



MOTHERLAND

سرزمین مادری

A film by
JASMIN MOZAFFARI

Runtime: 24 minutes
Languages: English, Farsi
Shooting Format: 16mm film
Output Format: DCP, 5.1 Sound
Genre: Drama

Produced by
PROWLER FILM
SILENT TOWER
FELA

During 1979 at the height of the Iran Hostage crisis, Babak goes on a trip to meet his fiancé's parents and ends up confronting the realities of what it means to be an Iranian immigrant in a patriotic post-Vietnam America.

SYNOPSIS

During 1979 at the height of the Iran Hostage crisis, Babak embarks on a trip to meet his fiancé Katie's parents at Thanksgiving in rural Iowa. Along the way, Babak ends up confronting the harsh realities of what it means to be an Iranian immigrant in a patriotic post-Vietnam North America. When he is not welcomed by his fiancé's father, this calls into question not only Babak and Katie's relationship, but Babak's future. Like many Iranians at the time, Babak is caught between two worlds: a North America that rejects him, and his homeland of Iran where a brutalist Islamic regime has risen to power. Based on the true events of my parents, and the contentious hostage crisis of 1979, MOTHERLAND is the story about the moment in history everything changed for the Iranian diaspora.

FILMMAKER STATEMENT

MOTHERLAND is my most personal film to date, chronicling an Iranian immigrant's journey for acceptance and search for "home" during the height of the 1979 Iran Hostage Crisis. The film is inspired by the story of my father, an immigrant from Tehran, who married my mother (an Albertan) in the shadow of the hostage crisis. My mother's parents - my grandparents - wouldn't speak to my mother for two years after they found out she was marrying an Iranian. I wanted to use this true life "meet-the-parents" story as a way to uncover a part of history that has largely been forgotten.

The Iran Hostage Crisis was a volatile time for thousands of Iranian students on the ground in the US. They faced discrimination, violence, and threats of deportation. A number of students, like my father, fled to Canada as they saw it was a safer place to exist. This was in part due to the influx of anti-Iranian propaganda broadcast on the nightly news, spread across newspapers, and plastered across billboards. In a post-Vietnam America, this event - this collective hatred of Iranians - unified Americans in a renewed sense of patriotism that had been lost during the war.

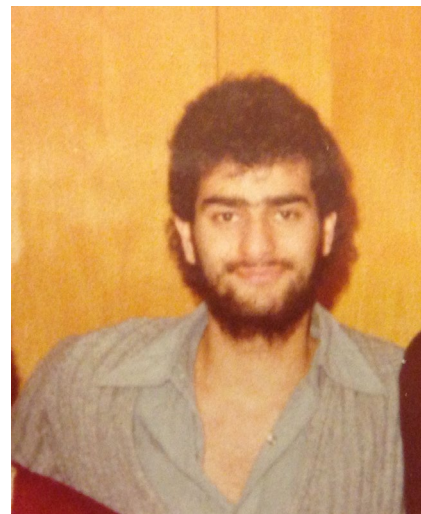
The largest Iranian diaspora reside in the US and Canada, yet the stories of the diaspora are few and far between, or are a gross misrepresentation of our culture. I wanted to make this film not only for the sake of Iranian diaspora representation, but also to challenge outdated stereotypes of West Asian men as terrorists and abusers.

Furthermore, I shot this project during the Women Life Freedom revolution in the fall of 2022. This movement wore heavy on our hearts as we were in production, and made us realize how important it was to continue to tell Iranian stories. It was my goal with MOTHERLAND to humanize us, as Iranians, as immigrants, and to purposefully reclaim our narratives.

- *Jasmin Mozaffari*
Writer and Director



Babak Mozaffari & Kathy Kraft in Canada, 1983 (director's parents)



Babak Mozaffari in late 70s in Massachusetts, USA

BEHTASH FAZLALI

as Babak

Behtash Fazlali is an award-winning actor and first-generation immigrant from Iran. Growing up in Toronto, he gravitated towards film as a channel to help navigate and gain a better understanding of his life between two worlds. He made his professional acting debut in the TIFF 2014 short film SAHAR, for which he also won 'Best Actor' at the Vancouver Short Film Festival (VSFF). He has since appeared in several television shows including *The Flash*, *Arrow*, *iZombie*, and *No Tomorrow*. Behtash starred in a number of feature films including THE EVIL IN US and WIRED SHUT, both of which garnered him 'Best Actor' nominations at the Leo Awards. Most recently, he can be seen in MOTHERLAND, premiering at TIFF 2023, a film about an Iranian immigrant meeting his American fiancée's parents during the height of the 1979 Hostage Crisis. When he is not immersed in acting, he finds solace in music, cherishes his family, playing basketball, and actively contributes to amplifying the voices of the oppressed in Iran.

ORIANA LEMAN

as Katie

Oriana Lemman is an emerging filmmaker and actress based in Toronto. She recently appeared in Netflix productions *Locke and Key*, and *Guillermo del Toro's Cabinet of Curiosities*. Oriana attended the University of Toronto and Concordia University, where she studied Film Production. She has a background in classical music (ARCT in Violin Performance), photography, and creative writing. Her previous short film, THE WHALE (2020), was funded by Canada Council for the Arts, and premiered at the Rhode Island International Film Festival. She is currently developing her second short film, as well as her first feature-length screenplay.

