

DRUM --- TABLA



31. Venice
International Film
Critics' Week



a film by Keywan Karimi



SYNOPSIS

A middle-aged lawyer works and lives alone in a dreary apartment. One cold and rainy day, a disheveled man breaks in and entrusts him with a small package. The following day, the lawyer's apartment is ransacked and he must fight off threats to hand over the package. Neither his girlfriend nor his best friend can offer much help in solving the mystery. His best friend also happens to be a drug addict with a tendency to speak to an imaginary friend. The lawyer continues to be plagued with break-ins and unwelcome visitors, but he avoids attempts to corrupt him. When his girlfriend is stabbed to death, the lawyer's thirst for revenge will lead him to the greediest man of all...

COMMENTS FROM FILMMAKER KEYWAN KARIMI

GREED

We don't know clearly what is inside the package, but it is obviously something very important to cause so much trouble for the lawyer in DRUM. Greed is the subject of DRUM. It's about corrupt societies where people are capable of killing to get even just a little money. There are no moral values. Wealth from corruption has put Tehran in its current state for the past 50 years, from the Shah to the current regime. DRUM is based on a story written in the 60s, but it remains valid and it could very well happen today. We can see the same greed and the same dream of domination throughout the region. In a certain way, time does not exist in the film. The audience cannot determine the exact time of the events. We are outside of time. It's just an era of focus on wealth, a time when the gap between rich and poor entails an even greater social and cultural gap.

THE LAWYER & THE ADDICT

The lawyer basically lives in his office study. He does not attach much importance to his work or to life in general (like the failed 60s intellectuals). The drug addict is the lawyer's longtime friend. The addict lives in a dilapidated house he inherited from his father. It's in this house where everything collapses and drowns in shit, literally. The addict is judged mentally ill by others because he speaks only to his imaginary friend. The detox center where he is sent is basically a mental asylum. These characters are people who speak out against injustice. In some respects, the death of the men of power in the addict's house is a form of revenge by this social class for the conditions they must withstand.



TRAPS & LIES

Tehran became the capital of Iran in the early reign of Qajar (17th Century). A city with a diverse architecture, Iranian and Western constructions often inspired by French architects. After the fall of the Qajar and the early frenetic Pahlavi reign (early 19th century), the modernization of Iran destroyed old buildings and greed has created an ugly and deformed city. DRUM is a metaphor for the destruction of Tehran. The metaphors in the film illustrate both the present and the past. Wealth not only destroyed the buildings, it also destroyed values and eventually led to the attack on the environment. Tehran has become a city of lights and colorful neon where people come from everywhere to settle on the edge of town. Criminals and smugglers hide there, and political activists make it their barricade. Tehran is a city of lies and traps, a city of random architecture, an underground city.

It was not my intention to be romantic or nostalgic about the city. It's more of a scathing critique that says Tehran is also a victim of greed, headed toward annihilation. The city is not only a geographical entity, it has a body. Tehran has its contradictions and we see them in the city's quest for modernity and suffering.

CRISIS AESTHETICS

In the street sequences, the city becomes a character headed toward destruction. We see deserted streets and unfinished and abandoned buildings, like where junky lives, a ruined house inherited from his father with traces of the architecture of the Qajar era. All around there are huge towers and shopping centers. Usually Iranian filmmakers choose upscale areas for shooting, but I prefer to film in areas where we can see how poorer people live and work.

Tehran is a metropolis of 17 million people, so it was difficult to choose days where we could have empty streets. Showing empty streets is a way to reflect on Tehran in different way, in the past. We shot in the early Spring when many businesses were closed for the New Year holidays.

For me cinema is about editing, and the editing table is where I try to obtain a dialectical relationship between the elements. I use an almost documentary approach in my films. I use images from my environment and the screenplay merges among these images. I call this "Street Filmmaking", a film with a lot of elements from the street and the city. DRUM was made under different conditions, under more pressure. This type of filmmaking can be called "Crisis Aesthetics".





BLACK AND WHITE

I like to film in B&W because I like the way it looks, but behind this there are various intentions. Strong contrasts in black and white images show the ambivalence of the characters, their contradictions and fears. When the lawyer is in his girlfriend's house, the images are highly contrasted. The shadows on the walls of their bedroom during a love scene, reminiscent of expressionism and foretell death. We do not see a murder scene, we see only the scene announcing the death. Events such as the murder or the last scene of the drowning in the septic tank are not actually shown. They are hinted at through the atmosphere and sounds.

