

OFFICIAL SELECTION

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TORONTO INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2017

MARIA
MOZDAH

ADIL
HUSSAIN

WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY

A FILM BY IRAM HAQ

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FILM



A GRIPPING AND MOVING DRAMA
ABOUT A FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

SYNOPSIS

Hoe bepalend de cultuur van je ouders is op de opvoeding speelt een belangrijke rol in dit autobiografische verhaal van regisseur Iram Haq.

What Will People Say is een aangrijpend en ontroerend verhaal over de complexe relatie tussen een vader en zijn dochter, een jong meisje dat haar eigen weg moet vinden. De zestienjarige Nisha leidt een dubbele leven. Thuis, bij haar ouders is ze de perfecte Pakistaanse dochter, maar als ze uitgaat met haar vrienden is ze een doorsnee Noorse tiener. Als haar vader haar met haar vriendje betrapt, stort Nisha's wereld in. Haar ouders willen een voorbeeld stellen en besluiten haar te kidnappen en haar onder te brengen bij familie in Pakistan. In een land waar ze nooit gewoond heeft, wordt Nisha gedwongen zich aan te passen aan de cultuur van haar ouders.

VANAF 20 SEPTEMBER IN DE FILMTHEATERS



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

“The story of *What Will People Say* is my most personal so far. When I was 14 years old, I was kidnapped by my parents and forced to live for one and a half years in Pakistan. I have waited until I felt ready as a filmmaker and as a person to be able to tell this story in a wise and sensible way. That is to say, without making the girl appear as just a victim and her parents as merely her perpetrators. I wanted to tell an impossible love story between parents and their child; one that cannot have a happy ending as long as the gap between these two cultures remains so wide.

I want to put the audience side by side with Nisha and her emotions throughout the film. After a long casting process, we finally found the perfect actress for the part in Maria Mozhdah. It was an amazing discovery, and she was a joy to work with alongside the more experienced actors in the other parts.

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DIRECTOR Q&A

Let's start with the film's title. Where does it come from?

The saying 'What will people say' (log kya kahenge) is an expression all Pakistani and Indians can relate to. In Hindi and Urdu, it's an expression that's used frequently in families and environments where tradition and honor are highly valued. And this focus on what other people's opinions are is something I want to get rid of; actually pull out the roots once and for all.

But on a more personal level, what does this saying actually mean to you?

Behind all of this there's a personal wish to live an honest life; to be faithful to myself. To do the things I want to do and not to live for others. It's just not in my nature to conform to others. Which is why I find it interesting to take a closer look at what conforming to other people's – or an entire system's – wishes and needs actually does to people. There's a kind of freedom in telling girls that are being socially controlled, that it's hard while it's going on, but that they should never let themselves be cowed by someone else's wants and needs.

What type of conversations do you hope the film will create?

I hope the film will open for a deeper understanding for the dilemma parents and children find themselves in, especially when they come from such different worlds like Nisha and her father. I'm not interested in provoking anyone, but I have a strong need to tell something true.

What inspired you to create the emotional story behind this film?

The movie is inspired by several events from my own life. Like Nisha in the film, I mostly had Norwegian friends and it felt really unfair being a young girl and not being allowed to do what the others were doing. I was kidnapped by my own parents and had to live with my relatives in Pakistan when I was 14 years old. That being said, I've added a lot of fictional elements to the film.

How has your creative process changed from the time you initially conceived the idea for the film?

I've waited to become mature enough to be able to convey this story in a nuanced way, to avoid it being a story about terrible parents and that poor girl. To put oneself into their situation is naturally harder for me than it is to relate to my own generation, but I had to try to put myself into their mindset; look at it from both sides. I also spoke with psychologists that work with the child protective services and other multi-cultural girls.

What are some of the key elements you tend to gravitate to when writing your scripts?

Narratives that interest me will always come first. And social control, family relations and especially the dynamics within the family is something I've been interested in for quite a while. I like exploring close human relationships and how we interact with each other.

The shoot was split between Norway and India. What was it like working in India?

Working in Rajasthan in India was a magical experience. My father and ancestors are from there. I do know the language and that helped a good bit. I felt like I found myself there. I was in India five times and got to show pictures and share some memories with my father while he was still alive. That meant a lot to me.

What was it like working with a wide range of actors, in terms of age, professional experience, and cultural backgrounds?

I loved having a whole Indian team working together with Danes, Germans and Swedes. The actors have been amazing the whole time; I love all of them. You do get very close to each other in an intense creative process such as making a movie. Maria Mozhdah who plays the leading role is a really amazing girl. There is something simply extraordinary about her. We had such an amazing chemistry on set that at times I even forgot she was only 17.



