



Bluebird • Parandeh Abi

Feature 35mm 90min.

Budget

US\$1,950,000
(HK\$15,210,000)

Producers

Julie LE BROCCQUY
Hassan YEKTAPANAH

Production Company

Yekta Film

HAF Goals

Pre-sales, Funds

■ Introduction ■

Completing a trilogy of the immigrant experience (*Djomeh*, *Story Undone*), *Bluebird* observantly and poignantly focuses on the Anne Frank-like existence of a young student who has overstayed her visa in a foreign country. Taking temporary refuge in a restaurant kitchen, she can only connect with the outside world via a peeping hole. Through her eyes, the activities and human relationships in the restaurant become a microcosm of immigrant society, redefining concepts of exile and captivity. A celebrated figure in Iran cinema, Yektapanah brings to this project years of expertise working with masters like Kiarostami and Panahi, topped with his own excellence as a Cannes, Locarno and Rotterdam awardwinning director.

■ Director ■

Hassan YEKTAPANAH was born in 1963 in Tehran, Iran. Before becoming a director, he already had an illustrious two-decade career since 1983 as Assistant Director for world masters like Abbas Kiarostami (*Taste of Cherry*) and Jafar Panahi (*The Mirror*). Other acclaimed Iranian directors he has worked with include the late Ali Hatami (*The Mother*, *The Love Stricken*), Tahmineh Milani (*Kakadu*, *What Else New*, *The Two Women*, *Hidden Half*), and Ebrahim Forouzesh (*The Little Man*).

Yektapanah made his debut as director/writer with *Djomeh* (2000), which was shown in Un certain regards, Cannes, and won the prestigious Camera d'Or. The film has been screened in 40 international festivals, including Pusan, Toronto and Tokyo Filmex where it won the Jury Special Award. It also won Jury's Special Mention in Bratislava, Best Actor in Moscow and Special Award at the Abadan Festival.

His second feature, *Story Undone* (2004) was presented at the 2004 Locarno Film Festival and earned him doubles honors - the Silver Leopard for Best First and Second Film and the Netpac award for Best Asian Film. The film went on to win the Special Jury Award of Amazonas IFF. It has also been selected for several Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch festivals, and won the Amnesty International Doen Award at Rotterdam in 2005.

■ Producers ■

Julie LE BROCCQUY was Producer of *Osama* (2003), arguably the first feature made in Afghanistan by an Afghan director (Siddiq Barmak) after the fall of the Taliban. In addition to a Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film, *Osama* also received the AFCAE Award, Cannes Junior Award and the Camera d'Or Special Mention at Cannes 2003, as well as a New Currents Special Mention and the PSB Audience Award at Pusan IFF and several other honors. She was also Executive Producer of *Swing My Swing High*, *My Darling* (2004) and Producer of Hassan Yektapanah's *Story Undone* (2004).

Hassan YEKTAPANAH (see above)

■ Production Company ■

Yekta Film was formed by Producer Hassan Yektapanah with Associate Producer Nikta Tayeban, following the success of his first feature, *Djomeh* (2000), which was produced by Celluloid Dreams. To complete Yektapanah's second feature, *Story Undone* (2004), Yekta Film entered into co-production with Lebrocquy Fraser Productions, with financing from Ireland and Singapore.

■ Synopsis ■

Roya is an Iranian student who is being expelled from her university because she can no longer afford the tuition after losing her part-time job. Her visa has expired and an extension is impossible. She is unwilling to return to her native Iran empty-handed, because she is well aware of her family's hopes for her to prosper abroad.

In fact, her family's expectations are what keeps Roya going despite all the hardships she has endured alone in a foreign land. She decides to leave the city in search of assistance from a close relative who is the tenant of a small local restaurant.

Behrooz is a middle-aged man, a long-established immigrant, whose only crop of living overseas is separation from his wife and children, and a monthly indemnity to them. Perhaps this

small district with its little rental restaurant, Bluebird, is his last sanctuary.

Roya pleads with Behrooz to lend his support, and provide her shelter for a limited period. However, Behrooz is afraid of risking his present situation by protecting a fugitive, and he turns her down. Roya persists in her entreaty, asking only for a three-month job in his kitchen. Behrooz' patriotic feelings are aroused, and he agrees to help her. Nevertheless, to prevent the neighbors and customers from growing suspicious about a stranger in his restaurant, he wants her to stay out of the public eye. Roya swears to restrict herself to the kitchen at daytime during the whole period of her stay, and only show her face after midnight. Behrooz gives in to her innocence and earnestness.

The rest of the film depicts the physical and spiritual confinement of an ambitious and idealistic illegal immigrant.

The restrictive space of the kitchen gradually becomes a suffocating prison. Very soon, overcome by loneliness, curiosity and youthful indiscretion, Roya breaks her promise to Behrooz. She creates an aperture between the wall and the cupboards so as to steal glimpses into the outside world. This playful discovery slightly eases her pain and solitude.

From this moment on, Roya surveys the customers through this opening, day and night. A new chapter in the film unfolds, seen through her unique 'keyhole-like' POV. She views Behrooz' relations with his customers, his girlfriends, and his former Iranian family who come now and then to receive their monthly stipend... The many concealed undercurrents and secrets beneath the day-to-day interactions in the restaurant are fascinating and often poignant portraits of immigrant life. Gradually, Roya realizes that on the other side of the wall, many people are also living imprisoned lives!

Sadly, Roya cannot maintain this stasis forever. One day, while becoming engrossed in the bittersweet experience of a customer, someone in the restaurant notices her presence...

■ Director's Statement ■

Bluebird is the third episode of my trilogy of immigration stories. It is a story of immigrants who believe that all the difficulties of their past lives are forgotten when they live abroad, as if they have reached Utopia.

It is also about the citizens of countries where immigrants reside.

Their nationalist feelings make them assume that immigrants are like locusts destroying their farms.

Ultimately, *Bluebird* is a story about subtle human relations beyond any restricted location.

It is a story about relations between one person and another, under the big blue ceiling.

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