

TORONTO
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION
2006



HALF MOON

**BY
BAHMAN
GHOBADI**



THE MATCH FACTORY

HALF MOON



CAST

Mamo

ISMAIL GHAFFARI

Kako / Bus Driver

ALLAH MORAD RASHTIANI

Hesho / Singer

HEDYE TEHRANI

Border Policeman

HASSAN POORSHIRAZI

Niwemang

GOLSHIFTEH FARAHANI

Shouan

SADIQ BEHZADPOOR

SYNOPSIS

HALF MOON BY BAHMAN GHOBADI

Renowned old musician Mamo has been granted permission to perform a concert in Iraqi Kurdistan. His faithful friend Kako will drive a school bus and help gather together Mamo's ten musical adult sons, scattered throughout Iranian Kurdistan.

Mamo is determined to make this trip across the majestic landscape despite all obstacles. The old Kurdish musician has waited some 35 years for the chance to perform freely again in Iraqi Kurdistan. Mamo even ignores his son's premonition that something awful awaits him before the next full moon.

Mamo is convinced that the essence of the upcoming performance is the celestial voice of a woman. He has chosen Hesho, who lives in a mountain retreat with 1334 other exiled female singers. Old Mamo must persuade reluctant Hesho to join them, because her self-confidence and voice have been weakened by oppression. Since women are forbidden to sing in front of men in public in Iran, Hesho must be carefully concealed in the bus.

The journey of Mamo and his musical group is not without difficulties. But persistent Mamo guides everyone toward adventure, emotion and magic ...



COMMENTS

WRITER AND DIRECTOR BAHMAN GHOBADI

NIWEMANG MEANS HALF MOON

Niwemang means half moon in Kurdish. The title refers to the film's story as being about Kurdistan being half visible and half hidden. I hope the audience becomes tempted to reach the hidden part of Kurdistan while watching the film ... Niwemang is also a rare Kurdish name, and the name of a surprise character in HALF MOON.

IRANIAN KURDISTAN

HALF MOON was shot in Iranian Kurdistan, near the Iraqi border. A few short scenes were actually shot in Iraq. "Kurdistan" is generally held to include areas in eastern Turkey, northeastern Iraq, northwestern Iran and Syria. But the Kurdish people don't recognize borders. They are their own nation regardless of borders. There are around 40 million Kurdish people worldwide, mainly in Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria. They make up one of the largest ethnicities without a recognized state nor an official geographical region.

COMEDY & TRAGEDY

I have seen lots of tragedy in my life. Tragedy is deeply rooted in me. But I don't like making films only with sad stories, so I add in comedy. I like to mix comedy and tragedy and I use this as a model for my films. This combination of comedy and tragedy is the essence of Kurdish life. The Kurds have undergone so much tragedy through the ages. To combat this, they seek refuge in humor and music. This will get them through, this gives them hope for a destination that is other than bitter.

KURDISH CHARACTERS

The characters in HALF MOON are based on people I remember from my childhood. They are very passionate and emotional. The personalities of real people I have met inspire the creation of my film characters. In the same way, I have also experienced most of my film's atmospheres ... Most of the cast are what is referred to as non-professionals. In Kurdistan, we have no trained actors, and no established film industry, so I have always searched long and hard for my cast. But even though I do use non-professionals, I still work with them as if they were actual professionals. I direct them so that they can be totally at one with their characters.

OPENING SEQUENCE

Cockfights are quite common in Kurdistan. They usually take place on the weekends. For many people, they are a popular form of entertainment. I have strong childhood memories of cockfights; I have seen many ... A staged cockfight with many spectators opens HALF MOON. I wanted to share this very different atmosphere and experience with the audience. Cockfights are all about gambling, as is the journey old musician Mamo and his sons are about to make. The scene also serves as a good introduction to cockfighter Kako, who is a big admirer of Mamo and who will eventually serve as bus driver for the journey.



MAMO, THE OLD MUSICIAN

I know lots of people like Mamo. He and his sons are very common Kurdish characters. All over Kurdistan, you can meet musicians like them. For decades, Mamo has led an oppressed existence. In *HALF MOON*, Mamo wants to experience the savoring of freedom and playing his favorite music. This is basically an impossible mission for him. But his journey with his sons is one of love for homeland and music.

HESHO, THE CELESTIAL VOICE

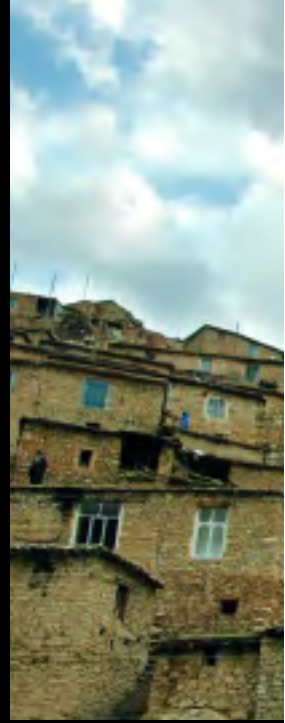
The female singer Hesho in *HALF MOON* represents the countless oppressed women who do not have the right to sing. In Iran, women are forbidden to sing solo in the presence of men. There are only a few places where women are authorized to sing for a female-only audience. Hesho's "celestial" voice is an homage to all Kurdish female singers ... In *HALF MOON*, Hesho is exiled along with 1334 female singers in a magical mountain retreat. This place is not real, it comes from my imagination. It's also in honor of all the Iranian female singers who do not have the right to sing in public and are exiled to their own homes ... The actual female singing voice heard in *HALF MOON* belongs to a student of composer Hossein Alizadeh, who is one of Iran's most acclaimed musicians.

