



SEVEN SPRINGS PICTURES and TAAT FILMS present



Divine Comedy

A Film by Ali Asgari

Starring Bahram Ark, Sadaf Asgari and Bahman Ark

Iran, Turkey, Italy, France, Germany – 2025 – 96min

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Synopsis

Bahram is a 40-year-old filmmaker who's spent his entire career making films in Turkish-Azeri, none of which have ever been screened in Iran. His latest work, once again denied permission by the Ministry of culture, pushes him to the edge of defiance. With his sharp-tongued, Vespa-riding producer Sadaf by his side, he embarks on an underground mission to showcase his film to an Iranian audience, dodging government censors, absurd bureaucracy, and his own self-doubts.



Director's Statement

Divine Comedy is a film deeply rooted in realism, but one that uses cinematic form to heighten the absurdity of the world it portrays. The film is designed to mirror the static, suffocating Iranian bureaucracy the protagonist is trapped within, as a 40-year-old director whose entire filmography has been denied screening permission by the Ministry of culture.

The audience is forced to sit with the characters, to experience the slow grind of bureaucracy and censorship as it happens. The static compositions reflect the immobility of the system itself—one that refuses to change, that traps its citizens in a cycle of waiting, pleading, and negotiating.

The film's casting further blurs the line between fiction and reality. Bahram and Bahman Ark, real-life filmmakers who have themselves faced government censorship and systemic obstruction, play fictionalized versions of themselves. Their presence in the film is not just a casting choice—it is a meta-textual statement on the very themes of the story. They are not performing resistance; they are enacting their lived experience. Similarly, Sadaf Asgari, who plays a version of herself, brings an authenticity that is impossible to fabricate. As an actress banned from working in Iran after attending Cannes for *Terrestrial Verses*, her presence alone carries a subversive weight.

The film's humor arises not from overt comedy but from the absurdity of oppression itself. The rigid, overcomplicated processes of film censorship and state control become so illogical that they collapse under their own contradictions. The characters, rather than reacting with overt rebellion, often navigate these absurdities with a quiet, knowing wit. Their dialogue is layered with sarcasm, their reactions subtly mocking a system that takes itself too seriously. The humor here is a survival mechanism, a tool for endurance in an environment where outright defiance carries dangerous consequences.

If *Terrestrial Verses* revealed the cracks in the system through irony, *Divine Comedy* magnifies them into fractures. The very act of making this film is an extension of its themes—it is an assertion that truth, even when silenced, persists in the spaces between the frames, in the long pauses, in the laughter that erupts in the most unexpected places. At its core, *Divine Comedy* is a study of resistance—not just through action, but through endurance, observation, and the refusal to disappear. The absurdity of the system is its own undoing, and the film's aesthetic choices reinforce this. In the final moment, as a single dog watches, unblinking, we are reminded of the power of simply bearing witness. The audience may be scattered, the authorities may intervene, but the act of seeing—like cinema itself—endures.

Ali Asgari, 2025

Director's Biography



Ali Asgari is a writer, director, producer and prominent figure in Iranian cinema which films focus on the precarious lives of individuals living on the margins of society in his native country.

Two of his short films, *More Than Two Hours* (2013) and *The Silence* (2016), were nominated for the Short Film Palme d'Or at the Festival de Cannes. His short film *The Baby* was also featured in the short film competition at the Venice Film Festival in 2014.

In 2017, his debut feature film, *Disappearance* premiered in Orizzonti at the Venice International Film Festival and was selected at the Toronto Film Festival in Discovery section. After staging several other short films, he directed his second feature film, *Until Tomorrow*, which premiered at the 2022 Berlinale in Panorama section.

Ali's third feature film, *Terrestrial Verses*, a cross-genre film, premiered at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival in Un Certain Regard and was theatrically released in more than 10 territories across the world. *Terrestrial Verses* has drawn over 100,000 spectators in France and 26,000 in Italy.

His fourth feature film, *Higher than Acidic Clouds*, is a boundary-pushing hybrid film that has been selected for IDFA 2024. Most recently, Ali Asgari was chosen as a jury member for the Orizzonti section of the Venice Film Festival. Ali is also a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

His latest feature film, *Divine Comedy*, will premiere at Venice Film Festival 2025 in Orizzonti section.

