

# 3 FACES

(Se Rokh)

A film by  
Jafar Panahi



100 mins / Iran / 2018 /Farsi and Azeri with English subtitles/Certificate 15  
Cannes Film Festival 2018 – Best Screenplay  
Toronto, New York, London Film Festivals 2018

**Release 29 March 2019**

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## SYNOPSIS:

Actress Behnaz Jafari is distraught when she comes across a young girl's video plea for help after her family prevents her from taking up her studies at the Tehran drama conservatory. Behnaz abandons her shoot and turns to the filmmaker Jafar Panahi to help her with the young girl's troubles. They travel by car to the rural, Azeri-speaking Northwest of Iran, where they encounter the charming and generous folk of the girl's mountain village. But Behnaz and Jafar also discover that old traditions die hard.

Further information and downloads [here](#)

Photo set can be downloaded [here](#)



## CREW

Writer, Producer, Director	Jafar Panahi
Executive Producer	Nader Saievar
Photography	Amin Jafari
Editor	Mastaneh Mohajer
Assistant Editor	Panah Panahi
Sound Editing and sound design	Alireza Alavian
Sets, costumes, make-up	Leila Naghdi
Sound recording	Abdolreza Heydari
Post production	Pooya Abbasian
1st assistant camera	Reza Sepehri
2nd assistant camera	Hashem Darzi
Perchman	Milad Ehsani Nasab
Special effects	Hamed Musavi
Original music	Imaj Studio Tabriz
Assistant Director	Peyman Shahbazi

## CAST

Behnaz Jafari	Behnaz Jafari
Jafar Panahi	Jafar Panahi
Marziyeh Rezaei	Marziyeh Rezaei
Maedeh	Erteghaei Maedeh
Mother	Narges Del Aram
Old lady in the tomb	Fatemeh Ismaeilnejad
Yadollah	Dadashnejad Yadollah
Karbalaei	Ahmad Naderi Mehr
Old man on the road	Hassan Mihammadi
Marziyeh's brother	Mehdi Panahi
Cow owner	Asghar Aslani
Duduk player	Yusef Moharamian
Poetry reading	Shahrzad (Kobra Saeedi)

Iran 2018 1:1.85

100 mins

## JAFAR PANAHI

Jafar Panahi was born in 1960 in Mianeh, Iran. After studying cinema he made shorts, documentaries and TV films. He became the assistant director on Abbas Kiarostami's *Through the Olive Trees*.

He directed his first feature *The White Balloon*, which premiered in 1977 at Cannes Directors' Fortnight and won the Camera d'Or. *The Mirror* premiered in 2000 in Locarno and won the Golden Leopard. *The Circle* premiered in 2003 in Venice and won the Golden Lion. *Crimson Gold* premiered in Un Certain Regard in Cannes and won The Jury Prize. *Offside* premiered in 2006 in Berlin and won the Silver Bear for Best Director. *This is Not a Film* premiered in 2012 in Cannes Official Selection in Special Screening. *Closed Curtain* premiered in 2013 in Berlin and won the Silver Bear for Best Script. *Taxi Tehran* premiered in 2015 in Berlin and won the Golden Bear. *3 Faces* premiered in 2018 in Cannes and won the Best Screenplay award.

Jafar Panahi's films are known for portraying realistic images of Iranian society, and so most of them have had trouble being screened in Iran. Only his first film, *The White Balloon* has been granted a screening licence in Iran.

After the 2009 protests at the re-election of Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, Panahi was arrested twice; the second time for 86 days. The Iranian government released him on bail following pressure from international film festivals, artists and well-known filmmakers and Panahi's own hunger strike.

According to the final judgment by the court, he was condemned to a twenty-year ban on filmmaking, screenwriting, travelling outside of the country and giving interviews. He could be condemned to six years in prison if breaking these restrictions, which is why his past three films and this one were made without authorization. Panahi has won a number of human rights prizes, such as the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought and The Medal of Art for Freedom.

## FILMOGRAPHY

2018 3 FACES – Best Screenplay, Cannes Film Festival

2015 TAXI TEHRAN – Golden Bear, Berlin Film Festival

2013 CLOSED CURTAIN (Pardé) – Competition, Berlin Film Festival

2011 THIS IS NOT A FILM (In film nist) – Special Screening, Cannes Film Festival

2006 OFFSIDE – Best Director, Berlin Film Festival

2003 CRIMSON GOLD (Talaye Sorkh) – Un Certain Regard

2000 THE CIRCLE (Dayereh) – Golden Lion, Venice Film Festival

1997 THE MIRROR (Ayneh) – Golden Leopard, Locarno Film Festival

1995 THE WHITE BALLOON (Badkonake Sefid) – Caméra d'or, Cannes Film Festival



## ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

Social networks are extremely popular in Iran, with many people yearning to connect with film celebrities. Despite being forbidden to make movies in his own country, Jafar Panahi remains a very popular recipient of messages, many from young people who want to make films. While he usually deletes them, sometimes he is touched by a sincerity, an intensity, that has led him to wonder more about those who send him these messages. One day he received a message on Instagram that raised his concern, and during the same period the newspapers wrote about a young girl who had committed suicide because she had been banned from making movies. This made him imagine receiving a video of this suicide by social media, and he wondered how he would react to that. This is how the story of 3 Faces was born.

