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SELECTION
SERIES
MANIA

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شادی HAPPINESS



A SERIES CREATED BY POURIA TAKAVAR AND YASHAR ALISHENAS
DIRECTED BY: POURIA TAKAVAR

STARRING: GHAZAL SHOJAIE, SOHEIL BAVI, SETAREH MALEKI, ARIA GAZOR, SOLMAZ GHANI
COPRODUCTION : ARTE FRANCE, LA ONDA PRODUCTIONS
(FRANCE, 2021, 15X6')

From Monday 20 September 2021
on arte.tv, YouTube and the Instagram account [arte_asuivre](https://www.instagram.com/arte_asuivre)

la.onda



From the North of Tehran to the South of a fast-changing Iran, the journey of four young people in a chaotic and initiatory road trip that underlies a very universal quest: that of oneself and the search for happiness. Directed by a young director, a series with a rhythmic narration and an innovative elliptical structure that offers a plunge into today's Iran, close to its youth, torn between ancestral tradition, censorship and modernity.

Tehran, 2021. As her mother prepares to emigrate to France, 17-year-old Shadi («happiness» in Persian) discovers that her father, whom she has not seen in years, has not given his consent to this project. In search of independence and in conflict with her mother, the young girl then organizes, with three accomplices, her runaway across Iran to find him. This small gang of city dwellers, hip to rap and addicted to smartphones, who flout the rules like any other teenagers, will discover,

during a memorable road trip, other facets of their country, an Iran that is wilder, more unusual and sometimes stricter. After the success of @teh_run (2017), Pouria Takavar's previous Instagram series, then followed by more than 50,000 subscribers, ARTE wanted to co-produce, with La Onda, Happiness, the new fiction of the young Tehran-based director. In it, he refines the portrait of a youth longing for freedom, happiness and self-affirmation, with their eyes riveted on Instagram to pursue their hopes and dreams. «Thanks to social networks,» he says, «young Iranians have access to other lifestyles like that of Americans. They want to be like them in a country that forces them not to be.»

Full of humor, unexpected and funny situations, Happiness reveals the aspirations and questions of a fringe of Iranian youth eager to enjoy life in a country where drinking alcohol remains illegal and flirting rhymes with clandestinity. «Iranians think that one

of the solutions to their problems is to leave,» says Pouria Takavar. That's what Shadi does. She leaves her mother, then the capital, and goes on the road with her friends, hoping to enjoy life more. But will she really have the opportunity to do so in Iran?» In fifteen five-minute episodes, the director succeeds in staging a fast-paced odyssey, coupled with a moving initiation quest and a timid romance. First Franco-Iranian webseries co-produced by ARTE, Happiness will be available on arte.tv, Youtube and, of course, Instagram, «a perfect opportunity to make the series accessible to Europeans as well as to my compatriots», concludes Pouria Takavar. The publication of the episodes on IGTV will be accompanied by Instagram stories that will chronicle the adventure, with videos captured on the way by the characters and maps to follow their movements.



The first episodes

1 - Shadi

Shadi and her best friend Ferial are enjoying the sunshine and singing at the top of their lungs on the swings in the playground of Atisaz, a privileged housing complex in northern Tehran. A young man watches them from a distance, amused.

Ferial laughs at Shadi: there's no point in moving to France if she doesn't dare to talk to guys...

