

12th PERSIAN FILM FESTIVAL

16-19 APR 2026



PERSIANFILMFESTIVAL.COM

PALACE MOORE PARK

 PALANGI PRODUCTIONS

PALACE
CINEMAS 

WELCOME

For twelve years, the Persian Film Festival has stood as a voice for stories from Iran and Persian-speaking filmmakers from around the globe. Stories that have always found their truest expression through cinema.

Iranian filmmakers, in particular, have long worked under immense pressure and restrictions, yet their art has never stopped bearing witness. Their films have been a mirror held up to the lives, desires, fears, and hopes of a people. That tradition does not stop when the world turns its gaze elsewhere. It deepens.

In light of the ongoing events in the past few months and the devastating realities facing Iran today, including the silencing of people through state-imposed internet shutdowns, the festival reaffirms its commitment to being a space where those voices are heard.

The films we have curated speak directly to the Iranian experience as it is lived right now and through the last decades.

For those who come to our screenings, whether you carry Iran in your blood, your memory, or simply in your conscience, we offer a place to gather, to witness together, and to remember that storytelling is itself an act of resistance.

PFFA has always been more than a festival. It is a commitment. And that commitment, now more than ever, holds.

We are here. We continue.

FESTIVAL DIRECTOR

Dr Amin Palangi

FESTIVAL PROGRAMERS

Dr Amin Palangi

Tara Aghdashloo

Saeed Sourati

Susan Prior (Awards)

Dr Hadi Nojournian

MARKETING MANAGER

Nafiseh Dadgar

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Hamed Ebrahimi

OPERATIONS MANAGER

Sana Shariflou

CONTENT PRODUCER

Bitra Ghanbari

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Ali Famori

STREAMING SERVICES

Bardia Moradbakhsh

ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO COUNTRY

The festival would like to acknowledge Australia's First Nations People as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land, and pay respect to the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, upon whose Country the festival is based. We honour the storytelling and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.

16.04.2026

18.30



OPENING NIGHT FILM

CUTTING THROUGH ROCKS

Sara Khaki, Mohammadreza Eyni

CAST

Sara Shahverdi

PRODUCTION YEAR

2025

DURATION

95 min

LANGUAGE

Persian, Azari
(English Subtitles)

This Oscar Nominated and Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner profiles a brazenly feminist, motorbike-riding Iranian trailblazer – the first woman elected to public office in her remote community.

At the age of 37, Sara Shahverdi has accomplished many things: survived a divorce, mastered the motorcycle, delivered hundreds of babies as a midwife and, most significantly, made history as her village's first ever female councillor. She's the epitome of the forward-thinking rebel who cares not for what others think – to the mutual awe and disbelief of many in her traditional community – and her main objective has been to fight for the rights of women and girls, especially those at risk of child marriage. But in deeply conservative Iran, a woman on a mission will inevitably ruffle many a feather.

19.04.2026
17.30



CLOSING NIGHT FILM

SUNSHINE EXPRESS

Amirali Navaee

CAST

Sam Nakhai
Babak Karimi
Azadeh Seifi
Shayesteh Sajadi
Mohammad Aghebati
Sajad Hamidian
Amir Hossein Hosseini
Kiana Keranian

PRODUCTION YEAR

2025

DURATION

100 min

LANGUAGE

Persian
(English Subtitles)

Participants assigned a specific character in a role-playing game undertake a fictional train journey to an island, in order to win a cash prize, only for the competition to become a microcosm of the limitations they experience in their real lives.

“Sunshine Express is a sumptuous allegory, examining how totalitarian systems sustain themselves through collective complicity. Navaee combines this with the competitive elements of a reality game show and more than a little kafka to create a world that reflects on the lives of the people playing the characters. The theatrical role-play offers no freedom, only heightened entrapment, as contestants navigate a world where the notion of choice is an illusion and coercion is not always imposed by force, but through psychological and emotional manipulation. In a world ruled by fear, Navaee’s increasingly taut drama suggests that even the virtuous can be driven to perform the cruellest acts.”

