ANY



NOW

DAY

(ENSILUMI)

A FILM BY HAMY RAMEZAN Finland – 2020 – 82 min. – Farsi, Finnish, English © Aamu Film Company.

SYNOPSIS

13 year old Ramin Mehdipour and his Iranian family have been living in a refugee centre in Finland. Just as Ramin starts to enjoy the school holidays, the family receives the terrible news their asylum application has been denied. The Mehdipours file a final appeal, and they continue with their everyday lives, trying to keep a positive attitude despite the looming danger of deportation. As Ramin starts the new school year, every moment, every friendship will be more precious than ever.

INTERVIEW WITH HAMY RAMEZAN

How closely is *Any Day Now* based on your own experiences and the story of your family?

We escaped the Iran-Irag war when I was seven. I still remember the feeling of excitement and my hunger for adventure. For me, it still feels like yesterday; that feeling of despair I had because I could never learn my fake Turkish name and our unnatural family history – the one my father and his brother wrote on a piece of paper for everyone to remember. Our parents had to be honest with us, they had to tell us that we would be hanged if we failed. That knowledge really connected us as a family and made us such a tight team that, because of this, I found my self-confidence. I got good at my job, which was perfect because our success escaping depended on it. I learned so many false names and lies that I'm still here, writing fiction for you. We escaped successfully. But the next obstacle was entering into a state where our lies were to be tested. "Lying is sometimes an excellent thing," I remember my uncle saying to my father. Now I know why. The truth is so terrible that no one would believe you anyway. Adversity does not last forever, and finally, we were in Finland. My first memory is from Helsinki-Vantaa Airport. We were warmly welcomed with smiles and flowers. Outside the airport, I was amazed to see Mercedes' being used as cabs.

After a little drive, we reached a place, which was to be called our home. The location was none other than Malmi. My first reaction about this locality was, 'Oh man, this place is horrible.' Back then, Malmi was not exactly heaven on earth. But things have changed a lot since then. Finally, we were at our new home. It was a strange feeling because something so absurd and unreal just vanished as if it was never there, and all of a sudden, you are 'home', as if nothing happened. Until this day, I haven't reached a sense of understanding, and I'm still not sure which part of my life was the real one. The one that vanished as if nothing mattered anymore or the one that stopped came out of nowhere and said, this is your home. This has always been your home.

Our new house was well furnished. It was spacious, with a room each for my sister, my parents and I. It had a living room and balcony – very different from our previous nine square meter motel room for four. I was in love with our new home. I still remember the study desk where I spent most of my time sitting and learning the new language. People used to say the language was complicated to learn. It took me a mere six months to speak it with an accent but with such self-confidence that I could translate 'The Bold and the Beautiful' for my parents every day.

But let's not jump ahead of time. I would also like to share the memories of the camp days. The refugee camp was an old motel turned into a camp for refugees. One of the most beautiful places I remember had a beautiful name: A Motel of One Thousand Roses. We lived in flats that were only nine square meters in size, but the weather was, fortunately enough, pretty good. I remember our parents used to party and dance a lot in beautiful Belgrade, where the refugee camp was located. I couldn't believe that eight or nine people could dance in a nine square meter space. Back in Belgrade, my parents always drank the same cheap booze, and it had a picture of Satan with curly hair on it. They used to call it booze for dogs. But because of the joy and euphoria that Finland had accepted us as refugees, the men upgraded



and bought a precious one liter of finest Smirnoff Vodka to celebrate the success of the journey to our new home.

Now we were in our new home, and the Vodka had been cooling in the fridge, my uncle asked me with a happy face, to bring the Vodka. I ran with excitement – I really enjoyed parties because I thought everyone was funny and kind when they were drunk. But on the first day of the rest of our life, I was too excited. I opened the fridge with such force, everything turned into slow-motion. The bottle dropped and smashed to the floor, and it exploded like a bomb; every flying drop of that precious fluid turned into a tear in my parents' eyes, and that was the end of the first day of freedom. Still, today if my father recalls that tragedy, he can't look me in the eyes. Now, as a 41-year-old father of a young boy, I can only thank my dad for not disowning me right at that moment.

