HEYDAR, AN AFGHAN IN TEHRAN, received a BAFTA nomination for Best Short Film in 2006. He developed his debut feature film, FRONTIER BLUES, at the Cannes Film Festival Cinefondation Residence. The film premiered in Official Competition at the 2009 Locarno International Film Festival and went on to receive the Fipresci Award at the San Francisco Film Festival. His second feature, RADIO DREAMS, won the Hivos Tiger Award at the 2016 Rotterdam Film Festival, received the Special Jury Award at the Seattle International Film Festival and won Best Director at the Andrei Tarkovsky Film Festival in Russia. His third feature, LAND, premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2018. FREMONT is his fourth feature film.

## FILMOGRAPHY

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2018 – LAND, Writer & Director  
*Berlin IFF Panorama*

2016 – RADIO DREAMS, Writer & Director  
*Rotterdam IFF - Winner of the Tiger Award*

2009 - FRONTIER BLUES, Writer & Director  
*San Francisco IFF - Winner of the FIPRESCI Prize*

2005 - HEYDAR: AN AFGHAN IN TEHRAN (short),  
Writer & Director  
*BAFTA nomination for Best Short / New York City  
Short FF - Winner Best Student Short*



## CAST – Anaita Wali Zada / Donya

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Anaita Wali Zada was born the third of eight children in Afghanistan. By the age of 19, Anaita had become a well-known presenter and journalist on national television. Bold choices for women in the country have always taken exceptional courage and her liberalism and imaginative media work made her and her sister, Taban, a visible target of the Taliban. As Kabul fell in August 2021, Anaita and Taban were forced to flee, without knowing where they would land. Having settled in Washington, DC, their priority remains bringing their remaining family to safety. Anaita wants her life's work to honor the women of Afghanistan. To that end, she is studying English and preparing to pursue a university degree in acting and filmmaking.



## CAST – Gregg Turkington / Dr. Anthony

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Gregg Turkington is an actor and comedian. His feature credits include Rick Alverson's ENTERTAINMENT, THE COMEDY, and ANT-MAN. He also lent his voice to the beloved animated series GRAVITY FALLS and is well-known for his roles in the ON CINEMA universe including Adult Swim's DECKER.

## CAST – Jeremy Allen White / Daniel

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JEREMY ALLEN WHITE is an award-winning, dynamic actor known for his impressive, compelling performances that captivate both fans and critics alike.

Jeremy stars in the hit FX series *THE BEAR*, following 'Carmy', a young chef who comes home to Chicago to run his family sandwich show after a heartbreaking death in his family. Currently sitting at 100% on Rotten Tomatoes, the dramedy became an overnight smash success, garnering Jeremy a Golden Globe Award for "Best Performance by an Actor in a Television Series – Musical or Comedy", a Critics' Choice Award for "Best Actor in a Comedy Series" and a Screen Actors Guild award nomination for "Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Comedy Series".

The show was nominated for a Critics' Choice award for "Best Comedy Series" and was honored as an outstanding TV program by the American Film Institute. Given the massive success of the show, it was quickly renewed for a second season.

He wrapped production on two buzzed about films including Sean Durkin's *THE IRON CLAW*, opposite Zac Efron and Harris Dickinson. Based on a true story, the A24 film will follow the rise and fall of world-famous wrestling siblings, the Von Erichs, their family dynasty and their notorious impact on the sport. Additionally, Jeremy will star alongside Jessie Buckley and Riz Ahmed in Apple's *FINGERNAILS*, directed by Christos Nikou. The sci-fi love story, set in a world where a test can measure whether couples are truly in love, follows "Anna" (Buckley) and her certified lover "Ryan" (White) as she begins to work in an institute to help couples succeed.

Previously, he is beloved for playing "Lip Gallagher" on the mega-hit *SHAMELESS* for 11 seasons. In 2020, he starred in Dave Franco's hit *THE RENTAL*, opposite Alison Brie, Dan Stevens and Sheila Vand. In 2018, White appeared in Amazon Prime's *HOME COMING* opposite Bobby Cannavale and Julia Roberts. His film credits include Antonio Campos's *AFTERSCHOOL*, *THE TIME BEING* opposite Frank Langella, and *YOU CAN'T WIN* opposite Michael Pitt. Additionally, he can be seen as the male lead of the independent feature *AFTER EVERYTHING* opposite Maika Monroe and Gerardo Naranjo's English debut *VIENA AND THE FANTOMES*, a film about life on the road with an 80s punk band, where he stars opposite Dakota Fanning.



