

12/46

Jafar Panahi and Mohamad Rasoulof



Thursday 5 July, London. Throughout August **BFI Southbank** will host a retrospective of films by two of Iran's most important filmmakers **Jafar Panahi** and **Mohamad Rasoulof**. Xan Brooks says of Jafar Panahi: "A leading light of the Iranian new wave, the creator of haunting social-realist fables that were suppressed in his homeland but played well with art house audiences in the west...Panahi's new-wave compatriots have largely decided to abandon Iran...Yet Panahi has always identified himself as an Iranian film-maker, based in Iran".

Having had three of his films banned by Iranian authorities, Panahi has long been considered a dissident with a social agenda. So much so that in 2010, he and Rasoulof were arrested at his home and accused of carrying out propaganda against the state. Panahi and Rasoulof were given six-year prison sentences. In addition Panahi received a 20-year ban from writing and filmmaking (sparking mass outrage from the film community include Martin Scorsese, Sean Penn and Harvey Weinstein) and while Rasoulof is now able to work, Panahi's situation still remains unclear. This season will chart both their careers, starting with Panahi's - from Abbas Kiarostami's **Through the Olive Trees** (1994) on which Panahi was assistant director, to his latest 'film', the covertly exported **This is Not a Film** (2011). The second half of the season will focus on the lesser known but no less significant filmmaker Mohamad Rasoulof. The season will feature **The Twilight** (2002), **Iron Island** (2005) and **The White Meadows** (2009), and will finish with

Goodbye (2011) which won Rasoulof the Best Director Award at Cannes despite him being unable to receive it in person due to his arrest.

After he assisted Abbas Kiarostami on **Through the Olive Trees** (1994) Panahi made **The White Balloon** (1995). The film tells the story of a small girl who negotiates the chaotic streets of Tehran in an effort to buy a goldfish. **The Mirror** (1997) followed two years later, similarly telling a story about a young girl negotiating the vibrant streets of Tehran on her way home from school.

The Circle (2000) depicts the lives of seven single women who experience repression and fear in their daily lives, and would mark the beginning of a string of Panahi's films to be banned in Iran yet lauded by critics. In **Crimson Gold** (2003) Panahi cast an actual pizza delivery man in the central role in a 'based on a true story' tale of poverty and class divisions in Tehran. Again Panahi alienated the establishment but won over the critics, taking home the Un Certain Regard Jury Award at Cannes. Inspired by the ban on Iranian women attending football matches, **Offside** (2006) features young women disguising themselves as men to get into football stadiums to watch matches. With an ironic and humorous tone the film ridicules the contradictions of the ban and became Panahi's third film in a row to be both banned by Iranian authorities and receive a major award on the film festival circuit (The Silver Bear at Berlin). During his time under house arrest following his conviction, Panahi was visited by his friend Mojtaba Mirtahmash. Prohibited from filmmaking Panahi, with the help of Mirtahmash, produced a powerful act of resistance by talking direct to camera, describing a film he was prevented from making. **This Is Not a Film** (2011) was smuggled out of Iran on a memory stick concealed in a birthday cake and played at the Cannes Film Festival, after which Mirtahmash received a three month prison sentence for the part he played in the making of the film.

The second half of the season focuses on the work of **Mohamad Rasoulof**. Rasoulof began making short films in 1991, with his first feature **The Twilight** being released in 2002. **The Twilight** is based on real events and cast with individuals involved. It tells the story of a long-term convict who marries a young female inmate, but once released from prison struggles to support his family. **Iron Island** (2005) takes place on board a largely isolated oil tanker which is moored off the Persian Gulf coast. Inhabited by members of Iran's minority Arab-Sunnis, this community is ruled over by an authoritarian captain whose absolute authority is the focus of Rasoulof's realist allegory. Continuing with his socio-political critiques 2009's **The White Meadows** follows Rahmat, accompanied by a young boy Nassim, as they collect tears of people stricken by grief in a ceremonial vial and observe the suffering caused by prejudice superstition and unrelenting Sharia Law. While he was appealing his conviction Rasoulof was prevented from travelling to Cannes for the screening of **Goodbye** (2011) and his Best Director Award in Un Certain Regard was accepted by his wife on his behalf. The film follows a young pregnant lawyer in Tehran, whose husband is exiled to the desert because of his political journalism while her licence to practice law is revoked for activism. Described by one journalist as a silent scream of protest, it has an undeniable relevance to Rasoulof himself following his arrest.

