

"Magnificent! Not just the topic, but the production quality. The fact that the filmmaker could gain access, and put these women on film is incredible!"
- Behnam Nateghi, VOA New York, TV host , film critic



TALK RADIO TEHRAN

"Iranian women are like tea, the hotter the water, the stronger we get."

*Directed by Mahtab Mansour
Produced by Idanna Pucci, Mahtab Mansour, Terence Ward*

SYNOPSIS

To the beat of Tehran "talk radio", spirited women peel back gender-apartheid in this dawn to dusk urban safari. Probing questions and amusing outbursts reveal a society deeply in conflict with itself. Follow Zohreh, the chic Rally champion of Iran; indomitable Madam Nosrat, the city's first woman bus driver; and feisty Sepideh and her colleagues who form the only female fire fighting team in the Middle East. With passion and daring, they defy the status quo.



DIRECTOR - MAHTAB MANSOUR

Born In Iran, Mahtab Mansour grew up in Tehran. She left for Paris in 1980 and studied Science of Art at the Sorbonne, and then pursued her studies in Cinema. After completing her Masters degree, she returned to Iran where she taught Film Criticism and Semiology at Teheran University. As the Director of the Cinematography Research Institute from 1995 to 1997, she organized in association with UNESCO, France, the first seminars on *International Women in Contemporary Cinema*. For two years, she was also responsible of the first Documentary Film Festival in Isfahan. She co-produced 32 documentaries and short films for Iranian TV, and directed a documentary on the Ghashghai tribes, and a series on Iranian women in the Persian Gulf. Aside from film reviews, she has written articles on Persian miniatures. Currently, Mahtab resides in Paris.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The footage was shot by cameraman Morteza Poorsamadi in Tehran and edited by Vanya Chokrollah in Paris. In Iran, the atmosphere was extremely tense. Although we had secured permission from the Ministry of Culture, suspicious police and *basiji* often stopped us for questioning. I concealed that I was living in Paris. We were able to complete the shooting only because of my membership card of the Iranian Filmmakers Association, which I had never let expire. This film reflects how the Iranian people cope, circumvent and resist the imposed laws by using their imagination. My crew displayed all these talents during the shooting. Today, hope nervously clings in the air as the struggle between reformists and fundamentalists continues. At the heart of the conflict are the laws restricting women's rights.



“I dream one day of racing in Paris-Dakar.”

ZOHREH Iran’s First Female Rally Champion

The current Rally racing champion of Iran is Zohreh Vatankhah. A true Iranian beauty, she competes in national car racing championships, challenging about 180 men. So far, she has won 28 times. In 2008, she captured first prize for Rally racing in the desert. Her fame reaches well beyond Iran. But in her own country, she is highly criticized. Car racing remains the domain of men.

Yet, the mere mention of her name makes many Iranian girls dream. In 2001, she was barely 22 when she began to race while still studying for her electrical engineering degree. Her vigilant father became her manager and sponsor. In Iran, there are about twenty professional rally races every year, and she doesn’t miss one.

Her pink car always stands out. She takes care personally of at least 60% of the maintenance, and supervises every detail, preparing her vehicle scrupulously with the help of her mechanic who is on hand during the race. The sight of her glowing eyes under her helmet is as cinematic as her manicured nails disappearing into the greasy crevices of her engine.

Each day, she jogs and swims to keep herself fit. Sometimes in the evening, she plays billiard and watches action films that she adores. Zohreh is afraid of only one thing--that sooner or later the government will forbid women to become professional car racers.



“Women like to ride in my bus. They say I drive better than the men.”

MADAME NOSRAT Teheran’s First Woman Bus Driver

Bus-driving is a masculine profession in Iran, but Madame Nosrat does not care. Born in 1955, she is now a mother of four children and has been driving since 1994. Her reputation as an expert mechanic is well known even beyond her bus terminal. Often her male colleagues seek her advice and sometimes even her help. At dawn, Madame Nosrat begins her route driving along Tehran’s main artery, Vali-Asr Avenue, for 30 kilometers until the night. From poor dusty Southern Tehran close to Khomeini’s tomb, she crosses the entire city until she arrives in the lush, wealthy neighborhoods of Northern Tehran at the foot of the Elburz Mountains. Then she turns and heads back south.

Her bus is like no other. In Iran, women and men cannot sit in the same compartment. As in the mosque, men are in front, and women in the back. But in her bus, the situation is reversed. Each day is a “Rosa Parks moment” for women riders. At the entrance of the bus, a sign tells men that they have to take their place in the back, and this often upsets them. Madame Nosrat, with her diplomatic way, turns these encounters into light-hearted moments. “Women feel

secure with my driving...” she says. Over time, some regular male passengers have learned to respect and admire her. A few even address her with the title of “Haj Agha,” normally reserved only for men who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

During her long day’s work, Madam Nosrat never for a moment forgets her family, and calls several times to check on her two daughters and two sons. After a sixteen-hour day’s work, she returns home at night, and always finds her husband welcoming her with a cup of tea. During her absence, it is he who takes care of the house and prepares the meals. Once she is home, another world emerges as it happens with so many Iranians. She takes off her long black overcoat, and relaxes before the dinner that her husband has prepared. Indeed Mr. Nosrat is quite unusual among men in Iran. “During the war with Iraq,” he explains, “I drove a tank on the frontlines for nine years, but I tell you, housekeeping is much harder work!”