2 - Baudelaire on the balcony

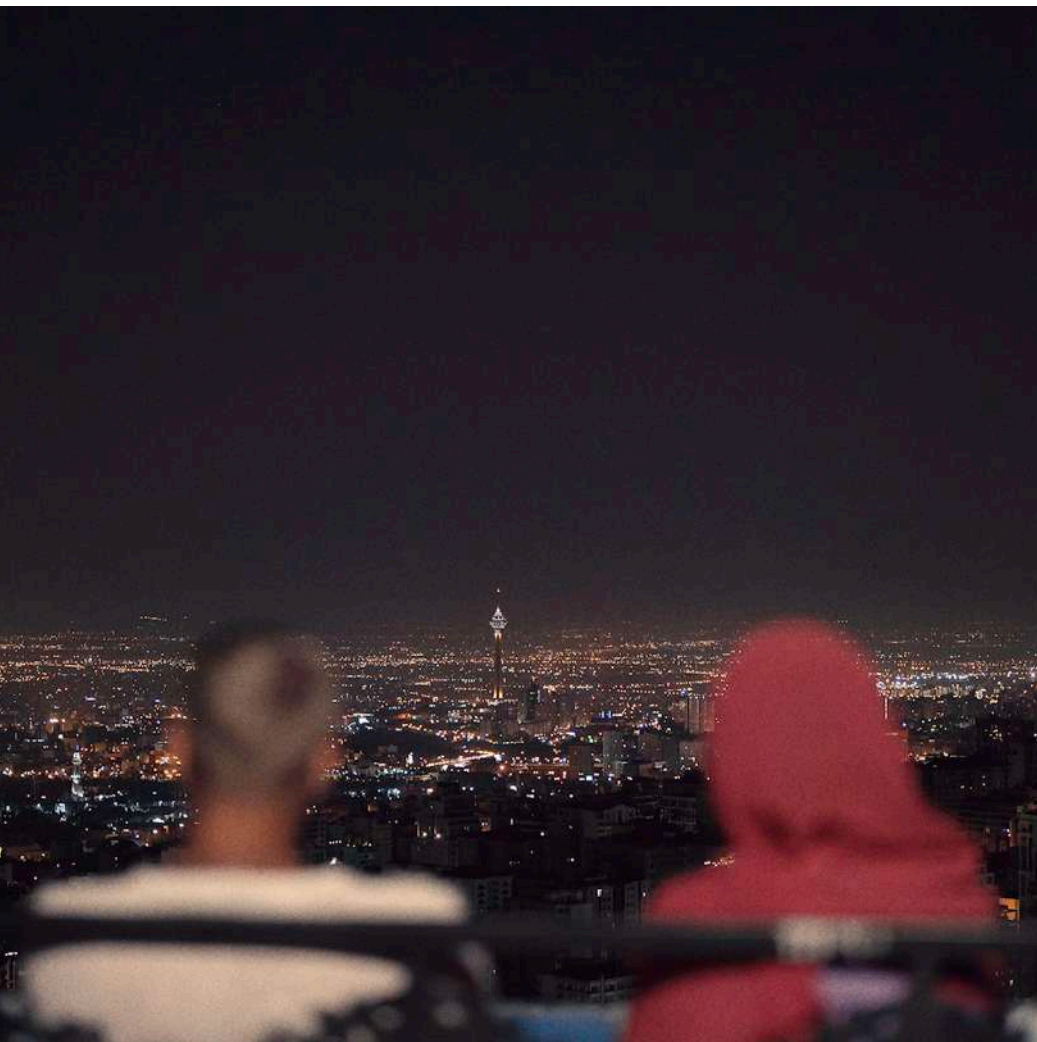
Shadi is bored in a private French class. Les Fleurs du Mal? Les Fleurs of Boredom yes... Until she receives a message on Instagram: «This is Sina, the guy from yesterday.»

3 - Such sweet immorality

Shadi and her mother are summoned to the office of the high school principal. The girl was caught red-handed with the bottle of wine offered the day before by Sina, but alcohol is prohibited in Iran. The principal's reprimands gradually turn into threats linked to their departure for France. During this stormy conversation, Shadi discovers that her father is probably unaware of their imminent emigration.

4 - Kish

Shadi returns from Ferial's house where she had taken refuge after an argument with her mother. Back home, she overhears a conversation and learns more about her future in Paris. Does she really have a say?



5 - Rendezvous at the top

Shadi has decided to run away and visit her father, whom she has not heard from for several years now, in Kish. To get to the south, she and Ferial need a car and a driver. They arrange to meet Sina at Bam-e, a hill north of the city whose name means «the roof of Tehran». Sina seems to be the ideal accomplice, but he must accept...

6 - Exit Tehran

Finally free from the traffic jams of Tehran, we head south to Kish! The mood is happy in the van even if Parsa is not the co-pilot Sina would



have dreamed of. Shadi suggests making a stop to see a disused amusement park. The young people discover to their cost that their carelessness can play tricks on them.

