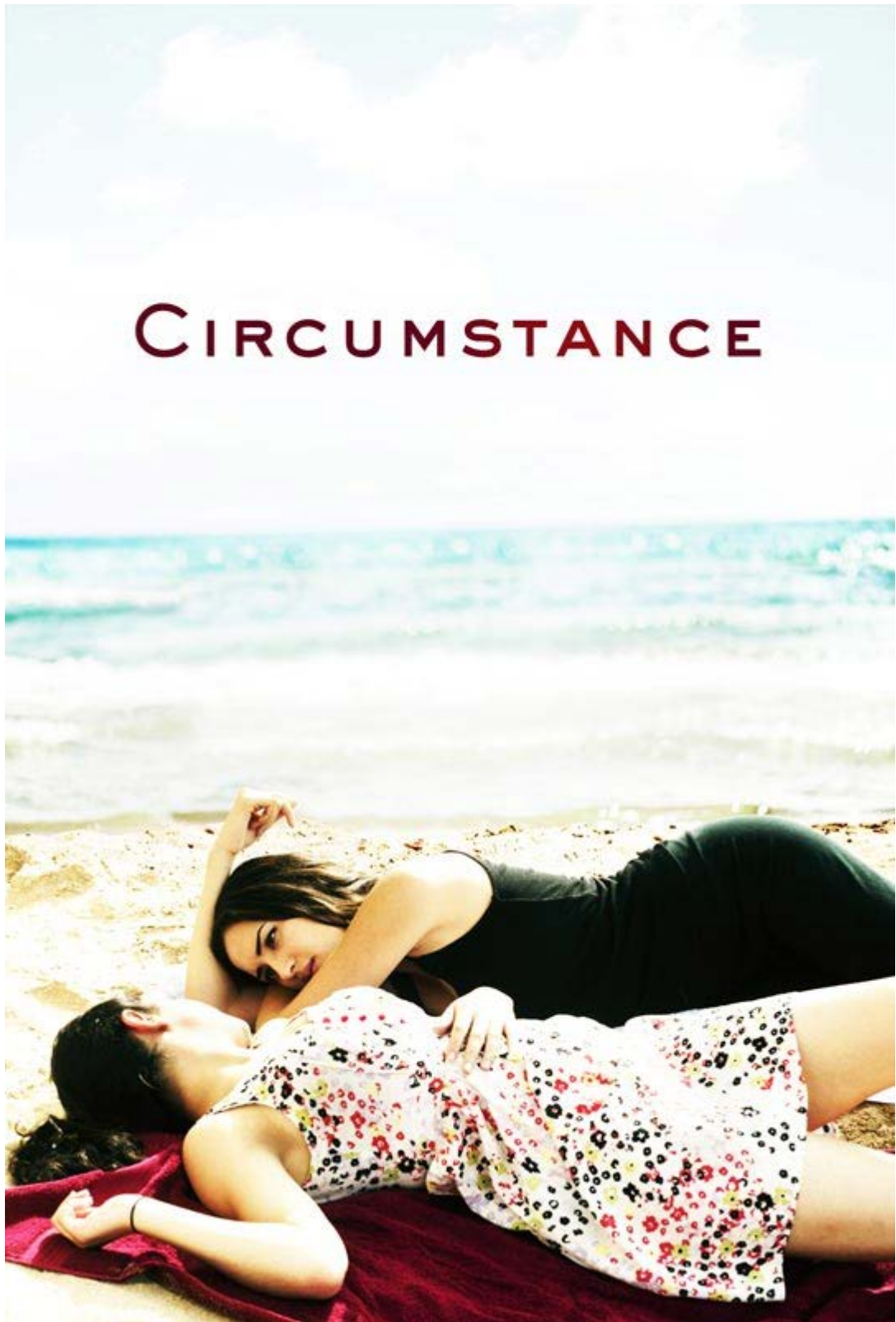


CIRCUMSTANCE



Nederlandse release 6 oktober 2011
ABC-Cinemien



Circumstance - Synopsis

Het taboedoorbrekende CIRCUMSTANCE is het debuut van schrijver en regisseur Maryam Keshavarz en winnaar van de Drama Publieksprijs op het Sundance Film Festival van 2011.

De 16-jarige Atafeh komt uit een welgesteld, liberaal gezin. Haar beste vriendin, Shireen, woont bij haar oom, haar overleden ouders waren ferme tegenstanders van het Iraanse regime. Samen doen ze hun best de strijd met hun wereld aan te gaan en zoeken ze de grenzen op van de regels waaronder ze leven: ze gaan uit in de underground clubscene van Teheran, dromen van een zorgeloos bestaan in het rijke Dubai en ontdekken de seksuele aantrekkingskracht die tussen hen heerst...