KURDISH MUSIC

Although it differs among the geographical regions, music plays an important part in the solidarity among Kurdish people. There is not a single Kurd who doesn't know how to sing or play a musical instrument. Just as there is no way to find a single Kurd who has not lost someone close due to war or oppression. The Kurdish people are almost intoxicated by their fate. Music is a way for them to transcend that ... I love music, especially Kurdish music. I cannot live, eat, rest, think nor write without music. I'm always singing at home. The ideas for my films usually come to me while I'm listening to music.

MOZART'S REQUIEM

Mozart's Requiem was the path that led me to do this film. During writing and production, I kept thinking about both Mozart and Mamo at the end of their lives. For me, the Requiem shares a very close feeling to Kurdistan's haunting landscape. During shooting, I often listened to Mozart's music in my private moments. I loved the idea of making the character of Mamo a sort of Kurdish Mozart. I hope I have fulfilled that dream and brought Mamo's spirit close to Mozart ... Just a little something to think about: While we're celebrating Mozart's 250th birthday in 2006, in my country, women are still banned from singing.





BAHMAN GHOBADI

WRITER AND DIRECTOR

Bahman Ghobadi has become one of the world's most promising and interesting directors with only three feature films. The Kurdish Iranian director has managed to create work in the most challenging of circumstances. His films centered around Kurdish life are shocking and real, but frequently touched with hope and humor.

Ghobadi was born in Baneh, Iran, and studied film in Tehran. Ghobadi began working in the field of industrial photography and also shot his own short films on 8mm and on video. Between 1995 and 1999 his short films (like *GOD'S FISH, AGAIN RAIN WITH THE MELODY, THIS MAN HAS ARRIVED, LIFE IN FOG*) earned him numerous awards and opened up new opportunities for him. In 1999, he worked as an assistant director for Abbas Kiarostami and went on to shoot his first feature *A TIME FOR DRUNKEN HORSES*, which was awarded the Camera D'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. In 2004 he was awarded with the Golden Shell of the San Sebastian International Film Festival for *TURTLES CAN FLY*.

Feature Films /// 2000 *A TIME FOR DRUNKEN HORSES* /// 2002 *SONGS OF MY MOTHERLAND* (aka *MAROONED IN IRAQ*) /// 2004 *TURTLES CAN FLY* /// 2006 *HALF MOON (NIWEMANG)*

NEW CROWNED HOPE

Bahman Ghobadi's *HALF MOON* is part of the New Crowned Hope film series. The New Crowned Hope festival was initiated and funded within the Wiener Mozartjahr 2006 by the City of Vienna, which gave artistic director Peter Sellars the freedom to create a celebration of a new kind for the 250th anniversary of the Austrian composer's birth. Rather than creating work about or by Mozart, Sellars has commissioned completely new works from contemporary international artists in the fields of music, theatre, dance, architecture, the visual arts and film. The aim of the New Crowned Hope festival is to use Mozart's themes as both inspiration and springboard for contemporary works reflecting on issues at the heart of this new century. With executive producers Simon Field and Keith Griffiths of Illuminations Films, Peter Sellars has commissioned seven film directors from non-western cultures to participate in New Crowned Hope.

FOR MORE INFORMATION /// www.newcrownedhope.org

CONTACT Alessandra Thiele (Film Communications, New Crowned Hope):

+43 699 1273 6217 / in Toronto: +1 416 841 53 92 /// thiele@festwochen.at

CREW

WRITER-DIRECTOR

BAHMAN GHOBADI

CINEMATOGRAPHY

NIGEL BLUCK

CRIGHTON BONE

EDITOR

HAYEDEH SAFIYARI

PRODUCTION DESIGN

MANSOOREH YAZDANJOO

BAHMAN GHOBADI

SOUND

BAHMAN ARDALAN

MUSIC

HOSSEIN ALIZADEH

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

SIMON FIELD

KEITH GRIFFITHS

(ILLUMINATION FILMS

FOR NEW CROWNED

HOPE)

PRODUCER

BAHMAN GHOBADI

CO-PRODUCER

BEHROOZ HASHEMIAN

A PRODUCTION OF

MIJ FILM (IRAN) /

NEW CROWNED HOPE

(AUSTRIA) /

SILKROAD PRODUCTION

(FRANCE)

WITH SUPPORT OF

KURDISTAN REGIONAL

GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ

THIS FILM IS PART OF NEW CROWNED

HOPE FESTIVAL PRODUCED BY

WIENER FESTWOCHEN

WIENER MOZARTJAHR 2006



TECHNICAL DATA

FORMAT 35 mm / 1:2,35 /

Colour / Dolby Digital

LENGTH 107 mins

WIENER MOZARTJAHR 2006

Wiener
W
Festwochen



**INTERNATIONAL PRESS
RICHARD LORMAND
TEL +1 337 258 3957
E-MAIL: INTLPRESS@AOL.COM
WWW.FILMPRESSPLUS.COM**

**WORLD SALES
THE MATCH FACTORY GMBH**

**SUDERMANPLATZ 2
50670 COLOGNE / GERMANY
TEL +49 221 292 102-0
FAX +49 221 292 102-10**

**EDUARD-SCHMID-STRASSE 13
81541 MUNICH / GERMANY
TEL +49 89 2000 120-0
FAX +49 89 2000 120-10**

**E-MAIL: INFO@MATCHFACTORY.DE
WWW.THE-MATCH-FACTORY.COM**