

Iran Video Collection

Iran: A Revolution Betrayed

Films Incorporated, narrated by Edward Mortimer
60 minutes, color/black & white

This video takes the viewer on a journey through the political strife beginning in the late 1970's that eventually led to a political revolution in Iran. It uses footage from the 1970's and 1980's shot in Iran and several other key locations in the conflict along with narration to explain the situations. The opening scene is footage shot by an Iranian citizen in the streets of Tehran several years before the revolution occurred. The scene shows unarmed demonstrators being shot at and fighting with the army of the shah. This scene is accompanied by many more like it, as the shah attempted to maintain order in the streets to keep his own power. After nearly forty years of rule, the shah was believed to be a stable "power to defend Western interests in the region." The government of the shah during the 1970's was seen by the West as a stable means to promote its cause in the Middle East. Despite outward appearances, a revolution was brewing among the people of Iran. One reason this video gives for the uprising is the exile of a respected Iranian religious leader, Ayatollah Khomeini. The video provides a good background of the Iranian revolution from peaceful demonstrations, to the shah's suppression of freedom of speech and the right to hold these demonstrations, and finally to the eventual return of Khomeini and how he captured power in Iran, much to the dismay of the West. Also covered is the hostage situation in 1979, which caused the disintegration of American-Iranian relations. The video shows speeches (using subtitles when necessary) made by the shah, Khomeini, President Carter, and other key figures in the conflict, including many Iranian people themselves. The video shows firsthand how the lives of Iranians changed after the revolution, politically and economically, and how Iranian unity throughout the revolution quickly disintegrated and caused renewed conflict among the people.

Mystic Iran, the Unseen World

(2002) 52 minutes.

A modern woman's mystical journey deep into the heart of her native country, Iran, in search of spiritual rites and rituals of the sufis rarely seen by outsiders.

Kandahar (2001)

DVD

The prolific Iranian director Mohsen Makhmalbaf had one of his most visible international successes with this haunting, open-ended drama. Set and shot during the Taliban era, it follows an Afghani-Canadian woman as she attempts to enter Afghanistan in search of a despondent sister. Since it is illegal for a woman to travel alone, she must rely on the kindness--or curiosity--of strangers, including a scrappy boy and a mysterious American doctor.

Crimson Gold

DVD, 2003

Two master filmmakers, Abba Kiarostami and Jafar Panahi, team up as writer and director, respectively, on *Crimson Gold*, a subtle tragedy about class conflict in Iran. Hussein is a lumbering veteran swollen by cortisone for war-induced pain and reduced to delivering pizzas at night. Witness to the rewards and vanities of the wealthy, insulted when a jewelry shop owner won't allow him in his store, and under pressure to get married, Hussein awkwardly aspires for higher ground but is more familiar with a life of marginal importance. When an eccentric socialite gives him a taste of luxury, something desperate is unleashed. Panahi brings his feel for and vision of the expansive ordinary, for the near-invisible forces churning within characters in seemingly throwaway circumstances.

Smell of Camphor, Fragrance of Jasmine

DVD, 2000

In this comedy, Bahman Farjami, a filmmaker who has not directed for twenty years due to censorship, experiences a strange set of coincidences that convince him the Angel of Death must be near. As a means of confronting his fears, he decides to make a film about his own funeral. As he researches the funeral rites of his country and culture, Farjami glimpses a side of Iranian society which he was not aware of. In the midst of this, his view is shaded by his own mounting family problems. Through a series of fiascos leading to comic and cathartic vision of his own disastrous funeral, he goes on an emotional roller-coaster ride that culminates in a Fellini-esque dream so intense that it may lead to his actual death.

Life and Nothing More...

VHS, 1996

Life and Nothing More is an astonishing film which constantly blurs the lines between fact and fiction, follows a film director and, Puya, his young son as they travel through the clogged roads of Iran in an attempt to reach Koker, a town that has been devastated by an earthquake.

Where is the Friend's Home?

VHS, 1996

Young Ahmed embarks on a quest to return a classmate's notebook, which he mistakenly took home. Sure that his friend will be expelled from school without the notebook, Ahmed ventures into an unknown neighboring village alone, facing innumerable obstacles in the form of stubborn adults, unfamiliar terrain and the encroaching night.

The Cyclist

VHS, 1996

In need of money to pay his wife's medical expenses, Afghan refugee Nassim succumbs to the pleas of a slick con artist with a fantastic plan to stage a bicycle marathon with only one contestant: Nassim himself. Billing himself as the Afghani Superman, the swindler wagers that Nassim can ride his bicycle, day and night, for an entire week. The normally mild-mannered townsfolk soon turn vicious on the sidelines as they place wagers on Nassim's fate, trying to turn his suffering into their profit. One of Iran's greatest filmmakers, director Mohsen Makhmalbaf displays a fantastic visual flair while confronting a variety of serious social issues. Here he tackles the issues of poverty and the ways that people exploit one another in an arresting and visually sophisticated work.

The Peddler

VHS, 1996

A compelling and brutally honest look at life for the poorest residents of contemporary Tehran, this drama from Iranian director Mohsen Makhmalbaf is comprised of three separate stories: an impoverished couple try to find someone to adopt their newborn daughter; a mentally troubled man turns to his elderly mother for company; and a young street peddler arouses the anger of his competitors.

Offside

DVD, 2007

"Offside" is about a group of Iranian girls who attempts to enter Tehran's Azadi Stadium dressed as boys in order to watch a big football match but some get caught and arrested. After the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran, women are not allowed to enter the stadiums.