

## Document Citation

Title	<b>A moment of innocence</b>
Author(s)	Dimitri Eipides
Source	<i>Toronto International Film Festival</i>
Date	1996
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	178
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	Makhmalbaf, Mohsen (1957), Teheran, Iran
Film Subjects	Nun va goldun (A moment of innocence), Makhmalbaf, Mohsen, 1996





## A Moment of Innocence

**Mohsen Makhmalbaf**

IRAN/FRANCE, 1996

78 minutes ■ Colour/35mm

Production Company: **Pakhshiran/MK2 Productions**

Executive Producer: **Mohamed Azin**

Producer: **Abolfazi Alaqeband**

Screenplay: **Mohsen Makhmalbaf**

Cinematographer: **Mahmoud Kalari**

Editor: **Mohsen Makhmalbaf**

Production Designer: **Reza Alaqeband**

Sound: **Nézamaldin Kiai**

Music: **Nadjid Etezami**

Principal Cast: **Ali Bakhshi, Mir Hadi**

**Tayebi, Ammar Dehghan, Elham**

**Mohammad Amini, Moharram**

**Zeinalzadeh**

Print Source/Foreign Sales Agent:

**MK2 Diffusion, 55 rue Traversière,**

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**Tel: (33-1) 4467-3000.**

**Fax: (33-1) 4341-3230.**

In last year's *Salaam Cinema*, Mohsen Makhmalbaf mixed fiction and reality to tell the stories of ordinary Iranians who want to become movie stars. *A Moment of Innocence* is a sequel of sorts, but this time Makhmalbaf has turned his unflinching gaze on himself.

In the seventies, Makhmalbaf was involved in a militant campaign against the Shah; his activities were cut short in 1974, however, when he stabbed a policeman in a fight. In response, the policeman, a man named Nasorah, shot and arrested him, and Makhmalbaf was jailed until the Islamic Revolution in 1979. In the present day, memories of this incident come back to him when a casting call yields none other than Nasorah himself.

Not sure what awaits him, Makhmalbaf drives to the police station with his assistant, Zinal. When they get there, the chief assumes he's come to reopen the 22-year-old case, and asks him to forget the whole matter. But that's not what Makhmalbaf wants – he means to exorcise the demons of his past by shooting a film about the incident. Nasorah, however, proves hostile to the idea – partly because of the injury Makhmalbaf inflicted upon him long ago, and partly because he was refused an audition for *Salaam Cinema*.

In the end, though, he goes along with the idea. Makhmalbaf casts Djodat, the young woman from *Salaam Cinema* who wanted to go to Cannes, as a friend who was by his side during the scuffle, and offers Nasorah

the chance to personally direct the actor playing the policeman in the film. It isn't long, though, before the two men's recollections of the incident come into conflict.

Layering reality with cinematic trickery, Makhmalbaf examines how film and memory shape our perceptions. Continuing in the sly, witty tradition of *Salaam Cinema*, *A Moment of Innocence* surprises again and again, and nothing – not even the director's own memories – can be taken for granted.

■ **Dimitri Elpidis**

**Mohsen Makhmalbaf** was born in 1957 in Tehran, Iran. He left school to support his family at 15, and soon joined an anti-Shah militant group. He was arrested for an attack on a police station when he was 17, and wasn't freed from prison until the Islamic Revolution in 1979. He has written several novels and short stories, and helped found the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Thought and Arts in 1981. He directed his first feature, *Nassoooh's Repentance*, in 1982, having never seen a film before. Films include: *Nassoooh's Repentance* (82), *Two Sightless Eyes* (83), *Boycott* (84), *The Peddler* (86), *The Cyclist* (88), *Marriage of the Blessed* (89), *Time of Love* (90), *Nights on Zayandeh Rud* (90), *Once Upon a Time, Cinema* (91), *Salaam Cinema* (95), *Gabbeh* (96) and *A Moment of Innocence* (96).

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