



76. Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Berlinale Forum



ESCAPE WEEKEND

A FILM BY MOHAMMAD SHIRVANI

Alternative Film Lab presents



**76. Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Berlinale Forum**

CESAREAN WEEKEND

A film by Mohammad Shirvani

90 min - IRAN



TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/1160090996/0d15d5a117?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>

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Production

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SCREENING DATES

Section: Berlinale Forum

WORLD PREMIERE

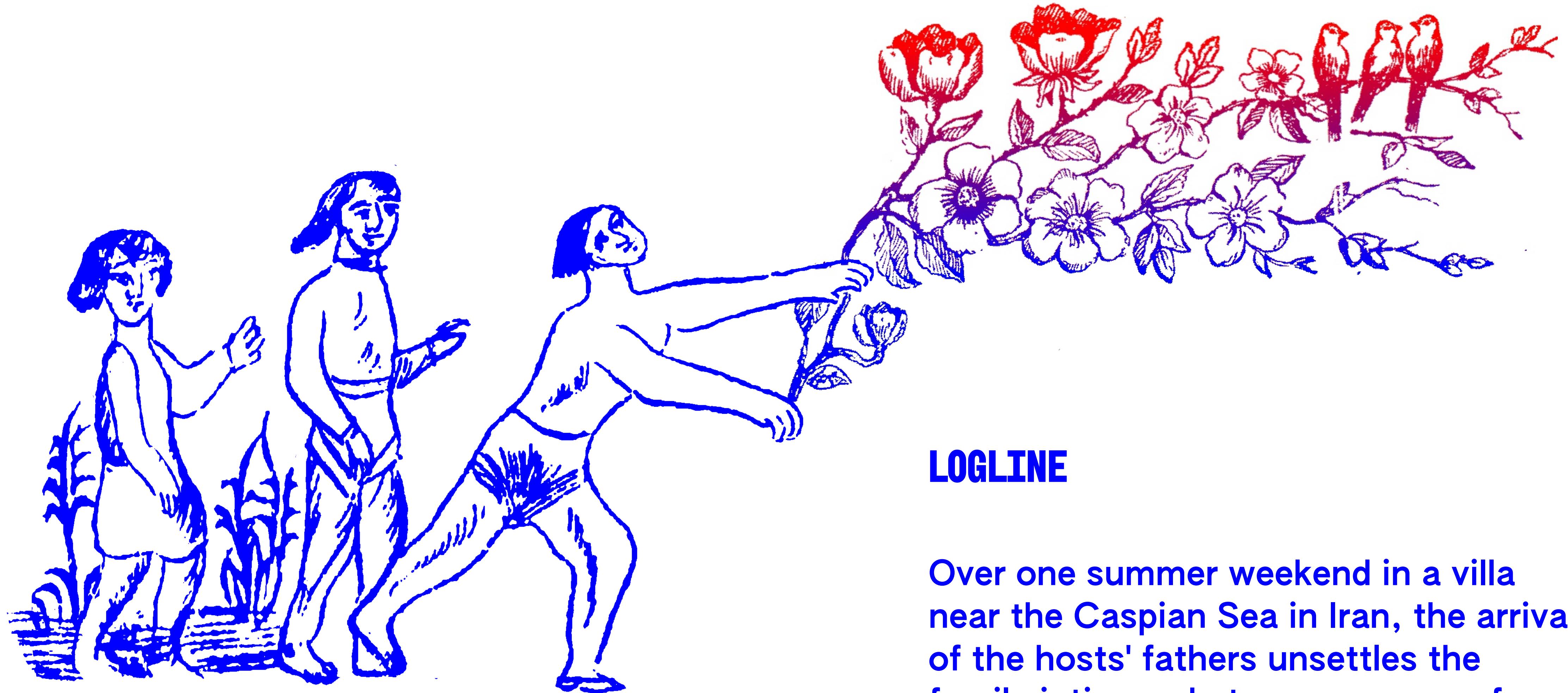
14.02. 16:00 ZOO PALAST 2

16.02. 11:00 ADK Hanseatenweg 10

19.02. 17:30 DELPHI PALAST

21.02. 20:00 CUBIX





LOGLINE

Over one summer weekend in a villa near the Caspian Sea in Iran, the arrival of the hosts' fathers unsettles the fragile intimacy between a group of young friends, exposing shifting bonds of masculinity, responsibility, and care in a society on the brink of rupture.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