7 - The soul of Iran

Having been robbed of all their travel money, Shadi, Ferial, Parsa and Sina must stop in Qom, the religious center of Iran. The four Teheranese risk not going unnoticed...

The characters



SHADI

Shadi is this discreet girl who stays away at a party, with a vague expression in her eyes. She spends most of her days with her best friend Ferial on the playgrounds of Atisaz. But it's not by hanging out there, listening to the same rap songs and smoking weed that Shadi will blossom. So she prefers to go feed the stray cats in her neighborhood to escape the slightly overprotective control of her mother Sarah. They are due to move to Paris soon, but Shadi is beginning to realize that her plans to emigrate have never taken into account what she wanted. The young girl feels that something is missing; she doesn't know what would make her happy but she is looking for it. She often follows Ferial to the cool parties in the north of Teheran, where she observes, always a little at a distance, the morals of her friends.



SARAH

For this atheist single mother, the Islamic Republic of Iran has become a hell: in the school where Sarah works as an English and French teacher, her male colleagues are all better paid than her; in the street, she is often looked at as if she was a prostitute; even her own friends judge her for having cut ties with her ex-husband. With no ties and no prospects, Sarah is determined to leave Iran before it is too late. She hopes that by moving to Paris, her daughter will be able to obtain a French baccalaureate and continue her education in France. Very busy with her departure preparations, she does not realize that she is starting to oppress Shadi. Her little girl, with whom she had such a close relationship, is growing up and moving away from her.



SINA

Sina is that resourceful guy, who plays with his good looks and natural ability to get out of any situation. Since his mother abandoned him to emigrate to Turkey, he's been living off of selling pirated video games, Afghan marijuana, and Turkish alcohol. The burden of living expenses has forced him to put his dream of cinema aside; he is content to live as best he can, and maintains very good relations with countless friends and acquaintances who form his large surrogate family: Sina knows all of Tehran and he plays with it. But he had not yet met Shadi, this young girl with a piercing look who touched him by her strength of character and her maturity.



FERIAL

Ferial comes from a traditional, wealthy family. Her caring parents spoiled her like a Persian princess. As she grew up, she became a fun-loving and energetic girl who is convinced that the world will admire her sooner or later. Determined to become an actress, she believes in two forces to help her accomplish her dream: Instagram and Allah; for Ferial, praying to God and collecting followers is not a contradiction. In fact, she even suspects that God and the Internet are mysteriously linked. Constantly seeking adventures and often provocative, Ferial is a friend with whom there is never a dull moment. She lives her life in a carefree manner, a casualness that permeates everything: her body, her friends, her followers. At least Ferial knows what makes her happy: attention, in all its forms.



PARSA

At 19, Parsa has spent more time reading than seeing the light of day: libraries have become his natural habitat. Admitted to one of the country's most prestigious universities, he is the kind of nerdy friend you hang out with more because you know he'll be successful than for his near-zero social intelligence. The time Parsa doesn't spend with his nose in books, he spends following Ferial, his cousin who is his exact opposite. He is supposed to chaperone her, but in fact Ferial uses her cousin as an alibi for her parents. Parsa can live with this as the young girl adds a healthy dose of unexpectedness to his monotonous life, as when he finds himself involved in Shadi's plan to run away...



A young and talented team

If there is one quest shared by men and women around the world, it is the search for happiness. Torn between East and West, rooted in the traditions of an ancient empire, plundered, resurrected, Islamized, modernized and revolutionized, Iran has become a source of lively debate, curiosity and even fascination. Beyond the ever-present Islamic theocracy, the country is home to Western influences, a mix of cultures and religions, ruins of ancient history, not to mention vast landscapes... In the midst of all this tumult, we ask a simple question: what does it mean to be happy in Iran today?