What were some of the challenges in balancing autobiography and fiction in the film?

The film project had all the challenges one can have. It involved complex matters and even more complicated human subjects. It was a tough job reconciling facts to fiction. It was when the refugee crisis was looming, and I couldn't help myself dive deep into politics. I had no potentials to balance the art with the truth. There can be no absolute objectivity, and it was challenging to determine what should remain faithful and what should be fictionalized. I tried to tell my truth, what happened to my family, but I learned cinema doesn't work that way. Cinema demands truth, but cinematic truth has nothing to do with reality. You can't put scene after scene your own experienced "truth" and assume you are telling an honest story. Cinema is a world of its own it's a world with its own rules. The film has a balanced approach with facts and it is emotionally, cinematically, close to the truth.





How did you cast a family like the Mehdipours? Was it an even more emotional process to be casting 'your own' family?

I had many options at hand. Finding the right family was my main task. After many years when I saw the path towards the film that I wanted to make. I had one character in mind. My father. Not that he would play the role, but all my ideas circulated around him and his younger self. After a month or two, all of a sudden, my father's face vanished. Everything he did, everything he was, turned into the actor Shahab Hosseini. His laugh, his jokes, his tendency to protect us with humor - it wasn't my dad anymore, It was Shahab Hosseini-Bahman. Thus casting Bahman set the mood for the story and the rest of the cast.

I tried my best to find the mother – I knew who the father was, and just by believing in that, I tried to find his wife, and mother of the children in the film. The casting instructions were not so difficult; we asked the actors not to fall in despair or sadness, however tough their lines may be. Shabnam Ghorbani seemed to be the only one who remembered that specific note. The Mehdipours were my biggest casting concern, but merely finding people who made you smile was already 90% of the job done. Ramin was the hardest. I had no deep feelings towards the character. So besides trying to find the right young person to attach to emotionally, and someone who can actually act well. It didn't end there. He also needed to speak with the right Persian accent and Finnish too.

We used facebook adds targeted to the Finnish-Iranians. We also send a postcard about the casting to all families that spoke both Farsi and Finnish. We might have reached all possible candidates. I met around thirty of them and in the end the selection was easy. Aran was not an easy character, but a borned superstar. He made everything look so easy. He offered me during the shoot so many amazing options, that honestly I have to say many educated actors aren't still at his level. What about working with Shabab Hosseini, one of the most well known Iranian actors who's familiar with audiences worldwide from his work in the films of Asghar Farhadi?

Even though I had never met Shahab Hosseini, I felt familiarity and warmness towards him or at least to all the characters he portrayed. I had a feeling that I knew him. I think possibly it is because he has been me in every role he has ever played. I always found myself in his characters. Whatever the role was. This was why I wanted to get in touch with him. Story short is that Shahab said yes. His answer was: "If you love the story, If I love the story. We make love together."

If I revealed a secret, that secret would be that Shahab isn't an actor. He is a poet; he can represent humanity on so many different levels that acting isn't enough to achieve those goals.



How was the work for those Iranian actors who did not themselves have the 'immigrant experience'?

This topic never even came to my mind. I believe that every Iranian, in one way or another is an immigrant right now. They have been immigrants for quite some time. But I don't feel acting as an immigrant needs to be the experience. Being an immigrant is a challenging situation like any other problematic situation. You have to survive it in one way or another. Or you won't.



Any Day Now is not a dark film, even when it deals with hard realities, it is filled with a summery energy, light and the happiness of childhood memories. Was this your goal from the start?

