



NEW RELEASES

My Favourite Cake

My Favourite Cake (Keyke Mahboobe)

Directed by: Maryam Moghadam,
Behtash Sanaeeha

©: Filmsazan Javan, Behtash Sanaeeha,
Caractères Productions, Hobab,
Watchmen Productions

Presented by: Filmsazan Javan,
Behtash Sanaeeha, Caractères Productions,
Hobab, Watchmen Productions

World Sales: Totem Films

Produced by: Gholamreza Mousavi,
Behtash Sanaeeha, Etienne de Ricaud,
Peter Krupenin, Christopher Zitterbart

Post-production Co-ordinator: Elsa Cohen

1st Assistant Director: Kiarash Sanaeeha
Continuity Supervisor: Maryam Shaghaghi
Written by: Maryam Moghadam, Behtash Sanaeeha

Director of Photography: Mohammad Haddadi

Stills: Hamid Janipour

Visual Effects: The Post Republic

Special Effects: Arash Aghabeik

Editors: Ata Mehrad, Behtash Sanaeeha

Production Designers: Maryam Moghaddam,
Amir Hivand

Costume Designers: Maryam Moghaddam,
Amir Hivand

Make-up Artist: Kamran Khalaj

Original Music: Henrik Nagy

Music Supervisor: Dounia Chaouih

Sound Designer: Hossein Ghoorchian

Sound Recording: Abdolreza Heydari, Iman Baziyar

Re-recording Mixer: Philippe Grivel

Cast:

Lily Farhadpour (*Mahin*)

Esmail Mehrabi (*Faramarz*)

Mansoureh Ilkhani (*Puran*)

Soraya Orang (*Mahin's friend*)

Homa Mottahedin (*Mahin's friend*)

Sima Esmaeili (*Mahin's friend*)

Aman Rahimi, Azim Mashhadi,

Saeed Payamipour, Asghar Nejat

(*old men in the restaurant*)

Mehdi Pilehvari (*moral police*)

Mohammad Heidari (*young driver*)

Iran, France, Sweden, Germany 2024

97 mins

Digital

An Artificial Eye release

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including
priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI
Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**,
the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine.
Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK
only). More info: sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk

**SIGHT
AND
SOUND**

Writers/Directors Maryam Moghaddam and Behtash Sanaeeha on 'My Favourite Cake'

This charming and quietly subversive tale from Iran delivers on all levels. Lonely Mahin is 70 and struggling. Her husband passed away some years earlier and her daughter lives far away in Europe, but she is determined to get her groove back. Throwing caution to the wind, she challenges accepted social practices despite the risk of unwelcome neighbourly interest and with the morality police on the prowl. Then one night, Mahin meets a man who is destined to change her life.

This magical, thought-provoking and understated yet subversive tale boasts a truly great performance from Lily Farhadpour. The drama wowed audiences at the Berlin Film Festival and will likely remain one of the highlights of 2024.

Justin Johnson, Lead Programmer

In Iranian writer-director duo Maryam Moghaddam and Behtash Sanaeeha's second feature, 70-year-old Mahin (Lily Farhadpour) eases the loneliness of her retirement through gossip sessions with her girlfriends, but she yearns for intimacy. Her pursuit of taxi driver Faramarz (Esmaeel Mehrabi) soon becomes a whirlwind romance, culminating in a night of drinking, dancing and declarations of love. Despite being considerably warmer than the filmmakers' previous feature (*Ballad of a White Cow*, 2020, which dealt with the dark side of Iran's legal system), *My Favourite Cake* still sees the tragedies of modern-day local life seep in. Moghaddam and Sanaeeha were unable to attend their film's premiere in Berlin this year, having been placed under a travel ban by their government. They spoke via video call from their home in Tehran.

What was the initial inspiration for My Favourite Cake?