JASMIN MOZAFFARI

WRITER / DIRECTOR

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Dubbed by *Variety* as a “major talent”, Jasmin Mozaffari is an award-winning Iranian-Canadian film & television writer/director. Her debut feature, *FIRECRACKERS*, premiered at TIFF in 2018 with *The Globe and Mail* calling Jasmin a “vital new voice for Canadian cinema”. *FIRECRACKERS* won Best Film at the Stockholm International Film Festival and Jasmin took home the award for Best Director at the Canadian Screen Awards. Peter Debruge (*Variety*) compared Jasmin to a “young Andrea Arnold”, the film was named a *New York Times Critic’s Pick* and was further celebrated by *The LA Times*, *Vulture*, *New York Magazine*, and *The Hollywood Reporter*.

Jasmin recently directed the pilot and co-exec produced the Netflix series, *FAKES*, as well as 2 episodes of *ROBYN HOOD*, created by Director X. *MOTHERLAND* is Jasmin’s most recent short film, and will premiere at the 2023 Toronto International Film Festival.

CAITLIN GRABHAM

PRODUCER

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Caitlin is a graduate of Toronto Metropolitan University's Film Studies program. Her first feature film, *FIRECRACKERS*, premiered at the 2018 Toronto International Film Festival, where she received the CMPA's Kevin Tierney Emerging Producer Award. *FIRECRACKERS* went on to screen at over 30 festivals worldwide and won multiple awards, including two Canadian Screen Awards, as well as Best Film and Best Actress at the 2019 Stockholm Film Festival. The film was released theatrically in Canada and the USA to rave reviews from publications including *Variety* and *LA Times*, and was a *New York Times Critics’ Pick*.

Caitlin is an Associate Producer of *BROTHER* by Clement Virgo, which premiered at TIFF 2022, played festivals around the world including BFI London 2022 and Busan International Film Festival, and won 12 Canadian Screen Awards. She continues to work with Conquering Lion Pictures, led by partners Damon D’Oliveira and Clement Virgo, as the Development Manager.

PRISCILLA GALVEZ

PRODUCER

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Priscilla Galvez is an award-winning producer based in Toronto, Canada. In 2018, she co-founded the production company Silent Tower, where she has produced work for the Canadian Broadcasting Company, PBS POV, The New Yorker and Hulu. Priscilla's films have premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival, Fantastic Fest, Tribeca, Hot Docs, Slamdance and SXSW. Most recently, she produced the documentary short 'Sing Me a Lullaby' (Canadian Screen Award winner for Best Short Documentary), directed by Tiffany Hsiung and the feature film 'Islands' directed by Martin Edralin, which was awarded a special jury prize for Best Breakthrough Performance at SXSW 2021. Priscilla is a fellowship recipient of the TIFF Accelerator Lab '20 and was nominated for the CMPA Kevin Tierney Emerging Producer Award for her work on 'Islands'.

TAJ CRITCHLOW

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

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Born in Toronto, Taj Critchlow is a multifaceted entrepreneur: a talent manager, film and TV producer, and creative consultant. His company, Karoshi Management, represents some of today's most culturally relevant filmmakers such as Julien Christian Lutz pka Director X, Karena Evans, Jasmin Mozaffari and R.T. Thorne! In 2018, Taj began the next phase in his career, working as an Executive Producer on Director X's Joel Silver-produced feature film, *Superfly*.

Taj is also the Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Fela - a new age production company specializing in authentic cultural storytelling. In just three years, Fela has become one of the most exciting production companies in the realms of music videos, advertising and beyond. Fela's work has accumulated billions of views and numerous accolades. Notable projects include the Grammy nominated *Life Is Good* video for Future and Drake, which amassed over 2M views; the acclaimed short documentary *Chatham Plays On*, which chronicled a historic Black Canadian baseball team and received recognition at prestigious award shows including Cannes Lions, The Clios, The One Show, The ADCs, and The Webby Awards; and the short documentary *Rebuild The World* for Lego, acknowledged by The AICP Awards and the D&AD awards.

In 2020 Fela released *Underplayed*, its debut feature film. The documentary follows leading female artists in dance music as they reckon with inequality in the music industry. Premiering at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), "Underplayed" received acclaim from top critics, including Variety and The Globe and Mail. As they continue to make waves in the industry, Fela remains committed to amplifying unique voices and creating impactful visual experiences.

CAST

BABAK
Behdash Fazlali

KATIE
Oriana Leman

WERNER
John Ralston

MAMAN
Niaz Salimi

BAHMAN
Nima Gholamipour

RUTH
Birgitte Solem

CREW

WRITER & DIRECTOR
Jasmin Mozaffari

PRODUCERS
Caitlin Grabham
Priscilla Galvez
Jasmin Mozaffari

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
Taj Critchlow

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Farhad Ghaderi

EDITOR
Alexander Farah

PRODUCTION DESIGNER
Helen Kotsonis

COSTUME DESIGNER
Mara Zigler