

**Memento Production and Asghar Farhadi Production**  
present



**FESTIVAL DE CANNES**  
COMPETITION  
2021 OFFICIAL SELECTION

# A HERO

(GHAHREMAN - قهرمان)

a film by Asghar Farhadi

with Amir Jadidi, Mohsen Tanabandeh, Fereshteh Sadrorafaii

## Synopsis

**Rahim is in prison because of a debt he was unable to repay. During a two-day leave, he tries to convince his creditor to withdraw his complaint against the payment of part of the sum. But things don't go as planned...**

Iran, France – 127 min - Image: 2K 1:2:39 - Sound: 5.1

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## Interview with Asghar Farhadi

### **How did the idea of *A Hero* come to you?**

I had read stories like that in the papers for quite some time. Stories of ordinary people who were put in the spotlight because of something altruistic they did. These stories often had similar characteristics. *A Hero* was not inspired by a specific piece of news, but I had these press stories in mind when I wrote it.

### **Why does the story take place in Shiraz?**

The topic of the film speaks for itself. There are lots of ancient remains in Shiraz, important and glorious traces of the Iranian identity. The main reason I chose this city is because of how specific the story and the characters are. But the side reason is that I also wanted to take distance from the tumult of Tehran.

### **How did you write the film?**

At first, I had a vague idea of the story, thanks to these real events. As years went by, the idea got clearer. I always work in the same way. The stimulus can come from an image, a feeling, a short plot which will develop with time. Sometimes, all of this can just stay in a corner of my mind, without me knowing that this will become a script one day. Time is an important ally. Some of these seeds disappear on their own, others persist, grow, and stay with you as an unfinished process only waiting to be taken care of. At this moment, an idea starts to come to light through scattered notetaking. Then comes the research and the first sketches which tell you what path to follow. Almost every story I wrote developed this way in my mind. I can't remember creating a complete story from scratch with a definite beginning, middle and end.

### **Did you know the complete biography of your characters?**

The scattered notes I talked about earlier consist for the most part of exploring the characters' past. This step, which is always very time-consuming, essentially applies to the main characters. For months, I take notes on different colored sheets about all ideas related to the story I am writing. I have one color for the ideas I am sure I will incorporate to the script, another one for the ideas I am still unsure about. Many of these sheets won't be directly used in the writing stage. They don't provide clear information for the script, but they help me to better understand my characters. During this preparatory stage, many aspects of the characters' past are being built up and leave more or less visible traces in the film.

### **Rahim's character is quite ambiguous. I'm thinking about this smile he always has on his face...**

I feel that the realistic approach of the film demanded such complexity in the characters' personalities. As in real life, people are made of a multiplicity of dimensions and in some circumstances, one of them takes over and becomes more visible. These are "grey" characters: they are not stereotyped, one-sided. As every real person in everyday life, they are contrasted, have antagonistic tendencies and are torn apart when it comes to decision making. Rahim's smile is part of an ensemble of traits which appeared progressively during the months of rehearsal to figure out how to define the acting of the actor who would embody him. It was about giving him this "grey" character quality, which is part of everyday life.

### **How do you proceed to make group scenes, especially in family, so natural?**

This comes largely from the writing. It is an unconscious process. It is when the whole crew and the cast are careful to ensure that every detail of the scene is plausible and authentic and try their hardest to give life to the script. As the characters' behaviors and dialogues were not unrealistic or based on clichés, actors do their best to make sure not to fall into the trap of superficiality. There is indeed a risk

that the search for the natural is an artifice itself. The line is very thin and subtle, and you must be careful not to cross that line. Everyday life can be redundant and boring. As a director, you must ensure that this search for a realistic scene, almost documentary-like, doesn't come with the slow rhythm of everyday life.

**Siavash lives with his uncle and aunt, Farkhondeh lives with her brother: I can feel true solidarity in these big families, which can sometimes become a burden. Is it something common in Iran?**

I guess that, as in many countries, this is how it works in the capital or at least the big cities. But elsewhere, everyday life is slower, families didn't lose their identities, their traditional way of life and these united families are more common. Family relationships are therefore more developed and in the event of someone being in distress, everyone feels involved. I grew up in this type of socio-cultural environment. Twenty years ago, the phrase "it's not my problem" did not exist in the Iranian language. This behavior has been imported and embodies a new relationship model in our society.

