

PRESSBOOK

NO LAND'S *** SONG

a film by AYAT NAJAFI



ORIGINAL TITLE

NO LAND'S SONG

GENRE

Feature documentary

TOPICS

Music, Women's Rights

FORMAT

HD – 16/9

DURATION

91 min

WRITER/ DIRECTOR

Ayat Najafi

PRODUCERS

Germany

Torero Film : Rouven Rech & Teresa Renn

HANFGARN & UFER : Gunter Hanfgarn

France

CHAZ Productions : Anne Grange

INTERNATIONAL SALES

ILLUMINA Films : Robin Brinster

WITH THE SUPPORT OF

Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg,

MFG Filmförderung Baden-Württemberg,

Kuratorium junger deutscher Film

Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée

SACEM

Institut Français – Ministère des Affaires Étrangères

TV5 Monde

WORLD PREMIERE

Montréal World Film Festival – August 2014



SYNOPSIS *NO LAND'S SONG*

In Iran, since the revolution of 1979, women are no longer allowed to sing in public as soloists - at least in front of men.

Defying censorship and taboos, the young composer Sara Najafi is determined to organize an official concert for solo female singers. In order to support their fight, Sara and the Iranian singers, Parvin Namazi and Sayeh Sodeyfi, invite three female singers from Paris, Elise Caron, Jeanne Cherhal and Emel Mathlouthi, to join them in Tehran and collaborate on their musical project, re-opening a musical bridge between France and Iran.

But are they going to succeed and finally be gathered in Tehran, sing freely, side-by-side, in front of a mixed audience and without restrictions, and to open a door towards a new freedom of female voice in Iran?



AWARDS / FESTIVALS

- Audience Award best documentary - Montreal World Film Festival
- Best documentary director – NOOR Iranian Film Festival, Los Angeles
- Youth Jury Award - DOK Leipzig
- DocuFICX best documentary - Gijón International Film Festival
- Audience Award – Middle East Now Festival
- Special Mention from the Jury of the Fleury-Mérogis prison - International Film Festival of Human Rights in Paris
- Special Mention from EXBERLINER Prize – Achtung Berlin
- Mention spéciale du Jury DocFilmMusic - Kraków Film Festival
- Nestor Almendros Price - Human Rights Watch Filmfestival
- Peace Film Award – Unabhängiges Filmfest, Osnabrück
- Audience Award – Verzio International Human Rights Film Festival
- Best Longer Film Award – International Folk Music Film Festival, Kathmandu
- Best Film of Women`s Rights - Bir duino International Documentary Film
- Selection of the Europäischen Filmfestival for Best Documentary 2015
- Big Award @ Festival2Valenciennes
- Critic's Prize @ Festival2Valenciennes
- Prix du public @ Festival de Cinéma des Cinq Continents
- Best documentary film Award @ Cinema Del Reale, Italy
- Long-listed for the German Film Awards / Lola 2017



Other festivals (selection)