Panahi and Rasoulof have both made films which seek to highlight injustice and suffering, but have in the process become victims of it themselves. This season will offer audiences a chance to see films which carry great significance to contemporary Iran, and campaigning for Panahi and Rasoulof's human and creative rights remains urgent not only to ensure their personal freedom but to secure the future of filmmaking in Iran.

This Is Not a Film will be available to buy on DVD from August 27.

Screenings taking place in Season:

Through the Olive Trees Zire darakhatan zeyton

Iran-France 1994. Dir Abbas Kiarostami. With Mohamad Ali Keshavarz, Farhad Kheradmand, Zarifeh Shiva. 103min. EST. **U**

Jafar Panahi was assistant director on this film set in the earthquake-stricken area of Kolker. An actor tells us that he is playing a film director and is about to select girls to act from the twenty or so waiting to be chosen. From then on, it's a series of questions: which is the fiction, which the reality, which the film, which the film within a film, which the true stories of those living there?

Wed 1 Aug 18:00 NFT2

Mon 13 Aug 20:30 NFT2

The White Balloon Badkonake sefi d

Iran 1995. Dir Jafar Panahi. With Aida Mohammadkhani, Mohsen Kafi li, Fereshteh Sadre Orafaiy. 84min. EST. **U**

A small girl coaxes 500 tomans from her mother to buy a glorious goldfish for New Year, loses the note down a grating and frantically seeks to recover it. In real time, our heroine negotiates the chaos of Tehran streets and the characters who inhabit them, including snake charmers, a lonely soldier, shopkeepers and a kindly old lady. Winner of the Camera d'Or at Cannes. Plus Panahi's short **The Accordion** (Iran 2010, 8min, video).

Thu 2 Aug 18:20 NFT2

Thu 16 Aug 18:20 NFT2

Sun 19 Aug 16:10 NFT2

The Mirror Ayneh

Iran 1997. Dir Jafar Panahi. With Mina Mohammad Khani, Aida Mohammadkhani, Kazem Mojdehi. 95min. EST

Panahi's fictional heroine is lost in Tehran but just 38 minutes into the film his young actress declares she's had enough and is going home – but she doesn't know the way either. Panahi keeps the camera rolling and with her microphone still clipped on and using amazing ingenuity, his now real-life heroine criss-crosses the city. Panahi produces another glorious tapestry of Tehran life in an unintended version (or is it?) of life imitating art.

Fri 3 Aug 18:20 NFT2

Fri 10 Aug 20:40 NFT2

The Circle Dayereh

Iran-Italy-Switzerland 2000. Dir Jafar Panahi. With Maryiam Palvin Almani, Nargess Mamizadeh, Mojgan Faramarzi 90min. EST. **PG**

Panahi's heroines are, this time, seven single adult women whose differing but common experience of repression and fear in their daily lives led the film to be banned in Iran. Beginning and ending with the same image – a woman speaking to someone of authority through a sliding panel in a door – the film's humanitarianism

was inevitably perceived by the authorities as political. Winner of the Golden Lion at Venice.

Fri 3 Aug 20:40 NFT2

Sat 11 Aug 20:40 NFT2

Crimson Gold Talaye sorkh

Iran 2003. Dir Jafar Panahi. With Hossain Emadeddin, Kamyar Sheisi, Azita Rayeji. 96min. EST. **12A**

Panahi cast an actual pizza delivery man in the central role of this searing commentary – based on a true story – on poverty and class divisions in contemporary Tehran. With an extraordinary opening sequence he delineates, in flashback, the life of a war veteran whose passivity is finally blown away. With *Crimson Gold* Panahi's standing as a world-class filmmaker was confirmed and it won the Cannes Un Certain Regard Jury Award.

Sat 4 Aug 15:50 NFT2

Sun 12 Aug 18:10 NFT2

Offside

2006. Dir Jafar Panahi. With Sima Mobarak-Shahi, Shayesteh Irani, Ayda Sadeqi. 91min. EST. **PG**

A Silver Bear winner in Berlin, inspired by the ban on Iranian women attending football matches, Panahi's film features young women disguising themselves as men, getting into the stadium – only to be arrested and held under guard by unhappy soldiers. Much of it shot during an Iran v Bahrain match, the film is ironic and humorous with allegory and poetic realism together ridiculing the contradictions and absurdity of the ban.