– Vanja Kaludjeric

17.04.2026
18.45



OFFICIAL COMPETITION

ROYA

Mahnaz Mohammadi

CAST

Melisa Sözen
Maryam Palizban
Hamidreza Djavdan
Mohammad Ali
Hosseinalipour
Bacho Meburishvili

PRODUCTION YEAR

2025

DURATION

93 min

LANGUAGE

Persian
(English Subtitles)

Roya, an Iranian teacher imprisoned in Tehran's Evin Prison for her political beliefs, is faced with a choice: make a forced televised confession or remain confined to her three-square-metre cell. As past and present slip out of sequence and exchange places, she moves between inner landscapes and lived experience. The film reveals how solitary confinement reshapes both perception and identity and makes the possibility of resistance increasingly fragile.

"Women's rights activist Mahnaz Mohammadi, director of *Roya*, knows first hand what it means to see the inside of a cell, having been jailed several times in the past for 'endangering national security' and 'propaganda against the regime.' Perhaps that is why her sophomore fictional film, shot clandestinely like so many other films critical of the government, feels true to the bone. With an intense performance by Turkish actress Melisa Sözen (best known for her role in Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Winter Sleep*), *Roya* takes us inside the battered mind of a political prisoner and shows how both psychological and physical terror can fragment memory."

– Mar van de Klashorst *Berlinale Review*

17.04.2026
20.45



BETWEEN DREAMS AND HOPE

Farnoosh Samadi

CAST

Fereshteh Hosseini
Sadaf Asgari
Hooman Rahnemoon
Amirreza Ranjbaran
Reza Amoozad
Kiarash Rezaei
Amirreza Jokar

PRODUCTION YEAR

2025

DURATION

106 min

LANGUAGE

Persian
(English Subtitles)

A trans man and his partner travel to a remote Iranian village to face his estranged father and obtain documents that would permit them to live authentically, in visionary director Farnoosh Samadi's bold queer love story.

“A window into the burgeoning underground queer community of Iran, the film centres on a young pair with dreams like many others — to live joyfully without restrictions on their love. Azad (Fereshteh Hosseini), a trans man, and his partner Nora (Sadaf Asgari) thrive amongst like-minded friends, a haven of self-expression and acceptance, in bustling Tehran. They live blissfully, but when Azad takes steps towards medically transitioning, he is troubled to learn that his estranged father must grant his permission or the process would be halted indefinitely. Although wary, the couple travel to Azad's hometown to plead their case to his family. The return is not welcome, and when Azad disappears during a row, Nora must find her lover, with little assistance or care from the local authorities.”

– Toronto Int. Film Festival review

OFFICIAL COMPETITION

18.04.2026

13.30



A SPECIAL TRIBUTE

THE STRANGER AND THE FOG

Bahram Beyzaie

CAST

Parvaneh Massoumi
Khosrow Shojazadeh
Manuchehr Farid
Esmat Safavi
Sami Tahassoni
Valiyollah Shirandami
Reza Yaghuti
Esmaeel Poor Rez
Mohammad Pour Reza

PRODUCTION YEAR

1974

DURATION

140 min

LANGUAGE

Persian
(English Subtitles)

A haunting and visually poetic work that has remained elusive for many years. Set in a mist-covered coastal village, the film unfolds around the arrival of a man with no past, whose presence unsettles the fragile order of the community. What follows is less a linear narrative than a hypnotic meditation on belonging, memory, and the unknown.

The festival is proud to present a special tribute in honour of visionary Iranian filmmaker Bahram Beyzaie, celebrating his profound and lasting contribution to Iranian cinema and cultural storytelling. For decades, Beyzaie has stood apart as a filmmaker, playwright, and thinker, crafting stories that draw deeply from Persian folklore while confronting questions of identity, displacement, and cultural memory.

Restored in 4k by The Film Foundation's World Cinema Project and Cineteca di Bologna in collaboration with Bahram Beyzaie. Funding provided by the Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation.

