

## Document Citation

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| Title         | <b>Salaam cinema</b>                     |
| Author(s)     | Dimitri Eipides                          |
| Source        | <i>London Film Festival</i>              |
| Date          | 1995 Nov 02                              |
| Type          | program note                             |
| Language      | English                                  |
| Pagination    | 133                                      |
| No. of Pages  | 1  |
| Subjects      | Makhmalbaf, Mohsen (1957), Teheran, Iran |
| Film Subjects | Salaam cinema, Makhmalbaf, Mohsen, 1995  |

LONDON FR 2/11-19/95 PG. 133

## Salaam Cinema



### IRAN 1995

**S**alaam Cinema was made as a birthday gift for cinema on its centenary. Director Mohsen Makhmalbaf places an advertisement in Tehran, saying that he wants 100 actors and actresses for a new film, and will be holding auditions. One thousand application forms are printed but 5 000 people turn up at the beginning of the film. A riot results, and people are trampled on. The auditions themselves are much more orderly, making up the rest of the film. Some are amusing, some sad, and some a surreal mix of the two. Nearly everyone, it seems, wants to be a movie star (although one woman says she merely wants to go to the Cannes Film Festival for free). Some think they look like Paul Newman or Marilyn Monroe, although none actually do. People sing, or dance, or show off altogether stranger talents. Most of the film – but not all – is unscripted, and Makhmalbaf plays with perceptions of the cinema in relation to truth. The director seems a dictator – not always gentle, not always fair – and so Makhmalbaf encourages a discussion of the director's role in filmmaking. As the picture progresses, something else occurs: we begin to hear the voices of the Iranian people. Intellectuals, students, men, boys, even women – a group it's truly unusual to hear from in Iranian film – talk about their lives and reflect on themselves. Without exception, the candidates also talk about the important place of the cinema in everyday life. As with most Iranian films, *Salaam Cinema* blurs the line between illusion and documentary, passing back and forth between fact and fiction. Above all, the film is charming, sly and full of wit. – *Dimitri Eipides, 1995 Toronto Film Festival notes*

◆ **MOHSEN MAKHMALBAF** Born 1952, Tehran, Iran. Makhmalbaf was a member of a militant political group acting against the Shah's regime and was jailed in 1974. With the Islamic Revolution in 1979, he was released along with other political prisoners. He soon turned to writing and, between 1980 and 1981, he published several short stories and a novel. In 1981 he founded the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Thought and Arts, along with many other Moslem artists. Since then he has been busily writing short stories, novels, plays and film scripts. He directed his first feature film, *Nassouh's Repentance* in 1982. He has written the screenplays for all his own films, plus two by other directors (*The Explanation*, 1981 and *The Telephone Calls*, 1986). He was the subject of Abbas Kiarostami's *Close Up* (1990), in which an unemployed film buff passes himself off as Makhmalbaf and pretends to be making a film. Makhmalbaf has been one of the most active artists of the post-revolutionary era and has received some 15 awards from international film festivals. His *Once Upon a Time, Cinema* won awards at the 1992 Karlovy Vary Film Festival, was Best Film at the 1992 Taormina Film Festival and was shown in the 1992 London Film Festival.



#### ◆ CREDITS

Dir/scr/ed: Mohsen Makhmalbaf. Exec. prod: A Lavasani. Prod: Abbas Randjbar. Phot. (colour): Mahmoud Kalari. Original score: Shahdad Rohani. Sd: Nezam Kiyai. rt: 75 mins. Lang: Farsi.

Prod. co: Green Film House, 98 Mirdamad Boulevard, PO Box 19395/4866, Tehran, Iran. Tel: (21) 2225960. Fax: (21) 2270970. Export agent: Mamad Haghghat, 16 Boulevard Saint Marcel, 75005 Paris, France. Tel/Fax: (1) 43 31 91 06.

#### ◆ CAST

Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Azadeh Zanganeh, Maryam Keihan, Feizollah Gheshlaghi, Shaghayegh Judat, MH Mokhtarian (Themselves).

#### ◆ FILMOGRAPHY

1982 *Tabeh – Nassouh* (*Nassouh's Repentance*)  
 1983 *Do Chashme Bisou* (*Two Sightless Eyes*)  
 1984 *Ste'azeh* (*Fleeing from Evil to God*)  
 1985 *Bayecot* (*Boycott*)  
 1987 *Dastforoush* (*The Peddler*)  
 1989 *Bicycleran* (*The Cyclist*)  
*Arousi-ye Khouban* (*Marriage of the*

*Blessed/Marriage of the Chosen*)  
 1990 *Nobat-e Asheghi* (*Time of Love*)  
 1991 *Shahha-ye Zayandeh Roud* (*Night of Zayandeh Roud*)  
 1992 *Nassereddin Shah Actor-e Cinema* (*Once Upon a Time, Cinema*)  
 1993 *Honarpushen* (*The Actor*)  
*Gozideh Tasvir dar Doran-e Ghajar* (*A Selection of Images in Ghajar Dynasty*) (docu)  
*Sang va shisheh* (*Stone and Glass*) (docu)  
*Ezatollah Entezami* (docu)  
 1995 *Salaam Cinema* (docu)