Our point of entry into this intriguing civilization is a 17-year-old girl, Shadi (which literally means «happiness»), who, like all teenagers, is struggling to make sense of her life, the world around her, and especially the happiness she can find on earth. She sees around her different ways of aspiring to this bliss: a mother frustrated by Iran who expects fulfillment in Paris, teenagers who party and constantly seek the approval of others on social networks, narrow-

minded teachers who only have academic success in mind... None of them satisfies Shadi: most of the people around her succumb to the overwhelming pressure of their ideals, which are by definition often beyond their reach. For the young girl, happiness must lie elsewhere, and she begins to question herself when the opportunity arises: with her friends, she leaves her Westernized bubble of Tehran and begins an eventful journey into the Iranian unknown. Along the way, she learns more about her own country, which she would rather stay in despite, or perhaps because of, its complexity. Her journey brings our heroine back to her dilemma: «Do I really want to leave?»

We were drawn to the road movie format because it offers a myriad of variations on the theme of happiness that challenge Shadi's quest and allows us to discover vicariously what happiness means today for a young adult in Iran. Moreover, the journey is a great source of discovery, but also of friction and conflict: Shadi and her friends in Tehran will

experience moments of joy as well as despair through unexpected encounters with traditional Iran, its nature, not to mention Iranians who have never listened to rap or barely heard of Instagram.

Iran is indeed paradoxical: steeped in ancient traditions, it is also one of the most active countries in the world on Instagram. In a society subject to heavy censorship, the app has become very popular, especially among young Iranians who use it both to share with each other and to get a glimpse of the outside world beyond the regime. Releasing this series about Iranian youth on Instagram seemed like an obvious choice: it's both a great opportunity to make the series accessible to Europeans and Iranians alike, and since the app has become a place of expression and inspiration for a whole connected generation, it offers innovative tools that allow both the telling of a linear series and the offering of a non-linear universe to the viewers through the stories.

Pouria Takavar and Yashar Alishenas



Pouria Takavar

Pouria Takavar is an Iranian director, screenwriter and editor born in 1995. Growing up with a camera in his hand, Pouria shot his first film at the age of 6. Starting in 2014, he made several short films selected in festivals and Olive, a paradisiacal fruit (2016), a short documentary film that inspired him to further his work on Iranian youth. He became known to a young audience as the director of the Instagram series @teh_runn in 2017 (90 episodes of 1 minute), counting more than 50,000 subscribers during its broadcast and an average of 55,000 views per episode. It was during this broadcast that the ARTE team spotted him and met him by dedicating an episode of Tous les internets, ARTE's webmagazine that tells the story of our societies through the uses of the web.

Filmographie :

The Toy Sho - short film - 2001
The Details - short film - 2014
The Easy Solution - short film - 2014
The Monopod - short film - 2015
Who I really am? - short film - 2016
Olive, a heavenly fruit - documentary short film - 2016
@teh_runn - series - 90x1' - 2017
Youthful Days - series TV - 30x45' - 2021
Happiness - series - 15x6' - 2021



Yashar Alishenas

Born in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, he moved as a child to Stockholm, where he grew up. Both producer and screenwriter, Yashar Alishenas has produced independent films in Iran, while in Europe his creations tend towards more character-driven dramas and comedies. Swedish and Iranian, he draws inspiration from our times, the thin veneer of civilization and the classical education he received at Heidelberg and Oxford, where he studied philosophy, literature and political science. As a screenwriter, he has developed comedy dramas with SVT and Audible, and is currently writing a dark comedy about the limits of tolerance, as well as a French series about denial, entitled The revolution never happened.

Artistic list

Ghazal Shojaie.....Shadi
Soheil Bavi.....Sina
Setareh Maleki.....Ferial
Aria Gazor.....Parsa
Solmaz Ghani.....Sarah
Farhad Atghaee.....Babak

Technical list

Direction.....Pouria Takavar
Creation.....Pouria Takavar, Yashar Alishnas
Based on an original idea.....Pouria Takavar
Screenplay.....Pouria Takavar, Yashar Alishnas
Alicia Pratz, Louise Silverio
Editing.....Afsaneh Salari
Image.....Ali Ehsani
Sound.....Vahid Razavian
Music.....Clémence Le Gall, Elyot Milshtein
Production Iran.....Hesam Eslami
Production.....ARTE France, La Onda Productions
(Baptiste Bertin et Thibaud Ader)

With the support of the CNC.

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