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pressroom.pbs.org/programs/independent_lens/arusi_persian_wedding

For the program companion website, visit pbs.org/independentslens/arusipersianwedding

“ARUSI PERSIAN WEDDING” TO HAVE ITS BROADCAST PREMIERE ON THE PBS SERIES INDEPENDENT LENS ON MARCH 17, 2009

Film Explores What Happens When an Iranian American Takes His California-Bred Bride to Iran

(San Francisco, CA)—Filmmaker Marjan Tehrani chronicles her brother’s journey to Iran, their father’s birthplace, as he travels with his Caucasian wife to have a traditional Persian wedding ceremony and explore his lost heritage. Weaving the young couple’s personal story with historical footage that illuminates the complex history of America’s relationship with Iran, **ARUSI PERSIAN WEDDING** goes behind the curtain of political tension to offer a rare glimpse of both modern and traditional Iran. **ARUSI PERSIAN WEDDING** will have its broadcast premiere on Tuesday, March 20, 2009, at 10 PM (check local listings) on the PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard.

Brooklyn filmmaker Marjan Tehrani and her brother, Alex, were born in America and raised in Berkeley by their Iranian father and Jewish mother. They grew up during the Iranian Islamic Revolution, when the shah was expelled and anti-American sentiment exploded, resulting in the infamous hostage crisis of 1979 and setting in motion decades of miscommunication, threats and vitriol between the American and Iranian governments. Through a very personal story, **ARUSI PERSIAN WEDDING** explores the complex and troubled relationship between America, the country of Marjan and Alex’s birth, and Iran, the country of their heritage.

Marjan and Alex’s father, Reza, had a deep love for his country, but emigrated to the United States in the 1970s to find his fortune. Following the revolution, complications with visas prevented him from bringing his children with him on his frequent return trips back home. But in 2005, in the midst of the Iraq war, Alex and his Caucasian wife, Heather, announced that they were going to journey to Iran to have a traditional Persian wedding—an *arusi*. Marjan and Reza accompanied Alex and Heather on the journey for the huge family reunion and traditional wedding.

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But this was no simple “big fat Persian wedding.” As we see, Heather’s conservative Christian father was not pleased by the idea of his daughter’s immersion in Muslim culture and her traveling to a country he considers part of the Axis of Evil. When Heather’s parents meet Alex’s dad and stepmother, the lovely dinner party escalates into an uncomfortable and heated conflict about politics. Those tensions, the arcane marriage negotiations they must perform in the company of an imam in the United States, Heather’s increasing culture shock and the complications involved in traveling to a Muslim nation in the middle of the war threaten to undermine the journey. But the love between Alex and Heather proves amazingly resilient.

Marjan Tehrani’s film is many things at once: a story of love, a story of family, and a story of a country at odds with itself and the world. Iran itself is a character in the film, a proud figure looming over every scene. What emerges is a much more nuanced portrait of Iran, one that Americans rarely see.

To learn more about the film and the issues, visit the companion website for **ARUSI PERSIAN WEDDING** at pbs.org/independentlens/arusipersianwedding. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker, and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions.

About the Filmmaker

Marjan Tehrani is an independent director and producer from Berkeley, California. She founded the production company Tru Films and has since directed and produced *Her Israel*, which premiered on the Sundance Channel in 2004, and **ARUSI PERSIAN WEDDING**. In addition, she is currently producing *P Star's Redemption*, a feature documentary that follows a 13-year-old female rap star phenomenon as she fulfills her father’s deferred dreams of making it in the music business. Beyond her independent work, Tehrani has produced several original series for television, including *dLIFE TV* for CNBC and the Emmy®-nominated *After School* for PBS, which featured celebrity alumni such as Harvey Keitel and Tim Robbins returning to their urban high schools as role models. Through Tru Films, Tehrani is dedicated to promoting dialogue between cultures, sharing the intricate and subtle aspects of identity, and capturing the transformative moments of the human experience.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers.

Independent Lens features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities and moments in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independentlens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

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