Sun 12 Aug 16:00 NFT2

Thu 16 Aug 20:45 NFT2

This Is Not a Film In film nist

Iran 2011. Dir Mojtaba Mirtahmash & Jafar Panahi. 75min. Digital. EST. **U**

Panahi, confined by house arrest and prohibited from filmmaking, has an idea. His colleague Mojtaba Mirtahmash visits with a camera, the outcome a powerful act of resistance with Panahi talking, describing a film he was prevented from making, and being crawled over by his daughter's pet iguana (adding a touch of surrealism). The film was smuggled out of Iran in a memory stick hidden in a cake and Mirtahmash served three months' imprisonment.

Mon 27 Aug 16:00 NFT2

Tue 28 Aug 20:50 Studio

Thu 30 Aug 18:00 Studio

The Twilight Gagooman

Iran 2002. Dir Mohamad Rasoulof. With Fatemeh Bijan, Zalkla Bijan, Ali Reza Mahdaviyan. 83min. Video. EST

Based on real events and cast with the individuals involved, the film tells of Ali-Reza, a long-term convict who the prison warden, in an attempt to ground him, arranges to marry a young female inmate. Marital rights leave her pregnant and they are both eventually released from jail, but life outside is hard and Ali-Reza's attempts to maintain his family are doomed. He returns to thieving – and prison.

Mon 6 Aug 20:45 NFT2

Fri 10 Aug 18:30 NFT2

Iron Island Jazireh ahani

Iran 2005. Dir Mohamad Rasoulof. With Ali Nassirian, Hossein Farzi-Zadeh, Neda Pakdaman. 90min. EST

Iron Island takes place on board a decommissioned and largely isolated old oil tanker moored off the Persian Gulf coast. Inhabited by members of Iran's minority Arab-

Sunnis, this community, in which the women are mostly masked, is ruled by Captain Nemat. The latter's absolute authority is the focus of Rasoulof's realist allegory, culminating in the brutal punishment of a young man pronounced necessary, otherwise '...the entire ship will slide into chaos.'

Sun 5 Aug 16:00 NFT2

Sat 11 Aug 18:40 NFT2

The White Meadows Keshtzar haye sepid

Iran 2009. Dir Mohamad Rasoulof. With Hassan Pourshirazi, Younes Ghazali, Mohammad Rabbani. 92min. EST

With Panahi taking editing duties, Rasoulof continues his socio-political critiques: this time with a visually stunning allegory/fable that follows Rahmat, accompanied by the young boy Nassim, travelling between remote islands gathering the tears of the grief-stricken in a ceremonial vial, and observing their suffering caused by prejudice, superstition and unrelenting Sharia law. Balancing between melancholy and absurdity, folklore and myth, Rasoulof denounces Ahmadinejad's Iran with subtlety and sweeping imagery.

Tue 21 Aug 21:00 NFT3

Fri 24 Aug 20:40 NFT2

Goodbye Bé omid é didar

Iran 2011. Dir Mohamad Rasoulof. With Leyla Zareh, Fereshteh Sadre Orafaiy, Shahab Hosseini. 100min. Digital. EST

A young pregnant lawyer in Tehran, whose husband is exiled to the desert because of his political journalism, has had her licence to practice revoked for activism. Alone and powerless, she struggles to obtain an exit visa even as her apartment is searched by secret police. Described by one journalist as a silent scream of protest, it has an unequivocal meaning and a visceral relevance to Rasoulof himself following his arrest.

Mon 27 Aug 18:20 NFT2

Fri 31 Aug 20:40 NFT2

Gesher

Iran 2010. Dir Vahid Vakilifar. With Abdolrassoul Daryapeyma, Hossein Farzi-Zadeh, Ghobad Rahmaninassab. 84min. EST

Rasoulof produced this first feature by Vakilifar which examines the lives of three men who leave home to try and better their lives in Oslouyeh, an oil- and gas-producing region, but end up living in disused oil pipes next to a refinery. They struggle to survive – one works at the refinery, another drives for businessmen, the third cleans public toilets – but their 'home', also shared with other workers, produces a strong camaraderie between them.

Sun 26 Aug 20:40 NFT2

Wed 29 Aug 18:30 NFT2

Press Contacts:

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work

- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office tel: 020 7928 3232. Unless otherwise stated tickets are £10.0, concs £6.75 Members pay £1.50 less on any ticket. Website www.bfi.org.uk/southbank

Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment

BFI Filmstore

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The benugo bar & kitchen

Eat, drink and be merry in panoramic daylight. benugo's décor is contemporary, brightly lit and playful with a lounge space, bar and dining area. The place to network, hang out, unpack a film, savour the best of Modern British or sip on a cocktail.

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archival collections, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

***** PICTURE DESK *****

A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank screenings can be found at www.image.net under BFI / BFI Southbank / August 2012