BIOGRAPHIES

IRAM HAQ

Iram Haq (b. 1976) is an actress, writer and director. She made and starred in her directorial debut, the short film *Little Miss Eyeflap*, which screened at the Sundance Film Festival in 2009. Her feature film debut *I Am Yours* premiered at Toronto International Film Festival in 2013 and was selected as Norway's official Oscar entry. The film has gone on to win a number of prizes at festivals around the world.



MARIA MOZHDAH (NISHA)

Maria Mozhdah was born in Pakistan in 1999, but grew up in Norway. When she was 10-years-old she was cast as one of the leads in a popular TV series for children in Norway. That was her only experience with acting before being cast as Nisha in *What Will People Say*.



ADIL HUSSAIN (MIRZA)

Adil Hussain (b. 1963) is an Indian stage, television and film acting veteran. Hussain has featured in an array of Indian and international films, including *Life Of Pi* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.



PRODUCTION CREDITS



MER FILM

Mer Film was founded by producer Maria Ekerhovd in 2011. Located in Bergen and in the far northern city of Tromsø, Mer Film's ambition is to develop and produce Norwegian and international art-house films by directors with a personal artistic vision. We are proud to have attached some of Norway's most exciting filmmaking talents, including Ole Gæver, Iram Haq, Gunnar Vikene and Eskil Vogt. Mer Film have also collaborated on a number of international co-productions, working with critically celebrated filmmakers such as Carlos Reygadas, Thomas Arslan, Wim Wenders and Amat Escalante.

ROHFILM FACTORY

Rohfilm Factory was founded in 2016 by Karsten Stöter as a boutique production entity for the development and production of international co-productions. We aim for quality in storytelling and emotional depth. We try to adapt to the vibrant changes of the media market, while constantly improving the visibility of our films. No matter for which platform we produce we seek for the most difficult to reach: art in film. The company has offices in Leipzig and Berlin.

Rohfilm was founded in 2005 by Karsten Stöter and Benny Drechsel and has successfully produced 25 films until 2016, among others [Lore](#) by Cate Shortland, [Lunchbox](#) by Ritesh Batra and [The Young Karl Marx](#) by Raoul Peck. Since spring 2016 both founders produce films in separate companies – Rohfilm Factory and Rohfilm Productions.

ZENTROPA SWEDEN

Zentropa Sweden was established in Sweden in 2009 with Madeleine Ekman as CEO and producer. 2014 saw the employment of an additional producer Lizette Jonjic (previously: Migma Film). The company's objective is to produce drama for cinema and TV in Sweden as well as to co-produce Nordic and international projects. The company's operations are based in Trollhättan and Gothenburg. Previous Zentropa Sweden has been involved as investor and/or co-producer in projects like: [The Hunt](#), [In a Better World](#) and [The King's Choice](#), among others and produced films like [The Here After](#).

BETA CINEMA

World sales and co-financing company Beta Cinema has established itself as a boutique-operation for quality feature films that combine commercial viability with artistic integrity. Prime examples are Oscar winners and worldwide B.O. hits like [The Lives Of Others](#), [Il Divo](#) and [Downfall](#).

Recent highlights include the Emma Watson, Daniel Brühl thriller [Colonia](#), Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner [Sand Storm](#) and 2017 Oscars contender [The King's Choice](#). The slate of upcoming titles is spearheaded by [The Happy Prince](#), written and directed by Rupert Everett with Rupert Everett, Colin Firth and Emily Watson, as well as [Werk Ohne Autor](#), the new film by Oscar-winner Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck.

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Cinegate

Celluloid Tracks

Cinema Defacto

WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY HVA VIL FOLK SI

Norway/Germany/Sweden 2017
106 Minutes, Norwegian & Urdu
Colour/Scope

Cast:

Nisha - Maria Mozhdah
Mirza - Adil Hussain
Amir - Rohit Saraf
Mother - Ekavali Khanna
Asif - Ali Arfan
Aunt - Sheeba Chaddha
Uncle - Lalit Parimoo
Salima - Jannat Zubair Rehmani
Daniel - Isak Lie Harr
Emily - Nokokure Dahl

Crew:

Director and screenwriter: Iram Haq
Producer: Maria Ekerhovd
Co-producers: Karsten Stöter, Lizette Jonjic, Madeleine Ekman
Cinematographer: Nadim Carlsen
Editors: Janus Billeskov Jansen, Anne Østerud
Production Designers: Ann Kristin Talleraas, Vintee Bansal
Sound: Tormod Ringnes
Music: Martin Pedersen, Lorenz Dangel

CONTACT

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