- Reel Indie Film Festival, Toronto, Canada (Oct. 2014)
- Traces de Vies – Festival of Documentary Film, Clermont-Ferrand, France (Nov. 2014)
- Mar del Plata International Film Festival, Argentina (Nov. 2014)
- Göteborg International Film Festival, Sweden (Jan./Feb. 2015)
- One World International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival Prague, Czech Republic (March 2015)
- FIFDH - Paris Human Right International Film Festival (March 2015)
- Festival international du film d'Aubagne, France (March 2015)
- Humant Rights Watch Film Festival, London, UK (March 2015)
- Festival Itinérances d'Alès France (March 2015)
- Panorama des cinémas du Maghreb et du Moyen-Orient, Saint Denis, Paris, Montpellier, Lyon (March 2015)
- Dokumentarfilmwoche Hamburg, Germany (April 2015)
- Istanbul Film Festival, Turkey (April 2015)
- Crossing Europe Filmfestival, Linz, Austria (April 2015)
- Ankara Uluslararası Film Festival, Ankara, Turkey (May 2015)
- Kino 2015 – Amlman Filmleri Türkiye'de, Izmir, Turkey (May 2015)
- Cannes Cinephiles Sektion « Visions Sociales, Cannes, France (May 2015)
- Visions sociales – CCAS, Cannes, France (May 2015)
- Festival du film de Cabourg, France (June 2015)
- Middle East Now Festival, Florenz (June 2015)
- Human Rights Watch Film Festival - New York, USA (June 2015)
- Festival Documentarist, Istanbul, Turkey (June 2015)
- Festival Cinéma(s) d'Iran – Paris, France (June 2015)
- Middle East Summer Nights, Firenze, Italy (June 2015)
- Festival Images et palabres – Tailhac, France (July 2015)
- Festival de Lama - Lama, France (Aug. 2015)
- Doc Lounge – Stockholm, Sweden (Aug. 2015)
- Five Lakes Festival – Bavaria, Germany (Aug. 2015)
- Film and Art Festival Two Riversides – Kazimierz Dolny, Poland (Aug. 2015)
- Festival de Gindou – France (Aug. 2015)
- Iranian Film Festival - Munich, Germany (Sept. 2015)
- MICGénero Festival – Mexico City, Mexico (Sept. 2015)
- FIWOM – Film Festival for Women's Rights – Seoul, South Korea (Sept. 2015)
- PATRZE NA: Islam Film Festival – Poland (Sept./Oct. 2015)
- Vancouver International Film Festival – Vancouver, Canada (Sept./Oct. 2015)
- Festival Ciné32 - Indépendance(s) et création – Auch, France (Oct. 2015)
- Festival de Saint-Paul-3-Châteaux, France (Oct. 2015)
- Films Femmes Méditerranée - Marseille, France (Oct. 2015)
- FIFDH de Guadeloupe, France (Oct. 2015)
- Festival Haizebegi, les Mondes de la Musique – Bayonne, France (Oct. 2015)
- Antenna Documentary Film Festival – Sydney, Australia (Oct. 2015)
- Traces de Vies – Festival of Documentary Film, Clermont-Ferrand, France (Oct. 2015)
- Tofifest – Torun, Poland (Oct. 2015)
- Jeevika, 12th Asia Livelihood Documentary Film Festival – New Delhi, India (Nov. 2015)
- Festival Regards de Femmes – Pont Saint-Esprit, France (Nov. 2015)
- Northwest Film Center – Portland Art Museum – Portland, USA (Nov. 2015)
- Kyivmusicfilm – Kiev, Ukraine (Nov. 2015)
- Festival du film Franco-Arabe – Romainville, France (Nov. 2015)
- Festival Cinéma & Musiques – Agen, France (Nov. 2015)
- FIFDH Festival International du Film des Droits de l'Homme – Strasbourg, France (Nov. 2015)
- Human Rights Watch Film Festival – Nairobi, Kenya (Nov. 2015)
- Offenbach International – Offenbach, Germany (Nov. 2015)
- Festival Musiques en Docs - Mouans-Sartoux, France (Nov. 2015)
- Festival Resonances – Bobigny, France (Nov. 2015)
- Mois du Film Documentaire – Loudeac, France (Nov. 2015)
- Filmfest Frauenwelten – Tübingen, Germany (Nov. 2015)

- International Documentary Film Festival One World – Bratislava, Slovakia (Nov. 2015)
- Forum des Images – Paris, France (Dec. 2015)
- Festival Signes de Nuit – Paris, France (Dec. 2015)
- Festival Nuits d'Orient – Chenove, France (Dec. 2015)
- Festival Toiles sur Toile – Clichy-Sous-Bois, France (Dec. 2015)
- Festival Cinéma(s) d'Iran Aubervilliers, France (Dec. 2015)
- Festival International du Film des Droits de l'Homme de Gironde, France (Jan. 2016)
- Berliner Philharmonie – Berlin, Germany (Jan. 2016)
- Festival of Iranian Films – Prague, Czech Republic (Jan. 2016)
- Salt Spring Film Festival – Salt Spring Island BC, Canada (March 2016)
- EPOS Festival Tel Aviv – Israel (March 2016)
- Asian Film Festival - San Fransisco, USA (CAAM) (March 2016)
- ACT Human Rights FF – Fort Collins Colorade, USA (April 2016)
- FRAGMENTS - facing human rights – Graz, Austria (April 2016)
- Chicago International Movies & Music Festival (CIMMfest) – Chicago, USA (April 2016)
- Mediterrane festival - Ashdot, Israel (June 2016)
- Days of Cinema 2016 Filmlab Palistine – Ramallah, Palestine (Oct. 2016)
- Mostra Internacional de Cine Sao Paulo Film Festival – Sao Paolo, Brasil (Oct. 2016)
- Festival international Signes de Nuit - Lissabon, Portugal (Oct. 2016)
- Beirut International Film Festival – Beirut, (Oct. 2016)
- Festival International du Cinéma d'Auteur de Rabat - Rabat, Morocco (Oct. 2016)