18.04.2026

16.30



OFFICIAL COMPETITION

THE THING YOU KILL

Alireza Khatami

CAST

Ekin Koç
Erkan Kolçak Köstendil
Hazar Ergüçlü
Ercan Kesal

PRODUCTION YEAR

2025

DURATION

113 min

LANGUAGE

Turkish
(English Subtitles)

Haunted by the suspicious death of his ailing mother, Ali, a university professor coerces his enigmatic gardener to execute a cold-blooded act of vengeance. As long-buried family secrets resurface, the police tighten their noose, and doubts begin eroding his conscience. Ali has no choice but to look into the abyss of his own soul.

Iranian writer-director Alireza Khatami examines how the distinct identities a person holds within themselves can manifest in this fascinatingly heady work, debuting at Sundance.

This surreal, Lynchian psychological thriller explores patriarchal violence, trauma, and identity through a dark, often nightmarish lens. It is an intense, intellectually engaging film that thrives on a "slow burn" to surreal chaos, with strong cinematography and performances.

18.04.2026

18.30



OFFICIAL COMPETITION

DIVINE COMEDY

Ali Asgari

CAST

Bahram Ark
Sadaf Asgari
Bahman Ark
Hossein Soleimani
Mohammad Soori
Amirreza Ranjbaran
Faezeh Rad

PRODUCTION YEAR

2025

DURATION

98 min

LANGUAGE

Persian, Azari
(English Subtitles)

Bahram is a 40-year-old filmmaker who has spent his entire career making films in Turkish- Azeri, none of which have ever been screened in Iran. His latest work, once again denied permission by the Ministry of Culture, pushes him to the edge of defiance. With his sharp-tongued, Vespa-riding producer Sadaf by his side, he embarks on an underground mission to showcase his film to an Iranian audience — dodging government censors, absurd bureaucracy and his own self-doubts.

“Divine Comedy starts off with an audiovisual motif that feels partly pulled from a romantic comedy, set to a breezy jazz score that immediately sets the light, subversive tone of the film. The two happily hit the road on their baby-pink Vespa, Roman Holiday-style, with Sadaf driving and Bahram’s hands on her shoulders – and this returns several times, playing out almost like a sitcom cue every time we hear that jazzy music. However, Asgari relies quite heavily on this to signal to the viewer that everything will be okay, a choice that eventually tries one’s patience.”

– Olivia Popp, Cineuropa

18.04.2026
20.30



OFFICIAL COMPETITION

MORTICIAN

Abdolreza Kahani

CAST

Nima Sadr
Gola
Pouya Razavi
Erfan Bokaei
Hamidreza Hosseini
Rahim Bahrami
Sarwa Hassani
Kimia Motevalli

PRODUCTION YEAR

2025

DURATION

95 min

LANGUAGE

Persian
(English Subtitles)

Winner of the top prize at the Edinburgh Film Festival, Abdolreza Kahani's resourceful no-budget feature blends droll odd-couple comedy with severe tragedy.

A reclusive mortician who has been tasked with washing the bodies of recently deceased ex-pat Iranians in Canada. His world is turned upside down when he receives an unusual request from a dissident singer in hiding.

Director Abdolreza Kahani (A SHRINE) returns to EIFF with another entirely original and gripping character study and puzzle piece. A reclusive mortician faces an unusual request from a dissident singer in hiding, their bond providing the beating heart of this disarmingly elegant film. Combining a distinctive, lo-fi visual style, naturalistic performances and familiar wit and humanity, Kahani's new film is utterly distinctive and affecting with a gut punch ending that will leave audiences reeling.

– Paul Ridd, Edinburgh Film Festival



OFFICIAL COMPETITION

ITALIANO

2024 | 20 min | Persian (English Subtitles)

Mehdi Davachi

CAST

Baset Rezaei
Kourosh Daneshvar
Mohammad Khaleghi
Mahan Rajaee

Two gay partners bound by a forbidden love in Iran decide to illegally migrate to Italy. To cross the border, they must negotiate with a fiercely homophobic smuggler, turning their escape into a high-stakes confrontation. As pressures mount, one of them begins to doubt if he truly wants to leave his homeland behind.