## A NARROW AND WINDING ROAD

Jafar Panahi wanted to look back at Iranian cinema history and explore what has hindered its artists, in different ways, at different times. Hence the idea of evoking three generations, those of past, present and future, through the three characters of the actresses. Out of composing these three stories came the image of this narrow and winding road, which is a concrete metaphor for all the limitations that prevent people from living and evolving. The winding road needed for the script actually exists, even if today it is no longer used. Cars generally take another road, wider and paved.

## THE SHOOT



The 3 Faces shoot took place in three villages: the birthplaces of Panahi's mother, father and grandparents. Such a familiar and protective environment

greatly facilitated the possibility of filming without risk. Using a very sensitive camera sent by his daughter who lives in France, he was even able to work outdoors at night without the need for heavy equipment. As always, Jafar Panahi wrote the entire script. Filming outdoors was a much welcomed change after his previous movies (*This is Not a Film*, *Closed Curtain*, *Taxi Tehran*), which confined him to interiors – an apartment, a house, a car.

The three villages used in the shoot are located in the northwest of Iran, in the Azeri speaking part of Iran, where people in the countryside are particularly attached to local traditions, with some aspects still very archaic. The attitude of the inhabitants in the film is consistent with what is still happening in this region.

BEHNAZ JAFARI (The “first” face)



At first, Jafar Panahi had planned that the couple arriving at the village would be played by another actress and her husband, who is a producer. This actress could not make the film, so he proposed the lead role to Behnaz Jafari, who is a famous actress in Iran. She has appeared in many films since Samira Makhmalbaf's *Blackboards* (2000), as well as in very popular TV series. The episode being watched in a café in *3 Faces* was actually being broadcast on TV when the scene was shot. Alongside her, Panahi decided to take on the other role, using his good knowledge of the Azeri language and participate in engaging with the villagers and the girl who sent the message.. Known for having a strong personality, Behnaz Jafari was keen to fully commit to the project, and refused to be paid.

SHAHRZAD & MARZIYEH REZAEI (the other two “faces”)

The second major female character of the film is played by Marziyeh Rezaei whom the director met by chance in the street, and was immediately convinced that the young woman was born for this role.



The third “face” is legendary Iranian movie star Shahrzad (real name Kobra Saeedi), who is popular even with the younger generations. Her most famous role was in Massoud Kimiai's great film noir, *Qeysar* (1969). Shahrzad performs a sensual number that has been compared to Rita Hayworth's in *Gilda*. *3 Faces* points out how actresses have always been regarded with a level of disrespect, perceived as ‘easy’ women, both before and after the Islamic Revolution. One of Panahi's goals is to emphasize how much they were, and are, true artists. This is the case of Shahrzad, star of the pre-revolutionary era's mainstream cinema, who is often highlighted in song and dance numbers, but also happens to be a renowned poet and author. Once the film was shot, Panahi went to Isfahan where Shahrzad actually lives. He asked her permission to use her name. She not only accepted, but agreed to recite her poetry for the movie. Like all the stars of that period, Shahrzad was banned from performing after the Revolution. She is never seen in *3 Faces*. Her presence is simulated by her absence, a figure in the shadows or seen from behind in the distance. We only hear her voice reciting her own poetry.

## EXPLORING MASCULINE / FEMININE THEMES

Similar to Shahrzad, the notable Iranian actor Behrouz Vossoughi is made reference to on a poster in *3 Faces*. He is immensely popular, and remained so even though he exiled to the United States after the Revolution. He starred in Amir Naderi's *Tangsir* (1973), a contemporary western style film - a tale of revolt against the corrupt - whose character continues to embody a spirit to which the Iranians proudly hail as a hero. Vossoughi was one of the most celebrated incarnations of heroic male power in films of a proclaimed machismo, characteristic of pre-revolutionary mainstream cinema. Although forms of masculine dominance have changed since then, they have not disappeared from the screen. *3 Faces* is critical of this legacy, and puts its female characters at the centre of the story. Very present in the most traditional parts of society, the fetishization of the foreskin is also put under question. The sacralization of this snippet of skin, as well as issues related to the reproductive powers of a bull, are made fun of and are a major theme of the film.



## A CHANGE OF MOOD IN IRAN

Unlike *Taxi Tehran*, where the names of the collaborators were not mentioned in the end credits, everyone in the cast and crew is credited in *3 Faces*. During the previous film, technicians were afraid of the consequences if their name appeared. For this film, everyone insisted on appearing in the end credits.

There has been a rise in protests in Iran in 2017, which has resulted in the mobilization of many film professionals who have written to the Iranian president and government to support allowing Jafar Panahi to continue making films and allowing him to travel to festivals like Cannes. Panahi welcomed the support, but insists that he be authorized to film as he sees fit, and to showcase his films in his country. Panahi also wants to shed a spotlight on abused filmmakers in Iran and ask that they be left in peace, and allowed to freely travel and make films - starting with Mohammad Rassoulof, who was arrested along with Panahi in 2009, and had his passport seized by authorities after he presented his last film abroad.

Notes by Jean-Michel Frodon