PRESS COMMENTS

- The Guardian: An "audacious" film and enterprise. Unfortunately, the respite from official oppression proved temporary — hard liners banned performances by females even as backing singers.
<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/mar/16/no-lands-songs-sara-najafi-iran-women-concert>
- Hollywood Reporter: Much more than a 'let's do a show' movie, the reviewer considers it to be enthralling, riveting and empowering, even though its end is not suspenseful. The proffered religious justification for the ban is that female solo singing may be sexually arousing to male audience members, and is akin to putting too many ingredients into the soup. "Ayat Najafi's documentary is about the fight for a woman's right to sing in Iran."
<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/no-lands-song-film-review-809544>
- Middle East Monitor: Facing endless barriers, the group struggles to its defiant and triumphant conclusion. "Inspired by the memories of ballsy female Iranian singer Qamar-ol-Moluk Vaziri who, in 1924, became the first female to perform without a hijab in front of men, they remain optimistic. ... In the concert she dedicates her solo to the Iranian youth from the Tunisian youth. Instead of a celebration of the female voice, it seems to have become a much more obvious act of rebellion" which conveys their emotion.
<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20150320-no-lands-song-the-women-whose-voice-will-not-be-silenced/>
- The New York Times: Clearly showing courage in film making and thus deserving the Human Rights Watch International Nestor Almendros award, it is "candid in its views about the Iranian government's attitudes toward women, it sears its protagonist's story into the hearts of viewers with a narrative of artistic resistance, humor, friendship, and, ultimately, triumph in a country notorious for denying women's rights."
<http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2015/06/22/iranian-musician-fights-for-womens-rights-to-perform-in-public/>
- Variety: The film is a "gripping documentary" and "a finely tooled, multi-layered [film]." This "gripping chronicle of her efforts covers a nearly three-year period and is as full of ups and downs as a roller coaster, and bursting with beautiful music. The inspiring, enlightening, audience-friendly pic" should receive commercial as well as cultural success.
<http://variety.com/2015/film/festivals/no-lands-song-review-1201615085/>

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

My sister Sara makes music since the age of 4. Watching her go through the challenges of being a female musician in Iran, and the first woman to get a diploma of composition in Iran, has led me to an awareness of the difficulties facing Iranian women in music in my country today.

In this film, I want to shed light on the problems faced by a new generation of Iranian musicians. Sara's love of music is the most important element in her everyday life. The concert that she wants to organize for and with her friends, is a group effort to confront ourselves with a dream which could finally become reality.

The role of music in all social and political developments in Iran during the 20th century has been crucial. Music represents and gives voice to the desire of each period in Iran's history. Even though so many female singers have left Iran since the revolution in 1979, many of them still live and work in Iran. The ironic fact that many more young girls attend the music schools than boys is very surprising for me. Why are they learning something considered illegal for them?

The film follows step by step the process of organizing a concert in Tehran by questioning from within the system of censorship in Iran. My film highlights the limits of freedom in my native country by interrogating them head on - in front of the camera. In terms of strategy, we have operated during this long shooting, opposing Sara's determination and "false naivety" to the prohibitions that were opposed to us. We have adopted a "politically correct" posture. This allowed us to film or (secretly) record all stages of Sara's authorization requests and meetings with departmental officials and religious authorities, and to highlight the logic of the censorship operated by the Iranian regime. As the film follows Sara's fight to stage the concert, the film brings the interior, the "logic" of Iranian law to light.

The musical layer of the film is centered on the revolutionary song "Bird of Dawn" (Morq-e Sahar) which singers will try to give a new voice to. This film is also a tribute Qamar, this legendary female singer who, in the '20s, was able to break taboos in Iranian society and free the female voice, this very same fight Sara and her friends have to lead again now. In the 1920s, Qamar had managed to free the voice of women. She passed it from inside to outside, from the private domain where it was confined, to the public world.

Her persistence inspired us the desire to challenge our turn to the new government of Iran.