OFFICIAL COMPETITION

WIND

2025 | 16 min | Persian (English Subtitles)

Moeinoddin Jalali

CAST

Jalil Aalipour
Bijan Ganjali
Abbas Naderi
Moeinoddin Jalali
Majid Jalali
Jalil Jalali
Karen Jafari

It's an ironic portrayal of Iran's history by the inhabitants of the city of Isfahan, presented in four parts, and about the wind that sweeps everything away.



OFFICIAL COMPETITION

LEILI'S PHOTO

2025 | 7 min | Persian (English Subtitles)

Maral Mostafavi

CAST

Artemis
Amir Mostafavi
Sara Pahlavani
Amir Anbari

8-year-old Leili needs to take a pinhole picture of her family for school the next day, but her parents and older brother will not cooperate.



OFFICIAL COMPETITION

SUMMER TRIANGLE

2025 | 8 min | Persian (English Subtitles)

Maryam Esmaeili, Ali Babai

CAST

Yass Farkhondeh
Kourosh Eshraghi

A young girl goes to the rooftop to find her cat and discovers a boy who is attempting suicide. She forces the boy to search for her cat with her in the last moments of his life.



FARSI WITH MAMAN

2025 | 10 min | Persian (English Subtitles)

Omid Iranikhah

CAST

Hassan Nazari-Robati
Ziba Toyouri
Reagan Sytsma
Jan Batten
JT Michael
Stacy Castiglione
Patrick Sprague

An Iranian-American man recounts his complicated relationship with the native language he forgot.



THE TORTOISE

2025 | 14 min | Persian (English Subtitles)

Amir Reza Jalalian

CAST

Ali Bagheri
Hamed Nejabat

An old man with a stone face, living in a land of rigid stones, has had enough of his situation and decides to get rid of himself by destroying himself with a piece of stone. His son, who serves in an army, gets the news of his father's death. He is given a two-day break to go back home, so the stone face son gets back home to his fatherland.



OFFICIAL COMPETITION

A SIGHT OF HER

2025 | 16 min | Persian (English Subtitles)

Hediye Khaniyan

CAST

Mehrad Akbarabadi
Hediye Khaniyan
Ali Ghaffari

Taban, auditions for a lead role in a major film. During the final screen test, she's required to act out an intense emotional scene. The casting director pushes her by probing her personal relationship with her father to evoke the necessary reactions. While successful in securing the role, Taban struggles with the psychological impact of the audition process.



OFFICIAL COMPETITION

LIKE FRIEND, LIKE DEER

2025 | 13 min | Persian (English Subtitles)

Malek Eghbali

Like Friend, Like Deer tells the story of a wildlife ranger in a critical situation who kills an illegal hunter during a confrontation. This short animation explores the deep connection and hidden similarities between humans, animals, and the environment they share.

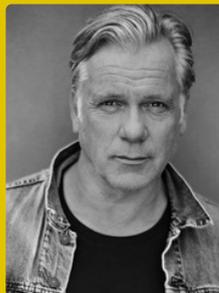
FESTIVAL JURY



Kriv Stenders



Amanda Brown



Erik Thomson



Brietta Hague



Yasmin Kassim

The Persian Film Festival celebrates excellence in filmmaking across several categories, including its esteemed Golden Gazelle Award for Best Feature and Best Short Film.

The festival Jury will review the official competition and announce the winners across each category at the Closing Night Ceremony.

FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

16—19.04.2026

PALACE CINEMAS MOORE PARK

Thursday 16 April

Cutting Through Rocks – 6.30 PM

Friday 17 April

Roya – 6.45 PM

Between Dreams and Hope – 8.40 PM

Saturday 18 April

The Stranger and the Fog – 1.30 PM

The Things You Kill – 4.30 PM

Divine Comedy – 6.30 PM

Mortician – 8.30 PM

Sunday 19 April

SHORT FILMS SESSION – 2.00 PM

Sunshine Express – 5.30 PM

Adult \$27

Concession \$23

Opening Night \$44.5

Flexipass (5) \$99

Flexipass (7) \$134

TICKETS

persianfilmfestival.com

ENQUIRIES

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