**Bahram's character, the man Rahim owes money, is also very ambiguous...**

This character usually should have been the bad guy of the film and we should have resented him for the obstacles he creates to the main character. But because of the character development I was referring to, he also has his reasons to act the way he does. When he explains these reasons, they seem justified to us and his behavior understandable. Maybe this dimension of the character, which makes him more than just the stereotyped bad guy, allows us to feel closer to him.

**As in *A Separation*, the children's glance is important...**

In this film, children are once again witnesses. They observe the adults' difficulties and their conflicts. They are not able to understand the complexity of these difficulties and that's why, in this film as in the previous ones, children are only stupefied witnesses of all events. Their perception of the crisis adults go through is purely emotional. However, in this film, Nazanin, Bahram's daughter, is older than other kids and she does something that makes the situation even more complex.

**Most of the characters communicate through social media. Is it a new and powerful phenomenon in Iran?**

As everywhere in the world, social media have a crucial place in people's life in Iran. This phenomenon is quite new, but its impact is such that it is difficult to remember what life was like before it appeared. My personal experience leads me to believe that this is more obvious in Iranian society than elsewhere. I think that can be explained by the socio-political situation of the country.

**At the end of each of your films, the viewer does not have all the answers. Are you a filmmaker that does not want to choose?**

As I have said before, this common particularity to all my films is not intentional. This ambiguity, almost mystery-like, comes naturally during the writing stage and I must say that I like this. This aspect makes the relationship between the film and the viewer more lasting, beyond the screening. It gives the viewer the possibility to reflect more on the film. I always take great pleasure in viewing *Rashōmon*, precisely because of this mysterious dimension. Combining ambiguity with a story dealing with everyday life is an interesting challenge.

**Do you know this famous quote from Jean Renoir: "The most awful thing in this world is that everyone has their reasons"? It seems to fit with most of *A Hero's* characters...**

I strongly agree. Everyone has their reasons to act the way they do, even if they are not conscious of these reasons. If you ask them to list them, they won't be able to do so. These reasons are not crystal-clear and easy to summarize. They are full of contradictions. In real life, people can take years to understand the reasons of their acts, because they are profoundly embedded in their past. In addition, I must clarify that I don't think that it means that all acts can be justified. It is not about legitimization

but understanding. Understanding does not mean legitimating. By knowing the reasons that drove someone to act, we can understand him without ruling in his favor.

## **Biography of Asghar Farhadi**

Asghar Farhadi was born in 1972. He directs his first short at age 13 in the Youth Cinema Society and directs five others before he goes to college. He enrolls at the University of Teheran in 1991 to study theatre, a choice which will have an influence on the way he makes films. He writes his master thesis on Harold Pinter and the importance of silences and pauses in the work of the dramaturge. After graduating, he studies directing at the Tarbiat Modares University in 1996. At the same time, he writes radio plays and TV series. After graduating from directing, Asghar Farhadi starts directing his own TV series including *A TALE OF A CITY (DASTANE YEK SHAHR)*.

In 2002, he writes and directs his first feature-film *DANCING IN THE DUST (RAGHSS DAR GHOBAR)*. The film wins the prize for Best Actor at the Moscow Film Festival and Best Screenplay and Best Director at the Asian Pacific Film Festival.

A year later, Asghar Farhadi directs *BEAUTIFUL CITY (SHAHRE ZIBA)* which breaks away from the codes of the cinema done at the time. The film tells the story of an 18-year-old murderer, sentenced to death, whose life rests in the hands of the victim's family. *BEAUTIFUL CITY* is distributed in France in 2012 and sparks great interest in different festivals across the world. The film wins the Grand Prize at the Warsaw Film Festival.

In 2005, Asghar Farhadi directs *FIREWORKS WEDNESDAY (CHAHAR SHANBEH SOURI)* which tells the story of an Iranian family from the point of view of their housekeeper.

Two years later, Asghar Farhadi tells the story of a group of friends leaving for vacation in Northern Iran. When one of them disappears, the whole group is left in a complex situation. *ABOUT ELLY... (DARBAREYE ELLY)* is screened simultaneously at the Berlin Film Festival and at the Fajr Film Festival in Teheran. The film wins the Silver Bear in Berlin and the Directing Award in Teheran. *ABOUT ELLY...* is released in France in September 2009 and records more than 100,000 admissions.