The film focuses on the central character of Sara. The French characters serve as a sort of poignant counterpoint: Between culture shock and artistic solidarity, we experience the voyage to Tehran in the eyes of Elise Caron, Jeanne Cherhal and Emel Mathlouthi, accompanied by three male musicians, who become more and more aware of the reality of female singers as they finally join Sara and participate actively in her fight with Iranian singers Parvin Namazi, Sayeh Sodeyfi and the other Iranian musicians.

Here, music acts as the core of female strength fighting with the repression. Singing as the strongest expression of the body is the main enemy of the Islamic republic of Iran.

At the end of our adventure, a door opened for women's voices, the time of an evening, September 19, 2013, in the City Opera of Tehran: but what about tomorrow?

Ayat Najafi

CREDITS

WITH

Sara Najafi, Parvin Namazi, Sayeh Sodeyfi, Élise Caron, Jeanne Cherhal, Emel Mathlouthi and the musicians Edward Perraud (drums), Maryam Tajhdeh (tar), Ali Rahimi (Tombak), Sébastien Hoog (guitar), Imed Alibi (percussions), Ali Kazemian (voice), Chakad Fesharaki (Kamancheh)

CREW

WRITER/ DIRECTOR

Ayat Najafi

CAMERA

Koohyar Kalari, Sarah Blum

SOUND

Sasan Nakhai, Dana Farzanehpour, Julien Brossier

EDITING

Julia Wiedwald, Schokofeh Kamiz

SOUND DESIGN

Oliver Stahn

ORIGINAL MUSIC

Sara Najafi, Sébastien Hoog, Edward Perraud

PRE-EXISTING MUSIC

Hossein Alizadeh, Élise Caron, Emel Mathlouthi

PRODUCERS

GERMANY

Gunter Hanfgarn, Rouven Rech, Teresa Renn

Patrick Merkle

FRANCE

Elisabeth Perrez, Alexis Genauzeau

Anne Grange



PROTAGONISTS



Composer and pianist **SARA NAJAFI**, sister of the director Ayat Najafi, was born in 1980 in Tehran. We will follow her footsteps during the adventure of NO LAND'S SONG, as she's the main initiator of the concert planned to take place in Tehran. She will be our guide when we meet the people of today's Iran. Sara Najafi started playing piano at the age of four. At the age 12, she entered the Music Conservatory of Tehran, then in 1998 she joined the University of Art and Architecture where she has taught since 2003. She is the first woman to receive a diploma in composition in Iran. She also composed the music for several short films ("Opposite", "A striped dream", "Somewhere on the Land", ...) and theatre plays ("The Seagull," "The Night of Companionship"). She wrote the soundtrack of the feature film "Zagros", premiered at the International Fajr Film Festival in Tehran in 2006. In 2008, she participated in the Berlinale Talent Campus. She teaches piano and the Orff method of theory and harmony since 1998.



PARVIN NAMAZI is one of the great traditional Persian voices of the present age. Born in 1953 in Iran, she began her career at the age of nine as a solo singer for a children's program on Iranian television. She left Iran in 1972 to start her education in Germany. Her career took off in the 1980s when she joined the ensemble "Darvish" in Berlin, where she worked with Hossein Alizadeh, a master of traditional Iranian music, and Mohammad-Reza Lotfi. After 20 years of exile, Parvin returned to Iran in the 1990s to study the traditional folk music of Kurdistan. Her first album "Kurdana" was banned from publication in Iran.

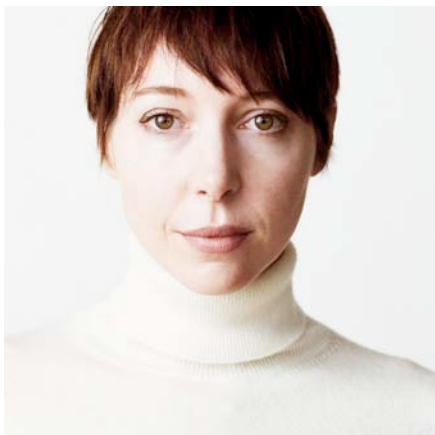


Mezzo-soprano **SAYEH SODEYFI**, born 1979 in Tehran, is studying at Azad University, where she studied Setar. In Armenia at the Yerevan Komitas State Musical conservatory she obtained a Master in classical music. She followed the teaching of Jolita Nazarian, Aleeda Harotonian, Kambiz Roshanravan Hussein Alizadeh, Mohammadreza Darvishi and Masood Shoari. Since then, she has performed in numerous recitals and festivals in Iran and elsewhere. She currently teaches at the University Karbordi Elmi, the Conservatory of Tehran and various other institutes. She is also a member of the Educational Association of Austrian Embassy and an active composer.