Wanneer de aan drugsverslaafde broer van Atafeh terugkeert uit het afkickcentrum, sluit hij zich aan bij de moraalpolitie. Hij wordt steeds extremer in zijn gedrag en geloof en is in het bijzonder gefixeerd op de relatie tussen zijn zusje en Shireen. In deze beklemmende omstandigheden probeert iedereen zich zo goed en zo kwaad mogelijk staande te houden, maar dat is makkelijker gezegd dan gedaan.

Keshavarz neemt haar kijkers op brutale wijze mee naar het moderne Iran, het deel van Iran wat normaal gesproken voor de buitenstaander onzichtbaar blijft: een opwindende wereld met illegale nachtclubs, waar jongeren arrestaties en hun toekomst riskeren om te kunnen experimenteren met seks, drugs en rebellie, terwijl ze de autoriteiten proberen te ontwijken.

Circumstance/103 minuten/ 35 mm/Libanon, Verenigde Staten, Iran, 2011/Perzisch gesproken



CIRCUMSTANCE wordt in Nederland gedistribueerd door ABC - Cinemien

Beeldmateriaal kan gedownload worden vanaf www.cinemien.nl/pers of vanaf www.filmdepot.nl
Voor meer informatie: ABC - Cinemien, Gideon Querido van Frank, gideon@cinemien.nl

Circumstance - Cast & Crew



Nikohl Boosheri
Sarah Kazemy
Reza Sixo Safai
Soheil Parsa
Nasrin Pakkho
Sina Amedson
Keon Mohajeri

Atafeh
Shireen
Mehran
Firouz
Azar
Hossein
Joey

Director
Screenplay
Production
Original music
Cinematography
Editing
Production design
Costume design

Maryam Keshavarz
Maryam Keshavarz
Karin Chien, Maryam Keshavarz and Melissa Lee
Ginger Shankar
Brian Rigney Hubbard
Andrea Chignoli
Natacha Kalfayan
Lamia Choucair

Circumstance - Maryam Keshavarz

De Iraans-Amerikaanse Maryam Keshavarz is opgegroeid in New York en bracht vele zomers door in het Midden-Oosten. Haar motivatie om verhalen te vertellen is ingegeven door haar constante geschipper tussen conservatief religieuze traditie en een liberale levensstijl. Nadat zij in de Verenigde Staten met lof was afgestudeerd, ging ze Perzische taal en literatuur studeren in Iran. Hier begon haar verkenningstocht naar de moderne Iraanse samenleving. Na haar afstuderen, begon Keshavarz aan een opleiding regie aan de Tisch School of Arts in New York.

Eerder maakte Keshavarz een documentaire en verschillende korte films, waarvan THE DAY I DIED uit 2006 twee prijzen won voor Beste Korte Film op het Berlijns Film Festival Berlinale. CIRCUMSTANCE is haar speelfilmdebuut.



Filmografie

- 2011 CIRCUMSTANCE
- 2006 THE DAY I DIED (korte film)
- 2006 NOT FOR SALE (korte film)
- 2004 THE COLOR OF LOVE (documentair)

Circumstance - Nikohl Boosheri en Sarah Kazemy



CIRCUMSTANCE is zowel voor Nikohl Boosheri (Atafeh) als Sarah Kazemy (Shireen) haar acteerdebuut. De twee werden gekozen uit een auditie van 2000 meisjes. Hoewel de eerdere investeerders graag bekende gezichten wilden gebruiken, was Keshavarz vastberaden om juist voor onbekende acteurs te kiezen. Er waren een aantal eisen verbonden aan de rol: de actrices konden geen inwoners van Iran zijn, omdat dat hun daarna serieuze problemen zou opleveren; ze moesten tweetalig zijn, met Perzisch als moedertaal; ze moesten ouder zijn dan 18 jaar, maar er tegelijkertijd jonger uit zien en het moesten natuurlijk goede acteurs zijn. Keshavarz legt uit hoe belangrijk de film voor haar en de acteurs was: 'We hebben allemaal een verschillende relatie met Iran. Voor hen [de jonge acteurs] was de film belangrijk omdat het verhaal van hun ouders is. (...) Er stond veel op het spel, omdat niemand van ons nu terug kan. We moesten allemaal echt geloven in het project.'

SCREENDAILY

By David D'Arcy

Circumstance is a family drama set against the strict rules that govern public and private life in Iran. Watching it, you lose count of the taboos that its Iranian-American director is violating.

It's an auspicious beginning for a young director. Watch for the fireworks once *Circumstance* reaches Iran.

Maryam Keshavarz's debut dramatic feature, supported by the Sundance Institute, is not the first narrative film to explore personal passion that's at odds with Islamic rectitude. But its profile is already high, and threatens to become even more prominent, ensuring an audience wherever Iranians have emigrated (and one in Iran, where pirate dvds may already be circulating).

The political stories in *Circumstance* should benefit from the attention given the current ferment in Arab Islamic countries, and the forbidden lesbian plot should lure in the curious.