# CREW

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## Writer - Carolina Cavalli

Carolina Cavalli is a writer-director from Milan working in the Italian and English language. Carolina won Premio Solinas Experimenta Serie prize for her original comedy-drama series *Mi Hanno Sputato nel Milkshake*. Her debut feature as writer-director, *Amanda*, was selected for the 79th Venice Film Festival and premiered internationally at TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival) 2022. It is currently on theatrical release. Her first novel *Metropolitania* was published in November 2022.

## Late Producer - Marjaneh Moghimi

Marjaneh Moghimi was the founder-director of Butimar Productions, a Bay Area nonprofit organization dedicated to producing world-class documentary and narrative feature films by filmmakers from the Middle East and those who form part of the Middle Eastern diaspora. Moghimi produced numerous award-winning films with acclaimed international directors such as Bahman Giarostami's *KANMANCHEH*, *INFIDELS*, and *PILGRIMAGE* (which was nominated for best documentary at 2014 Tribeca Film Festival); Michael Apted's *POWER OF THE GAME*; Justine Shapiro's *OUR SUMMER IN TEHRAN*, for ITVS; and Mitra Farahani's *BEHJAT SADR* and *FIFI HOWLS FROM HAPPINESS* (which premiered at Berlin and Telluride Film Festivals in 2013 and was picked up for theatrical distribution by Music Box films, also available on Netflix and Fandor). Her last narrative feature *RADIO DREAMS*, directed by Babak Jalali, won the Hivos Tiger Award for Best Film at the 2016 Rotterdam International Film Festival and was picked up for theatrical distribution by Matson Films. The film screened in more than 25 cities in North America and is now available on Amazon.

## Producer - Sudnya Shroff

Sudnya Shroff is an Indian American artist who has made San Francisco Bay Area her home since 1996. She has pursued her passion for storytelling through visual art, murals, installations, the written word, and now *FREMONT*, her first feature film. As a champion of the world's displaced sisterhood, Sudnya has made it her life's mission to tell stories - arrestingly beautiful and awe inspiring stories - the kind that have the power to move and change our subconscious narratives of fear around those who don't look and sound like us. Towards that end, she has built a community that trusts her and has joined forces in this endeavor to effect a powerful and much needed social awakening.

### Producer - Rachael Fung

Rachael Fung is an independent Producer and filmmaking fellow of The Gotham (formerly IFP) and SFFILM. The founder of New York and Sydney-based Extra A Productions, she produced Nia DaCosta's debut feature, *LITTLE WOODS* starring Tessa Thompson and Lily James which premiered at Tribeca 2018, was released theatrically in the US by NEON and is currently streaming on HBOMax. Other producing credits include *THE GIANT* (TIFF 2019, San Sebastian 2019) and shorts *KIMCHI* (SXSW 2018), *THE LONELY WHALE* (2016) and *THE GOD PHONE* (Audience Award winner at Little Rock Film Festival 2012). Rachael was previously Associate Producer for Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin's company, Bazmark Inq, working on projects including *THE GREAT GATSBY* and *THE GET DOWN*.

### Producer - George Rush

George M. Rush is a producer and attorney specializing in the entertainment industry with an emphasis on the independent film community. Clients include producers, directors, screenwriters and investors in development, production and distribution phases. George represented Barry Jenkins' *MEDICINE FOR MELANCHOLY*, David Robert Mitchell's *MYTH OF THE AMERICAN SLEEPOVER*, and Joe Talbot's *THE LAST BLACK MAN IN SAN FRANCISCO*, as well as other independent films including *MENASHE*, *LOVESONG*, *ALWAYS SHINE* and *I BELIEVE IN UNICORNS*. As a producer, George collaborated with Boots Riley on *SORRY TO BOTHER YOU*, Michael Tully on *PING PONG SUMMER* and *DON'T LEAVE HOME* and John Maringouin on *GHOST BOX COWBOY*. He has also Executive Produced Dean Fleischer-Camp's *MARCEL THE SHELL WITH SHOES ON* and Frank Berry's *AISHA*.