Songwriter **ÉLISE CARON** is a contemporary singer, equally at home in improvisation and musicals. Until 1990, she gave recitals ranging from Brecht, Sophocles, Shakespeare through Monteverdi, Faure, Debussy, Schoenberg. During this period she met contemporary composers such as Bruno Gillet, Luc Ferrari, Michel Musseau, Jacques Rebotier Frederick Lagnau Albert Marcoeur who also wrote for her. In 1995 she began writing her own songs with the close collaboration of pianist and composer Denis Chouillet, including Songs for little ears in 2000 and Eurydice in 2002. She worked with

John Greaves, Yves Robert, Jean-Rémy Guédon Lucas Gillet, Eric Watson, Edward Perraud, ... She also reappeared in cinema in 2008, after seeing her in the lead role of Molotov Cocktail by Diane Kurys in 1979, or heard as a voice lining Virginie Ledoyen in Jeanne and the Perfect Boy in 1998. In 2010 she won the Victoire award as the best jazz singer of the year. In 2014 and 2015 she released two new albums: »Emler: Présences d'esprits« with Andy Emler and »Orchestrales«. <http://www.facebook.com/elise.caron.988>



JEANNE CHERHAL spent her childhood in the countryside of Nantes before she decided to move to Paris, dreaming of becoming a ballet dancer. Her career really started with the release of her studio album Twelve times a year, where she finally developed her style and imagination. In March 2005, she was awarded the Victoires de la Musique as the best newcomer of the year. In the course of 2006, the singer surprised with her beautiful album Offering Water, in which the artist indulges more ambition and depth. In March 2010, Jeanne Cherral changed the record label and released the album Charade chez Barclay. In 2014, she released a new album,

»History de J.« marked by her encounter with the world of Véronique Sanson - <http://www.jeannecherhal.fr>



EMEL MATHLOUTHI, dedicated Tunisian singer and composer, impressed in the first edition of the Prix RMC Middle East in 2006 where she was a finalist. With her outstanding vocal qualities, her mesmerizing style, sometimes lyrical, she managed to paint a world in a most singular and unusual way, her inspiration is ranging from the saline water of her roots up to electro-eclectic sounds. The combination of different musical universes with its many sources of inspiration led to the birth of an original repertoire ranging from Arabic music, electro and psychedelic rock. Following the success of her

first album, »Kelmti Horra«, her upcoming new album, »Ensen«, will be released in february 2017, where she demonstrates again an amazing musical variety.<http://emelmathlouthi.com>

ABOUT THE FILM DIRECTOR



Born in Tehran in 1976 and currently living between Berlin and Iran, Ayat Najafi first studied scenography. In 1995, he set up a company for student theater at the University of Tehran, participating in several workshops led by some masters of Iranian theater. He worked on several theatrical productions as director, writer, actor and designer.

Since 2000, Ayat Najafi developed his directorial work. In 2003, he founded Arta Atelier, focusing on an interdisciplinary and multimedia approach to theater, and made short experimental and documentary films. In 2005, he participated in the Berlinale Talent Campus with his short film *Move It* (2004). As a student at the University of Konstanz (2008-2009), he presented his play *Stories of women with mustaches and men in skirts. Lady Tehran*, his second theatrical production in Germany with an international team, premiered in Berlin in 2009, followed by *Pakistan [Does not] exist*. In 2008 he made his first feature documentary, *Football Under Cover*.