Winning Sundance's audience award suggests that Americans might take to this film in a way that they have failed to with other Iranian cinema by such greats as Abbas Kiarostami and the now-imprisoned Jafar Panahi.

Filmed in Lebanon with a cast of Iranian actors drawn from all over the world, *Circumstance* looks at Iran through the experience of a liberal family living under an intolerant regime. Mehran, the musician son, has returned from drug rehab and is inching toward Islamic sobriety. Atafeh, 16, his sister, is exploring the Tehran underworld with her friend, Shireen. As the two girls become closer, Mehran's resentment grows, to the point that he sets up cameras in the family home to observe them.

Keshavarz, who wrote the script based on events that she saw and experienced in Iran, situates the family's turmoil in the broader context of other educated Iranians trying to survive in the worst of circumstances under a regime rooting out evil where it's thought to be hiding.

Her scenes, shot all over Lebanon in lush Super 16mm, show the haven that family life provides, and the catharsis of secret bacchanals that defy the regime's ban on alcohol and male/female dancing.

In the role of Atafeh, Iranian-Canadian Nikohl Boosheri plays a young woman willing to rebel against any rules. French-born Sarah Kazemy, as Shireen, is elegant as the more restrained half of the couple that yearns for "free" Dubai. As Mehran, Reza Sixo Safai, who grew up in Palo Alto, California, is eerily threatening as the drug

addict brother who has seen the error of his ways and who's determined to safeguard purity.

Keshavarz has succeeded in getting a consistency acting style from a cast that she drew from different continents. Cinematographer Brian Rigney Hubbard and production designer Natacha Kalfayan (with haunting music from Gingger Shankar) give the same consistency to the look of the story shot outside Iran.

It's an auspicious beginning for a young director. Watch for the fireworks once *Circumstance* reaches Iran.



THE *Hollywood* REPORTER

by James Greenberg

"Circumstance" is an amazingly accomplished and complex first feature from Iranian-American writer-director Maryam Keshavarz.

Drawing on some of her own experiences, she has created an insiders look at a world few of us will ever get to see. The political, sexual and religious labyrinth of Iran today feels at once contemporary and utterly foreign. Told with a modern rhythm and propulsive soundtrack, it's a compelling story that should attract both a young and older audience of culturally curious moviegoers.

Keshavarz's looking glass is a liberal, well-to-do family in Teheran, and in particular 16-year-old Atafeh (**Nikohl Boosheri**) and her less privileged friend Shireen (**Sarah Kazemy**), whose parents were likely executed as dissidents. As any girls their age, they are testing the bonds of friendship and their sexual attraction for each other, made even more complicated by a repressive society that has little regard for women. They act out their rebellion by taking drugs and partying in hip-looking underground clubs, but their only real escape is through their imagination. Life is so stifling in Iran that they picture themselves running off to the relative freedom of Dubai. All of Atafeh's family has been affected by the totalitarian regime. Her once progressive, Berkeley-educated father Firouz (**Soheil Parsa**) is nostalgic for his glory days while compromising in the present. Her mother Azar (**Nasrin Pakkho**) is a successful surgeon but nonetheless reminds her daughter that we have to accept the reality we live in. Most damaged of all is her brother Mehran (**Reza Sixo Safai**). A crack addict recently released from jail, he is desperately looking for a way to fit in to society and not surprisingly turns to religion. His twisted sense of holiness leads him to become a member of the morality police and from his lofty perch puts his whole family under surveillance. Atafeh's vitality and especially her life-affirming relationship with Shireen is more than he can stand, and he sets out to crush it in a series of actions that irrevocably alters the close and loving ties that once bound the family members as allies, not adversaries. It's within these crushing circumstances that people like Atafeh and Shireen do their best to find a modicum of peace and hope, but it doesn't work for all of them. For obvious reasons, Keshavarz shot the film in Lebanon, and even there she had to stretch the bounds of what was acceptable. Having grown up in the U.S. and Iran, she is able to look at the culture from the inside and has a keen eye for the telling image or subtle gesture, ably assisted by cinematographer **Brian Rigney Hubbard**. In one striking scene at the seaside, she frames a group of men lounging in bathing suits seated next to women in their black hijabs. On the other hand, scenes of the girls buoyantly bounding down the street and partying in the clubs are shot in saturated colors, contrasting with the drabness of everyday life. Drawing on relatives from her extended family, Keshavarz clearly knows these people well and has managed to create distinct and individual characters on both sides of the political spectrum. In this she is aided by fine performances from relative newcomers Boosheri and Kazemy as the teenage girls, and the sympathetic grace of Iranian stage veterans Parsa and Pakkho as the parents. Together the director and her cast have managed to give the film a sense of complete authenticity. At times, however, Keshavarz may have been too close too to these people and occasionally it feels like she is trying to squeeze in too much detail. Particularly in the early going, the film seems like it's simmering rather than gaining momentum. Some judicious trims would help that. But overall this is an impressive debut from a filmmaker with something to say and the talent to say it.