CREDITS

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY: Mohammad Shirvani
CINEMATOGRAPHY: Mohammad Shirvani
EDITING: Mohammad Shirvani
CAST: Nader Mashayekhi
Peyman Yeganeh
Milad Ahmadzadeh
Armin Shirvani
Bita Jamshidi
SOUND DESIGN: Oveis Derakhshan
COMPOSER: Reza Rostamian
PRODUCER: Alternative Film Lab

Shooting format: 4K Digital
Screening format: DCP
Sound format: 5.1 Surround
Running time: 90 minutes
Languages: Persian
Subtitles: English
Year of production: 2026
Country: Iran



SYNOPSIS

The mood in the summer villa near the Caspian Sea in northern Iran is buoyant. Milad and Armin spend a weekend with friends, carried by an effortless sense of closeness. The news that Bita is pregnant by Milad only heightens the fragility of their relationship. The next morning, the hosts' fathers enter the scene, each figure marked by their own fractures. The confrontation between generations unfolds as a passage through the house, its levels and transitions: childhood/parenthood, closeness/withdrawal, desire/responsibility. The villa becomes a social score—excess upstairs, moments of

pause in between, the fathers below in the pool—verbal and physical encounters intertwined. The film refuses moral attribution and narrative closure. One child is on the way, another already born. One stays, another disappears. The sea observes; music takes over where language ends. Rather than formulating a political statement, the film sketches a parallel social world—people beyond prescribed roles, forms of affection and masculinity in flux. Shirvani's working method is central to this openness: without rehearsals and with live direction from behind the camera, a cinema of presence emerges, in which control and improvisation are inseparably entwined. Bodies are exposed to space and duration. Skin becomes a surface of experience before meaning takes hold.

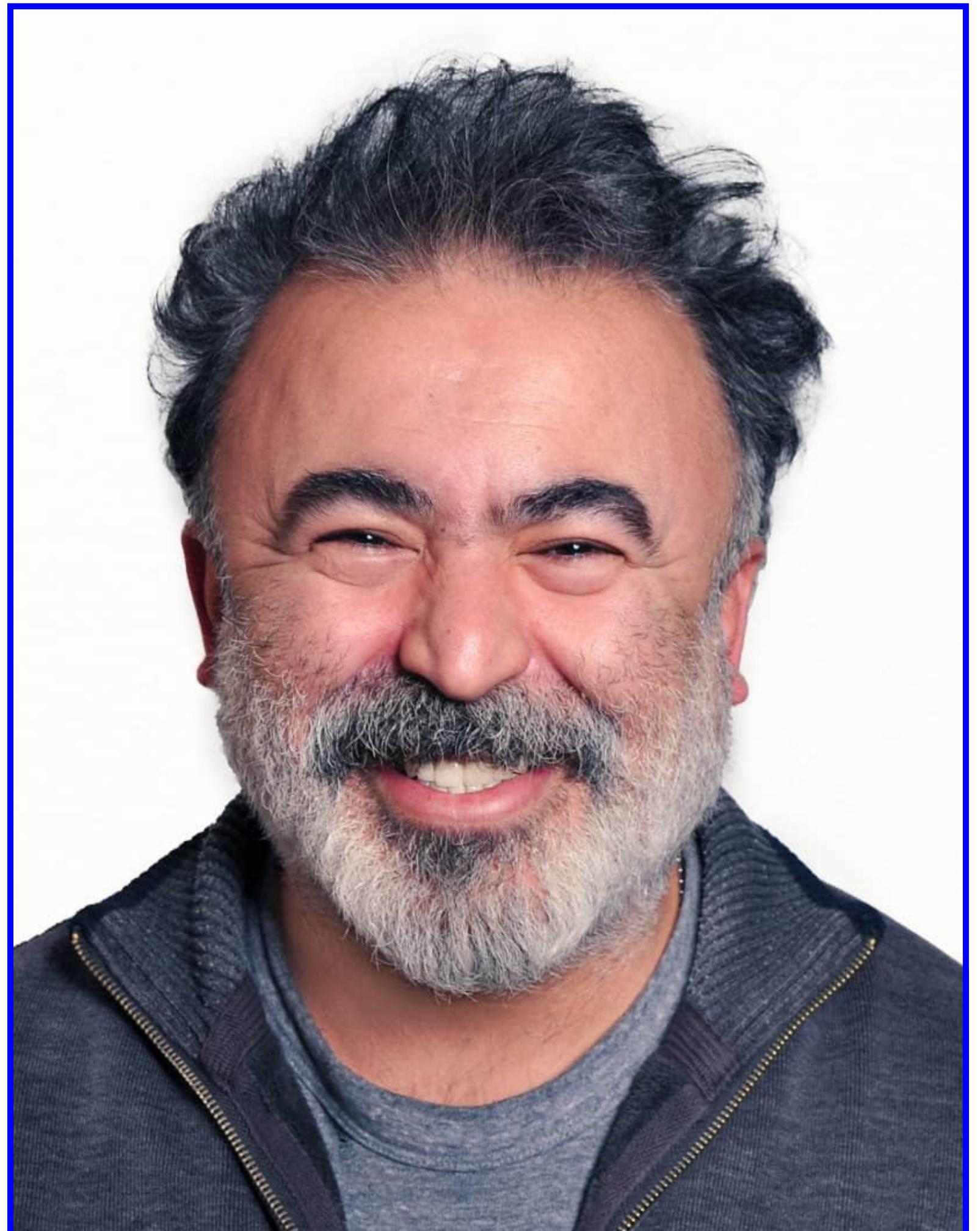
Text credit: Berlinale Forum, Afsun Moshiry