After this success, Asghar Farhadi starts writing *A SEPARATION (JODAEIYE NADER AZ SIMIN)* which he directs in 2010. The film finds its audience by portraying a middle-class family in crisis eventually leading to divorce.

*A SEPARATION* premieres in Berlin where it is acclaimed by the press and the audience. The film wins the Golden Bear for Best Film and two Silver Bears for the cast. And that is only the beginning. The film wins more than 70 international prizes including one Golden Globe, one Oscar and one César. *A SEPARATION* is sold worldwide and meets unprecedented success for an Iranian film. In France, where it is screened in more than 250 cinemas, the film reaches more than one million admissions. It is released in the US in December 2011 where it becomes one of the biggest successes for a foreign language film. In 2012, Asghar Farhadi is amongst the top 100 most influential people in the world according to Time Magazine.

Amongst the other prizes won by *A SEPARATION*: Best Foreign Language Film at the Durban International Film Festival, Best Film and Best Screenplay at the Asian Pacific Film Festival, Best Film at the Sydney Film Festival, Best Directing at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival...

Asghar Farhadi then moves to Paris with his family to write a new script whose story will unfold outside of Iran. The main character, Ahmad, gets back to Paris to finalize his divorce with his wife, Marie. His comeback will force them to confront their past. *THE PAST* is released in France in May 2013 and simultaneously presented in competition at Cannes. More than a million admissions are recorded in

France and *THE PAST* wins Best Actress in Cannes before being nominated at the Golden Globes and the César.

Asghar Farhadi comes back to Iran to shoot *THE SALESMAN* in 2015. The film is completed in Spring 2016 and selected in competition at the Cannes Film Festival. Asghar Farhadi wins Best Screenplay and the main actor, Shahab Hosseini, wins Best Actor. *THE SALESMAN* is released in France the following fall and at the same time in Iran where it becomes Asghar Farhadi's biggest success. In February 2017, the director wins his second Oscar for Best Foreign Language Feature.

A few months later, Asghar Farhadi kicks off his next project with Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem. *EVERYBODY KNOWS* is shot in Spain and in Spanish. The Argentine Ricardo Darín is also part of the cast. The film is selected in competition and as the opening film at the 71<sup>st</sup> Cannes Film Festival. It is released the day of its premiere and records more than 830,000 admissions in France.

Asghar Farhadi's new film, *A HERO (GHAHREMAN)*, shot in Iran, is the director's fourth attempt to win the Golden Palm. *A HERO* is also the fourth film produced by Alexandre Mallet-Guy and the seventh he distributes in France. The first encounter between Alexandre Mallet-Guy and Asghar Farhadi occurs in Berlin in February 2009, where Alexandre Mallet-Guy discovers *ABOUT ELLY*...

## **CAST**

Rahim	Amir Jadidi
Bahram	Mohsen Tanabandeh
Mme Radmehr	Fereshteh Sadrorafaii
Farkhondeh	Sahar Goldoust
Malileh	Maryam Shahdaie
Hossein	Ali Reza Jahandideh
Nadeali	Ehsan Goodarzi
Nazanin	Sarina Farhadi
Salehi	Farrokh Nourbakht
Salehpoor	Mohammad Aghebaty
Siavash	Saleh Karimai

## **CREW**

Scriptwriter and director	Asghar Farhadi
Producers	Alexandre Mallet-Guy - Asghar Farhadi
Co-producers	Olivier Père, Rémi Burah
Line producer	Hamidreza Ghorbani
Production manager	Mohammad Yamini
Cinematographer	Ali Ghazi
Script	Ghazal Rashidi
Costumes	Negar Nemati
Production designer	Mehdi Mousavi
First assistant director	Amin Khankal
Sound	Mehdi Saleh Kermani
Editing	Haydeh Safiyari
Sound editing	Mohammadreza Delpak
Mixing	Bruno Tarrière
Produced by	Memento Production Asghar Farhadi Production
In association with	Memento Distribution Memento International
Coproduced by In partnership with	ARTE France Cinéma ARTE France
With the support of	Région Île-De-France, en partenariat avec le CNC Aide aux Cinémas du Monde – Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée – Institut Français
International sales French distribution	Memento International Memento Distribution