“In life, motivation is everything. I love my job.”

SEPIDEH and the World’s Only Female Firefighting Team

A horrific accident occurred a few years ago in the public swimming pool of Karaj, a suburb of Tehran. After the morning session reserved for “men only”, the pool was disinfected as usual. But this time, by mistake, too much chlorine was poured in the water. That afternoon, a dozen women happily plunged into the pool. Disaster struck as the gas filled the air. Firemen rushed to the scene but refused to rescue the ladies. According to the regime’s Islamic law, a man is forbidden to touch a woman. And because these women were wearing only their bathing costumes, they were left gasping in the water, and some ultimately drowned.

The vision of those women dying in the fumes haunted Mahtab for a long time, until her eyes fell on a surprising article. The city council of Karaj had formed a team of female firefighters. From seventy applicants, twelve were selected. When Mahtab eventually entered Bhawana Negi Fire Station, she underwent hours of suspicious interrogation by the Station Manager before meeting these remarkable young women.

Sepidah Hosseini, a 29 year-old black belt in judo is also a rock climber and a violin player with a master’s degree in architecture and in English translation. Born in 1982, she’s been a firefighter for 9 years. “In life, motivation is everything,” she says with fearless emotions and disarming charm. “It’s simple. I love this work, and the man I will marry must be prepared to share all tasks at home.”

Today, twelve brave women occupy a special building in a large firehouse compound. They are separated from their male colleagues. Organized in three groups of four, the women work twenty-four shifts. When the alarm rings, they slip into their protective gear keeping their gray coats on, jump into the fire engine, and drive off with their helmets over their Islamic headscarves. When fully dressed, no one can tell they are women, and they are then able to work alongside the men.

These women relate to the injured and the families of the dead with an apparent greater compassion and more humanity than the male colleagues. They often go to the morgue and console the families who have to recognize their dead or listen to medical examiners. Very often, they attend funerals. During the tragic earthquake in Bam, the ancient city of sand, Sepideh with two other colleagues worked night and day to help with the rescue.



PRODUCERS – TERENCE WARD and IDANNA PUCCI

TERENCE WARD is a documentary producer, a writer and a cultural consultant on the Middle East. Recently, he produced *Black Africa White Marble*, a documentary inspired by the humanism of the Italian-born explorer, Pietro Savorgnan di Brazza (Grand Prix 2012, Festival d'Annecy; Audience Award 2013 Cambridge Film Festival). He is the author of the acclaimed *Searching for Hassan: A Journey to the Heart of Iran* (Anchor Books, NY). With James Ivory and Mahtab Mansour, he adapted the book into a screenplay for Merchant Ivory. Currently, it is in development with Boshra Film for the first co-production film with Iranian and American producers since the Revolution. with Idanna Pucci, he is producing the film *Archaeology of a Woman* by award-winning director Sharon Greytak that features the Academy-nominated actress Sally Kirkland. For him, this film holds special meaning because he spent his childhood in Teheran.

IDANNA PUCCI produced and directed *Eugenia of Patagonia*, a documentary that premiered in 2005 at the Festival des Femmes in Paris, France and the Festival CinDonne of Turin, Italy (Audience Award). She also co-produced *Leonardo's Legacy* (Discovery Channel) on the great Renaissance master. Currently, she is producing a feature film *Archaeology of a Woman* by award-winning director Sharon Greytak. After her childhood in Florence, Idanna moved to Indonesia where she studied Balinese culture. She wrote *The Epic of Life: A Balinese Journey of the Soul* (Van der Marck Editions, NY); *Against All Odds: The Strange Destiny of a Balinese Prince* (Saritaksu, Bali); *The Trials of Maria Barbella: The True Story of a 19th-century Crime of Passion*, (Vintage, NY); and *Brazza in Congo: A Life and Legacy* (Umbrage Books, NY), a biography on her ancestor, Pietro Savorgnan di Brazza, who was the inspiration for the documentary *Black Africa White Marble*.



CREDITS

Producers:	Idanna Pucci, Mahtab Mansour, Terence Ward
Director:	Mahtab Mansour
Editor:	Vanya Chokrollahi
Camera:	Morteza Poorsamadi
Sound Engineer:	Naser Shookohiniya
Mixage:	Manelli Hosseini
Assistant Cameraman:	Ali Ranjbar
Boom Operator:	Mohamad Kian-Nasri
Production Manager:	Hayeedeh Ghoreishi
Production Coordinator:	Farzaneh Ghoreishi
Transport:	Nemat Shaheydari, Bahram Fathirad
Logistics:	Mohamad Nazifi
DIT:	Ali Poorsamadi
Conseiller Artistique:	Mahamoud Chokrollahi

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Title: TALK RADIO TEHRAN

Length: 38 minutes

Year of Production: 2014

Country: France and Italy

Format: HDCAM 1085/25

Frame size: Full HD

Interlaced/ Progressive: Progressive

FPS (Frames per second): 25

Aspect Ratio: 16/9

Directed by: Mahtab Mansour

Produced by: Terence Ward, Idanna Pucci, & Mahtab Mansour

Language: Persian (with English and French Subtitles)



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