Making Any Day Now was a long and challenging project. I lost a lot, and I achieved a lot. The film was meant to be an intimate portrait of our journey because I missed those days. My life hasn't been as exciting since that experience and I haven't reached the same sense of belonging to my family and to other people in need, with the same intensity. During the writing process, I wrote many much darker versions of refugee life and despair that the only thing I wanted in the end, was to guit filmmaking. I went to the Greek island of Lesbos, went to the middle of the sea, and witnessed devastating tragedies, and I walked with Asylum seekers from Greece until Finland. I re-lived my childhood trip, even though very different and with the gaze of an adult seeing himself in every child. I recall those terrible days like yesterday; I didn't want to write such awful stuff, but when I started, everything changed, I changed. Suddenly, I found myself in a place where my trauma was in search of its truth. It

was a significant turning point when I understood that there is no truth in trauma. I can sit ten years, and I still won't find my answer to why? This realization made me stop writing and to completely start over again, think about humanity and my good memories, and that's the point where I began to trust people and take the helping hand I got from my producers. It was their hard work that got me to the shore, and I saw the sun. I have promised myself to never again dive into projects where human beings are not the film's essence. It's very much known to the world that refugees definitely suffer and face a lot of problems. The word refugee itself tells you a thousand stories already, so why tell another one?

In the film there are no 'refugees' – there are families, friends, neighbors and some proud people and they don't compromise on their values. No matter how challenging times have been for them, they are positive and stay strong to face the adversity. Moreover, I wanted to make it clear that being a refugee is not an identity, not 'who we are'. Information and news tends to be focused on terrible things happening around us / to us. Still, it doesn't mean that if 20 Neo-Nazis are demonstrating against asylum seekers that the whole nation is involved. There are thousands and thousands of people helping and doing all they can to help families who need protection. I want the audience to understand that we are good human beings and shouldn't rely too much on burocracy or politicians. We are the giants with huge hearts. If we want change, we have to do it together. We will come to realise that the gap between "us" and those that seek asylum is not that big.







There is no obvious racism or xenophobia present in the film. Does that reflect your own lived experience?

So many good people, strangers, helped us in places like Istanbul (one of the worst places on earth for a refugee). But it doesn't mean we didn't have bad experiences. Good memories always keep coming back. We met a lovely family with a young daughter who was 20. She was very helpful. We did not know these people, but they sheltered us and also helped arrange a crazy "escape" from Istanbul, with daughter becoming a 'bride' and engaging the border security men. So, thanks to them, we survived Istanbul. A similar thing happened in former Yugoslavia. I am not so naïve to say there are no "bad guys," but there are many more good ones. As common Finns are good to asylum seekers, I portrayed them being cooperative and sympathetic. In my personal opinion, the fight should not be against police officers or people in jobs that require the use of force or something equally unpleasant, because, in the end, they are just doing their job. It is the ones at the top, who control our lives. We, the common citizens should know by which means we are exploited. That is the only way to close the gap. The police officers are not guilty of anything, but they are police officers with an assignment.







Where do you situate yourself in current cinema?

During some of the hard times in my life. I learned that the world was a much brighter and more exciting place when I stopped categorizing myself. I became a better man. I love good films from all around the world, but I hope my life and who I become as an individual would affect my films – not other films per se. I have learned from Iranian masters a lot, and also from my Finnish colleagues. My university in England, Farnham UCA, was my foundation. They were my cinematic parents. UCA gave me a good solid foundation to become a good filmmaker. Now my producer Jussi is my mentor who guides me and helps me to adapt to an innovative and creative path. I situate myself in my heart and my mind; I get my influences from my family and friends. I love creativity and my work is the reflection of that. My name is Hamy Ramezan and I'm a filmmaker.

DIRECTOR

HAMY RAMEZAN

Hamy Ramezan is a Finnish-Iranian film director and screenwriter. Having fled persecution in Iran, and survived Yugoslav refugee camps as a young boy, Ramezan and his family arrived in Finland in 1990. He graduated from the film school at UCA, Franham in 2007 and has since completed several short films. His short film *Listen* (2015) premiered at Cannes Directors' Fortnight 2015, has been screened at over 200 festivals and was nominated for Best Short Film at European Film Awards. *Any Day Now* is his feature debut.