Director's Filmography

Feature Films:

2025 Divine Comedy

Iran, Turkey, Italy, France, Germany / 96 minutes / Venice IFF 2025 – Orizzonti Competition

2024 Higher than Acidic Clouds

Iran, Luxembourg / 70 minutes / IDFA 2024, Vision du Reel & Hot Docs 2025

2023 Terrestrial Verses

Iran / 77 minutes / Cannes Film Festival 2023 – Un Certain Regard Nomination, IFFR 2024

2022 Until Tomorrow

Iran, France, Qatar / 86 minutes / Berlinale 2022

2017 Disappearance

Iran, Qatar / 90 minutes / Venice IFF 2017 – Orizzonti Competition, TIFF 2017

Short Films:

2022 About Me

Netherlands / 15 minutes / Premiered at Warsaw IFF & Tallinn Black Nights

2020 Witness

France, Iran / 15 minutes / POFF Shorts, Glasgow FF, Warsaw IFF

2020 Pilgrims

Turkey / 17 minutes / Warsaw IFF & Leeds IFF

2016 The Silence

France, Italy / 15 minutes / Palme d'Or Nominee for Best Short Film

2015 The Pain

France, Iran / 15 minutes / Los Angeles IFF

2014 The Baby

Italy, Iran / 16 minutes / Premiered at Venice IFF

2013 More Than Two Hours

Iran / 15 minutes / Palme d'Or Nominee for Best Short Film

Cast biographies



Bahram Ark | Lead Actor

Bahram Ark is an Iranian filmmaker, screenwriter, and actor, born in 1989 in Tabriz. Along with his twin brother, Bahman Ark, he graduated from the Iranian National Film School and has created several award-winning short and feature films that blend folklore, myth, and the surreal with contemporary social and political realities.

The Ark brothers won the Cinéfondation Second Prize at the 70th Cannes Film Festival in 2017 for their short film *Heyvan (Animal)*. As an actor, Bahram has appeared in several internationally acclaimed films, including *Terrestrial Verses* (Un Certain Regard, Cannes 2023) and *Hit the Road* (Directors' Fortnight, Cannes 2021). Bahram acts in Ali Asgari's most recent film, *Divine Comedy* as lead actor which will have its world premiere at Venice Film Festival.



Sadaf Asgari | Lead Actress

Sadaf Asgari is an acclaimed Iranian actress who made her debut in *Disappearance* (Venice Film Festival, 2017). Renowned for her versatility and authenticity, she has appeared in internationally celebrated films including *Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness* (Berlinale, Sundance 2019), *Until Tomorrow* (Berlinale 2022), and *Terrestrial Verses* (Un Certain Regard, Cannes 2023). Winner of multiple Best Actress awards, including at Sundance and Cabourg, Asgari has built a remarkable career across Iranian and international cinema, establishing herself as one of the most compelling voices of her generation.

Production Company

Seven Springs Pictures

Seven Springs Pictures is a film production and distribution company founded by Milad Khosravi in 2020, based in Tehran and Doha. Specializing in arthouse and documentary cinema, the company has produced a range of acclaimed feature and short films, including *Divine Comedy* (Venice FF 2025), *Cinema Jazireh* (Karlovy Vary IFF 2025), *Higher than Acidic Clouds* (IDFA 2024; Hot Docs, Visions du Réel 2025), *Terrestrial Verses* (Un Certain Regard, Cannes 2023), *Requiem for a Tribe* (Shanghai IFF 2024; True/False Film Fest; Ji.hlava IDFF), *Mrs. Iran's Husband* (Hot Docs 2023), and *The Snow Calls* (IDFA 2020).

With a focus on unique, socially engaged, and thought-provoking works, Seven Springs Pictures seeks to bring fresh perspectives and diverse voices from Iran and the Middle East to international audiences. The company collaborates with filmmakers through long-term partnerships to finance and produce their projects, working with both established directors such as Ali Asgari and Alireza Khatami, and emerging talents including Marjan Khosravi, Parsa Ansari, Gozde Kural, and Sajad Imani.

Cast

Bahram

Sadaf

Bahman

Mrs. Doctor

Haranof

The Prophet

Morteza

Rouzbeh

Mamadali

Bahram Ark

Sadaf Asgari

Bahman Ark

Faezeh Rad

Mohammad Soori

Milad Ashkali

Shahoo Rostami

Hossein Soleimani

Amirreza Ranjbaran

Crew

Director	Ali Asgari
Screenplay	Alireza Khatami Bahram Ark Bahman Ark Ali Asgari
Producers	Milad Khosravi Ali Asgari
Production	Seven Springs Pictures Taat Films
Director of Photography	Amin Jafari
Original Music	Hossein Mirzagholi
Production Designer	Melika Gholami
Costume Designer	Melika Hosseini Melika Gholami
Sound mixer	Abdolreza Heydari
Editor	Ehsan Vaseghi
Special Effects	Tahmineh Azkari
Coproducers	Hasan Köroğlu Lorenzo Cioffi and Giorgio Giampà Avantika Singh Desbouvries Solmaz Azizi and Lasse Scharpen Raha Raz
Coproduction	Kadraj Zoe Films Salt for Sugar Films Studio Zentral
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