

HAF 23 Zalava

A DEMON IN BOTTLE

EXISTS OR DOES NOT EXIST

ZALAVA

PRODUCER
IDA PANAHADEH

WRITER & DIRECTOR
ARSALAN AMIRI

CO-PRODUCER
YOSHIE RUTH LINTON

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Iran

GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME: Horror, Black Comedy | Digital Format | Persian | 100 mins

DIRECTOR:

Arsalan AMIRI

PRODUCER:

Ida PANAHANDAH

CO-PRODUCER:

Yoshie Ruth LINTON

HAF GOALS:

Funds, Co-producers

BUDGET:

US\$ 300,000

SECURED BUDGET:

US\$ 20,000

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

First Feature Director

ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

In a village terrified by demonic possession, an agnostic police officer arrests an exorcist on fraud charges when he claims to capture an invisible demon, thereby challenging local beliefs.

SYNOPSIS

In a small village called Zalava, villagers fear a demon among them. A young police officer who believes the villagers are superstitious and that demons do not really exist, encounters an exorcist, Amardan, who claims he can free the village. When Amardan shows an empty bottle, saying that the demon is inside it, the officer arrests him on the charge of fraud. Villagers angrily object but the officer will not let an exorcist abuse people's beliefs. Yet, when another demon seems to attack the village, the officer must return Amardan to the village. Now, Amardan claims the healthcare center is possessed and will not let the nurse, who has had an affair with officer, leave the building. He warns that the demon may follow her and something bad happen. During the exorcism, the officer nonetheless asks the nurse to help a little boy who is terribly ill. On emerging, the nurse faces guns pointed at her, since villagers think she is possessed. The officer comes out to convince them there is no possession, but someone shoots and accidentally kills the nurse. While the village is in shock, Amardan comes out with a new bottle – does it possibly have a demon inside?

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Zalava is my first feature, based upon my experiences as a member of Kurdish ethnic minority in Middle East, Iran. My focus is on problematic, paradoxical arguments between faith and uncertainty, and the traditions and modernity which now constitute the essence of war and unrest in the region. Middle East nations cannot escape the burden of thousands of years of religions and belief, and remain trapped in wars, killings and hatred with no hope for possible solution for peace. I want to depict this agonizing dilemma in my film. Yet, in *Zalava* we explore the challenges people face with sensitive humor, showing how they can believe in a demonic creature and a crazy exorcist while a police officer tries to persuade them that metaphysics does not exist. As script-writer and director I show these people in an ironic situation and makes the audience laugh and worry at the same time for the future of the villagers. The genre of the movie, however, is black comedy as I prefer to make an interesting, artistic film which has the ability to draw in a variety of audiences and to share my ideas internationally about film and genre within a political context.

DIRECTOR

Arsalan AMIRI

Born in 1975 in Kurdish Iran, he holds a B.A. in film and a Master's degree in Dramatic Literature from the Art University of Tehran. He began his career in 2007 writing film scripts. His feature *Nahid* (2015) (dir. Ida Panahandeh) won the Promising Future Award at Cannes Film Festival, Un Certain Regard. He continued his collaboration with Panahandeh in *Israfil* (2017, feature, BFI Premier) and others and was invited to write *The Nikaidos' Fall* (2018, feature) in Japan (dir. Panahandeh, Japan & Hong Kong). He is also a documentary filmmaker, producer and editor and has made several short films.

PRODUCER

Ida PANAHANDEH

An Iranian filmmaker, documentary and short film producer. Her debut feature, *Nahid* (2015) won the Promising Future Award in Cannes Film Festival (2015). Her latest feature is *The Nikaidos' Fall* (2018) with Naomi Kawase as Executive Producer. *Zalava* is her first feature producing experience.

Yoshie Ruth LINTON (CO-PRODUCER)

A Singapore-based producer with Japanese origin. Specializes in co-production with Japan and overseas; has worked with international film directors like Ida Panahandeh for *The Nikaidos' Fall* (2018), Naomi Kawase for *Vision* (2018), and Carlos Quintela for *The Wolf of the East* (2017).

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Evareh Film Studio

Evareh Film Studio is a Tehran based company that started in 2005. The founders are Ida Panahandeh and Arsalan Amiri and its mission is to produce independent short, documentary and feature films. So far, Evareh film has supported more than fifteen films. The latest one is a feature *Souzana'b* (2019) by Bahman Shahravan.