FILMOGRAPHY Any Day Now, 2020, 82' Listen, 2015, 12' Keys of Heaven, 2014, 28' Over the Fence, 2009, 28'





PRODUCER

PRODUCTION COMPANY

JUSSI RANTAMÄKI

Jussi Rantamäki (1980) was born in Kokkola Finland Rantamäki has worked in Aamu Film Company since 2008. His first two productions have premiered at the Berlinale and the Cannes Film Festival. He became the sole owner of Aamu Film company on 2013 and the first feature he produced The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki won prix un Certain Regard in Cannes 2016 and was sold to over 30 countries. Jussi has participated in EAVE in 2014 and became a member of the ACE Producer's Network in 2017. He received the State Art Prize in 2016. He works in long-term relationships with four carefully selected fiction directors.

AAMU FILM COMPANY

Aamu Film Company is a film production company founded in 2001. Our goal is to bring high quality art house cinema to broad international audiences. We work with devoted auteur directors in long term relationships that start from making short films and develop into producing international fiction features. During the past eight years we have carefully selected four directors we work with and the company is solely concentrated on the work of these artists. All of our directors make films for individual reasons and we produce the content they are personally drawn to. We know that the content of a film defines its form and production. That's why all our film productions are hand crafted for the content in question.

CAST

SHAHAB HOSSEINI

Shahab Hosseini was born on February 3, 1974 in Tehran, Iran. He grew up in a family of six and was the oldest child. He earned his high school diploma in Biology. He started acting in television and in small cinema roles in early 2000. His international breakthrough happened when he started working with Asghar Farhadi in About Elly (2009). Later he won the Silver Bear Award from the Berlin International Film Festival for his memorable role as the hot-tempered Hodjat in internationally critically acclaimed film The Separation (2011). In 2016 he starred in Farhadi's film The Salesman and won the best actor award in Cannes International Film Festival. Both The Separation and The Salesman went on to win The Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film.

SHABNAM GHORBANI

Shabnam Ghorbani was born on July 10, 1989 in Tehran, Iran, She entered Karnameh Cultural and Artistic Institute in 2014 and successfully graduated a year later in Acting. She started her acting career in 2016 with a theater performance called 4=1 directed by Yavar Darreh Zami. She also played a role in a TV show called Twilight Moment directed by Homayoun Asadian (2017). Her next theater performance was Psychosis 4:48, written by Sarakin and directed by Reyhaneh Nabiyan in 2018. Any Day Now is her film debut. In 2020, she played a role in the series Queen of Beggars made by Hossein Soheilizadeh, which is currently one of the most popular series in 2021 in Iran.

FESTIVALS

Berlinale Generation – International Premiere

FILM INFORMATION

Original Title: Ensilumi English Title: Any Day Now Genre: Drama Country: Finland Language: Farsi, Finnish, English Year: 2020 Duration: 82 min Picture: Color Aspect Ratio: 1.85:1 Sound 51 Available Format: DCP

CAST

Aran-Sina Keshvari Ramin Mehdipour Shahab Hosseini Bahman Mehdipour Shabnam Ghorbani Mahtab Mehdipour Kimiya Eskandari Donya Mehdipour

CREW

Director: Hamy Ramezan Screenplay: Hamy Ramezan & Antti Rautava Cinematography: Arsen Sarkisiants Editing: Joona Louhivuori Language: Finland Set Design: Kari Kankaanpää Costume Design: Kirsi Gum Sound: Svante Colerus Music: Tuomas Nikkinen & Linda Arnkil Still photographer: Sami Kuokkanen Production company: Aamu Film Company With the support of: Finnish Film Foundation, Yle and Church Media Fund Producers: Jussi Rantamäki & Emilia Haukka

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