FILMOGRAPHY

Football Under Cover, feature documentary, 2008, co-director David Assmann, 86 min (cinema) and 52 min (TV), HD, Production : Flying Moon

- Prix Europa Iris 2009
- Teddy award for Best Documentary – International Film Festival Berlin 2008
- Teddy audience award - International Film Festival Berlin 2008
- Nominated for First Steps Award 2008
- Freedom Award - Outfest 2008, L.A., USA
- Audience Award - Pink Apple, 2008

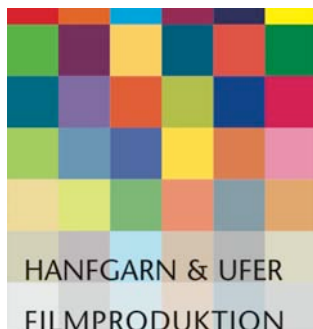


PRODUCERS

GERMANY



Torero Film is a German production company focused on documentary films. Founded in Berlin in 2005 by Rouven Rech and Teresa Renn, a second office was opened in Konstanz. Patrick Merkle, Producer of Ayat Najafi's documentary *Football Under Cover*, is part of the team. <http://www.torerofilm.de>



HANFGARN & UFER with offices in Berlin and Hamburg was founded by Gunter Hanfgarn and Andrea Ufer in 1991. The company produces features and documentary films with international broadcasters, coproduction partners and film funds worldwide. Most of the prize-winning films were distributed worldwide. <http://www.HU-film.de>

FRANCE



CHAZ Productions, established in 1994, is led by Elisabeth Perez and Alexis Genauzeau since 1999. CHAZ produced short films by Solveig Anspach, Christine Dory, Brigitte Sy, Rachida Krim, Sandrine Veysset, Mréjen Karin Albou Valerie Mitteaux, Beryl Peillard, ... Since 2013, two feature films were launched: *Max and Lenny* by Fred Nicolas and *La belle saison* by Catherine Corsini. <http://www.chazproductions.fr>

CONTACT

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<http://www.nolandssong.com>
<http://www.facebook.com/nolandssong>
<http://twitter.com/TehranAtNight>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No_Land%27s_Song

2014
MONTREAL WORLD
FILM FESTIVAL
PUBLIC AWARD FOR BEST
DOCUMENTARY FILM

2015 INTERNATIONAL
DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL BIR QUINO
- KYRGYZSTAN GRAND PRIX
BEST DOCUMENTARY
DIRECTOR

2014
DOK LEIPZIG
PREIS DER
JUGENDJURY

2014, 52ND
GLJÓN INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
PREMIO DOCUFIX

2015 UNABHÄNGIGES
FILMFEST - OSNABRÜCK
GERMANY
FRIEDENSFILMPREIS

2015
THE MIDDLE EAST NOW
FESTIVAL, FLORENCE
THE AUDIENCE AWARD

2015
ACHTUNG BERLIN NEW
BERLIN FILM AWARD
LOBENDE ERWÄHNUNG
EXBERLINER JURY

2015
55TH KRAKOW FILM
FESTIVAL
SPECIAL JURY MENTION
DOCFILMUSIC COMPETITION

2015 HUMAN
RIGHTS WATCH FILM
FESTIVAL, NEW YORK
NESTOR ALMENDROS AWARD
FOR COURAGE IN FILM MAKING

*Ein einziges Konzert
kann eine Revolution bedeuten*

NO LAND'S *** SONG

TORERO FILM, HANFGARN & UFER, CHAZ PRODUCTIONS ON TOUR WITH AYAT NAJAFI (CEREMONY DIRECTOR) MEDIENBOARD BERLIN-BRANDENBURG, MFG FILMFÖRDERUNG BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG, KURATORIUM JUNGER DEUTSCHER FILM, CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINEMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE (IN ASSOCIATION WITH) AL JAZEERA & TV 5 MONDE WITH SARA NAJAFI, PARVIN NAMAZI, ELISE CARON, JEANNE CHERHAL, SAYEH SODEYFI, EMEL MATHLOUTHI, MARYAM TAZHDEH, EDWARD PERRAUD, SEBASTIEN HOOG, ALI RAHIMI, ALI KAZEMIAN, IMED ALIBI, CHAKAD FESHARAKI (EDITORS) KOOHYAR KALARI & SARAH BLUM (CUTTING) SASAN NAKHAI, DANA FARZANEHPPOUR, JULIEN BROSSIER (SCRIPT) JULIA WIEDWALD & SCHOKOFEH KAMIZ (MUSIC) OLIVER STAHN (RESEARCH) SADAF AHMADI, MAX CHRAMBACH, ARASH NAIMIAN (POST-PRODUCTION) ANDREA UFER (PRODUCTION) PATRICK MERKLE (PRODUCTION) GUNTER HANFGARN, ANNE GRANGE, ROUVEN RECH, TERESA RENN

torero film



CHAZ
PRODUCTIONS

medienboard
Berlin-Brandenburg