SILENCE AND SOUNDS

DRUM has no composed score. We only hear source music and ambient sounds which sometimes give rhythm. There is very little dialogue in the film and the result is a deep silence that accentuates the heaviness of the atmosphere. In some sequences of the film we hear only the voice of the "witness" of the scene: the sounds of cars and trucks carrying construction materials (bricks, iron bars). Shouts and conversations on the street, the sequence in the public bath house where junky meets lawyer meeting for the first time, the sounds of massage and scrubbing tissues that can sometimes seem like music.

ALIMORAD FADAIENIA'S "DRUM"

Iranian writer Alimorad Fadaenia wrote the novel "Drum" in the 60s. He continues to write in Persian today, but he has been living in the US for the past 40 years, in almost total isolation and he stays in touch with only a few old friends.

The 60s were a strange period in the history of Iran: oil profits increased and the country's economic development was accompanied by dreams of the Shah and his leaders - dreams of a better life, dreams of a growing influence in the region. A feeling of superiority increased: "We are the best because we are rich."

In Iran, there have always been intellectuals and artists paid by governments to convey propaganda. There have also always been protesting intellectuals who write in newspapers and who are sometimes imprisoned and tortured. One group suppresses and the other is suppressed. But during this period, there was a third group whose works are now being rediscovered, works that speak of a more bitter reality. Alimorad Fadaenia is one of these writers. Such artists/activists were victims of government repression and they also received contempt from the intelligentsia. This current expressed a radical critique of the policy choices of the Shah's government and the whole of society.



KEYWAN KARIMI

DRUM is Keywan Karimi's first feature film.

Born in 1985, Karimi is an Iranian filmmaker of Kurdish origin. His short films, such as *Broken Border* (2012) and *The Adventures of a Married Couple* (2013), were presented in numerous international film festivals. Because of his documentary *Writing on the City* (2015), focusing on the graffiti of Tehran walls from the 1979 Islamic Revolution to the 2009 re-election of Mohamoud Ahmadinejad, Karimi was arrested and held in isolation for two weeks in December 2013. In October 2015, he was condemned to six years in prison and 223 lashes for "offending Islamic sacredness." In February 2016, the appeal judgment confirmed all convictions but reduced the prison sentence to one year imprisonment but kept the 223 lashes.

His freedom is currently in a state of limbo: he has not yet been imprisoned, but he has not been acquitted and he can no longer appeal his final sentence. His status can be considered house arrest as he is unable to travel anywhere, for example: the Venice Film Festival for the premiere of DRUM.

Karimi considers Yilmaz Guney (the Cannes Palme d'Or winner for 1982's *YOL* and a Turkish director of Kurdish origin) as an inspirational example of a filmmaker who stood up for freedom of expression.

FILMOGRAPHY

2016	DRUM (TABL)
2015	WRITING ON THE CITY (documentary)
2014	RASHID (documentary)
2013	THE ADVENTURES OF A MARRIED COUPLE (short fiction)
2012	BROKEN BORDER (short documentary)
2011	ACT (short documentary)
2011	THE COLOR OF OLIVE (short documentary)
2009	THE CHILDREN OF DEPTH (short documentary)
2008	MAN AND PUCKETT (short documentary)
2007	ANTI EARTHQUAKE CONEX (short documentary)





a Les Films de l'Après-Midi production

DRUM (TABL)
a film by Keywan Karimi

2016 - France/Iran - 95 minutes - B&W - in Farsi

MAIN CAST

The Lawyer	Amirreza Naderi
The Girlfriend	Sara Gholizade
The Drug Addict	Akbar Zanjani
The Disheveled Man	Dariussh Pirniakan
The Greedy Man	Elyas Rasouli
The Caretaker	Hushang Honaramooz
Thug 1	Ardalan Haji Rahim
Thug 2	Ali Farschchi
Attacker	Mohammad Safajouyi

MAIN CREW

Director	Keywan Karimi
Screenplay	Keywan Karimi
Director of Photography	Amin Jaferi
Editing	Keywan Karimi, Farahnaz Sharifi
Sound	Reza Tehrani
Sound Designer & Musician	Bamdad Afshar
Production Designer	Keywan Karimi
1st Assistant Director	Hamid Reza Ghafarzade
Producer	Francois D'Artemare (les Films de l'Après-Midi)



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