Maryam Moghaddam: The idea was to write a story about how even when life is miserable, it is still worth living, to cherish the small things in life. We wanted to depict loneliness, ageing and the feeling of being invisible. We chose an older couple because to be old is to have more experience of loneliness. You're closer to the end of your life – you have a whole life in your backpack – and even so, you can still have hope. We wanted this film to be dedicated to the reality of the Iranian people, who have to live a double life. We have to be a different person when we are out [in public] because of Iran's rules; we have to eat, dress, believe as they [the government] want us to. When we are at home, we can be our normal selves. [Many of the] Iranian movies you've seen in the 45 years since the revolution haven't shown the reality of our life because of censorship. We decided to break those rules, to not lie any more.

Despite this, you've described the film as being 'made in praise of life'. Could you explain what you mean?

Behtash Sanaeeha: It relates to something we have had in Iranian literature and in our culture for centuries. Our poets, like Omar Khayyam, speak about seizing the moment. As Iranians, we are always thinking about this, because we live in a country where the future is unpredictable. Bad things might be waiting for us, but we are used to living in the moment and enjoying it.

MM: 'In praise of life' means that you are very aware that happiness has an

NEW RELEASES

Sing Sing

From Sun 1 Sep 17:45

Starve Acre

From Fri 6 Sep; Sat 7 Sep 15:00 + discussion with filmmaker Daniel Kokotajlo and novelist Andrew Michael Hurley

My Favourite Cake

From Fri 13 Sep

In Camera

From Fri 13 Sep; Preview Thu 5 Sep 20:35 + Q&A with director Naqqash Khalid and actors Nabhaan Rizwan, Amir El-Masry and Rory Fleck Byrne

The Substance

From Fri 20 Sep

The Outrun

From Fri 27 Sep

The Goldman Case

From Fri 4 Oct

BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

BFI SOUTHBANK

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library, regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop. We're also pleased to offer you a unique new space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun goes down.

Join the **BFI mailing list** for regular programme updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account at www.bfi.org.uk/signup

end and, despite that, you should enjoy it and seize that small moment of joy. In reality, life is not only a feast. It contains loneliness and pain. Those very, very, neverendingly happy movies might make us feel good, but they aren't real.

In the West, people sometimes speculate that working under a repressive regime has helped the creativity of Iranian filmmakers.

MM: That's not true. That glorifies censorship. It is true that filmmakers in Iran have found ways to tell their stories despite censorship, but it doesn't mean the censorship has made our films better.

BS: You can see the result in *My Favourite Cake*. This film was made without censorship and it's maybe our best film. This is why we believe that censorship doesn't help any filmmaker. We made a film without censorship and we love it.

You made the film without a permit. It must have been an arduous production.

BS: It was a very long process. Because of our last film [being banned in Iran], we knew we couldn't get permission. We decided to get a permit for a short film under the name of a friend and shoot using that.

There were very difficult days when, after two weeks of shooting, Mahsa Amini [who had been arrested by the Iranian morality police] was killed [in custody]. We were all very sad and frustrated, [and felt] we couldn't continue. After a two-day break, the crew gathered in our main location, Mahin's house, and talked for several hours. We reminded ourselves that what this film is talking about are the same topics of the [Women, Life, Freedom] movement. This film talks about women, life and freedom. We felt it was our duty to finish it and join the movement. But the rest of the shoot was very stressful. Every day we thought guards would raid our location and stop everything.

Eventually, [the government] heard about this [feature] film being made with just a short film permit and they raided our editor's house. They took all the computers, hard drives, everything. We were lucky that, before the raid, we had sent a rough cut to our post-production studio in Paris. When we left to go there and finish the film, our passports were confiscated. They interrogated us and started a court case against us.

What have you been charged with?

BS: Propaganda against the regime. And also breaking the Islamic rules by showing a woman without a hijab, and a woman and a man drinking alcohol and dancing together. They're all forbidden to show in a film.

What gives you the motivation to carry on making films under these circumstances?

BS: We believe that, as filmmakers, we can help bring about change. This is our duty. We can see that our society, and Iranian women especially, are trying to act, to change something, to get freedom back.

MM: Making movies, telling stories, is what we do and what we love. Even if it has consequences, it is worth it.

Interview by Thomas Flew, *Sight and Sound*, October 2024