### Producer - Chris Martin

Chris Martin is a producer, line producer, writer and story-editor with over twelve years experience in film, television, and commercials. A producer of five theatrical and documentary projects, and an Independent Spirit John Cassavetes Award nominee, his credits include *SORRY TO BOTHER YOU*, *55 STEPS*, *LA MISSION*, *PUSHING DEAD*, *TEST*, *THE HEARBREAK KID*, *MISTRESS OF SPICES*, CBS' *ALIVE*, ESPN's *BONDS ON BONDS*, Sundance Channel's *BIG IDEAS FOR A SMALL PLANET*, and Discovery Channel's *I (ALMOST) GOT AWAY WITH IT*. A participant in the 2017 Cannes Marché du Film Producers Network he is twice finalist to the Sundance Institute Producer's Lab.

### Producer - Laura Wagner

LAURA WAGNER is an award-winning producer whose films have premiered at film festivals including Sundance, Tribeca, SXSW, Rotterdam, Melbourne and many more, and have enjoyed success worldwide in theatrical markets, on television and on digital streaming platforms. Her feature documentaries include *THE SCALE OF HOPE* and *ARTIFISHAL*, and her narrative fiction films include *IT FELT LIKE LOVE*

(Sundance 2013), TRACKTOWN (Sundance Creative Producing Lab 2014), EASY LIVING; and MY FIRST KISS AND THE PEOPLE INVOLVED. She is a Sundance Creative Producing Fellow, an SFFILM Rainin Foundation Fellow, a Film Independent fellow, and an alum of the Rotterdam Producing Lab, the Cannes Producers Network Fellowship, the Trans Atlantic Partners program, and Berlinale Talents.

#### Cinematographer - Laura Valladao

Laura Valladao is a Cinematographer based in Brooklyn, New York. She brings a focused curiosity to each project, collaborating to craft an honest and unique visual language for every film. She shot the feature film, "Premature", Directed by Rashaad Ernesto Green, which premiered in the NEXT program at Sundance 2019 as well as the short film "My Nephew Emmett", directed by Kevin Wilson Jr., which won the Student Academy Award in 2017 and went on to be nominated for an Oscar. Laura's documentary credits include "Dear Mama: The Saga of Tupac and Afeni Shakur" directed by Allen Hughes and her commercial work has received awards from the AICP. Her work on the Danish TV series "Limboland" directed by Rikke Schjødt, helped season one to win TV Prisen for Best Television Series, Short Form. When she isn't shooting, you can find Laura backcountry camping in Death Valley or surfing at Rockaway Beach.

# FULL CAST

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Donya	Anaita Wali Zada
Joanna	Hilda Schmelling
Fan	Avis See-tho
Salim	Siddique Ahmed
Mina	Taban Ibraz
Suleyman	Timur Nusratty
Ricky	Eddie Tang
Lin	Jennifer McKay
Amaya	Divya Jakatdar
Dr. Anthony	Gregg Turkington
Aziz	Fazil Seddiqui
Molly	Molly Noble
Daniel	Jeremy Allen White
Jason	Enoch Ku

# FULL CREW

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Writers	Babak Jalali Carolina Cavalli
Director	Babak Jalali
Producers	Marjaneh Moghimi Sudnya Shroff Rachael Fung Laura Wagner Chris Martin George Rush
Director of Photography	Laura Valladao
First Assistant Director	Elaine Gibson
Production Designer	Rob Riutta
Editor	Babak Jalali
Casting by	Eyde Belasco

Costume Designer

Caroline Sebastian

Sound Design

Stefano Gross

Original Score by

Mahmoud Schricker

Sound Mixer

Nixon Sanchez

# PRODUCTION COMPANIES

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## BUTIMAR

Founded in 2003 in Menlo Park, California, Butimar Productions is a 501 c (3) nonprofit art organization dedicated to making world-class documentary/feature films and music videos.

## EXTRA A PRODUCTIONS

Extra A Productions is the Sydney and New York based production company founded by Rachael Fung. Past credits include Nia DaCosta's debut feature, *LITTLE WOODS* (Tribeca 2018) and David Raboy's debut feature, *THE GIANT* (TIFF 2019, San Sebastian 2019). The company aims to expose audiences to stories, characters and settings that are, despite a difference in context, ultimately universal in emotion.

# INTERNATIONAL SALES COMPANY

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## MEMENTO INTERNATIONAL

Memento International is a select sales company that tracks and represents high-profile, director driven independent films. We commit to only 8 projects a year and offer tailor-made synergies and business expertise through production, financing and International Sales. We have recently worked with renowned and award-winning filmmakers such as Asghar Farhadi, Luca Guadagnino, Justin Kurzel, Joachim Trier, Laurent Cantet, Jim Mickle, Cate Shortland, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Kelly Reichardt.