



BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

SHAYDA (15)

Director: Noora Niasari

Starring: Zar Amir Ebrahimi, Osamah Sami, Leah Purcell

Australia, 2023, 1 hour 57 minutes, English/Persian + English subtitles

It's a film with airtight verisimilitude: you don't doubt its authenticity for a moment. Tension is skillfully sustained throughout and the drama has a pressurising effect, the air intensifying in a long, slow rise towards crescendo, Niasari never quite releasing the pressure valve and never taking the easy route. –

The Guardian

The differing values of the diaspora hold a commanding presence in the film. The rigidity of life vs. fluidity of motion is at constant odds as Shayda reckons with her own desires and methods of escape as well as the overbearing traditionalism that tries to knock her down. From divorce to education, the doctrine of this sect of her culture demands compliance she is not willing to give, and while some in her community embrace her, others, like Hossein, seek to punish her. Even in a high-stakes, climactic encounter with her husband, as bystanders attempt to shield her, other men proclaim "he has a right to see his wife." And so ensues a collision between masculine rights, moral consequences, and female agency—and these totems of reality persist emphatically and emotionally throughout the film's runtime. – **Roger Ebert**

As we already know from Iranian cinema classics such as Asghar Farhadi's *A Separation* (2011), divorce is a very serious matter within the culture — so much so that Shayda even faces pushback from her own mother, who tells her, "No one's life is perfect," adding, "At least he's a good father." But what's interesting about Niasari's telling of this tale is that it's not about a woman's flight into secularism; Shayda is proud of her Persian heritage, and it's no coincidence that her story takes place against the backdrop of Nowruz, the Iranian New Year. – **Deadline**

Preview courtesy of Vertigo Releasing

Notes compiled by Holly Dennison

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