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I made *Cesarean Weekend* at a time when life in Iran is defined by tension, exhaustion, and sudden breaks. Now, at the moment of the film's release, the country has just gone through a historic, unprecedented massacre of protestors and is trapped in a brutal environment that offers neither safety nor dignity to its inhabitants. The story follows a small group of people over a single weekend, but what interested me was not the event itself. It was the fragile space between generations: what is passed on, what is withheld, and what can no longer be carried. In today's Iran, family bonds are often where social

conflicts surface most sharply. Love, care, responsibility, and authority collide in intimate spaces, long before they become public or political. I did not want to make a film that explains the situation in Iran or turns suffering into spectacle. At the same time, it is impossible to ignore the reality in which the film was made. Independent filmmaking here means working under constant restriction limited access to resources, surveillance, censorship, and the knowledge that your work may never be shown publicly. These conditions are not abstract; they shape every decision. Rather than offering solutions or moral conclusions, *Cesarean Weekend* insists on presence. It insists on bodies that cannot fully comply, on relationships that resist simple definitions, on moments of closeness that exist despite control. The film does not claim freedom but it refuses to erase the desire for it.





MOHAMMAD SHIRVANI

Mohammad Shirvani (born 1973, Tehran) is an Iranian independent filmmaker and producer. Since 1999 when his first short film *The Circle* was selected for the International Critics' Week in Cannes he has made over **20 short and feature-length fiction and documentary films**. His first and second short films were distributed in Europe by **MK2**. With his debut feature *Navel* (2003), made possible by the digital revolution in Iran, Shirvani challenged the state's control and censorship over Iranian cinema. As the **first underground filmmaker after the Revolution**, he defied the compulsory hijab for female actors in Iranian cinema. After *Navel* was banned, he

turned to documentary filmmaking and, with the experimental documentary *Seven Blind Women Filmmakers*—made in collaboration with seven blind Cinematographers—opened up a new horizon in the concept of seeing. His second feature film, *Fat Shaker* (2013), won the **Tiger Award at the International Film Festival Rotterdam**, yet was once again banned in Iran. Since 2012, Shirvani has been actively supporting the development of underground cinema in Iran by founding **Alternative Film Lab** in Tehran. Through workshops, filmmaking camps, and alternative underground film festivals, he has supported and mentored **more than 1,000 young Iranian filmmakers**. Consistently denied public screenings of his films in Iran,

Shirvani sparked major controversy in 2016, when—in protest against censorship—he released **18 banned films online**, significantly influencing a new generation of independent filmmakers. His films have been widely shown at major international festivals, including **Cannes, Berlin, Sundance, Locarno, Rotterdam**, and many others. Three of his films have received support from the **Hubert Bals Fund**. He has now independently produced his **third feature film, Cesarean Weekend** underground in Iran, which will premiere in the **Forum section of Berlinale 2026**.

FILMOGRAPHY

Cesarean Weekend — 90 min, 2026

Six Eyes — 23 min, DV, 2014

Fat Shaker — 84 min, HD, 2013

Telescope — 78 min, HD, 2011

021, Tehran — 51 min, HDV, 2010

Iranian Cookbook — 73 min, DV, 2009

444 Days — 57 min, HDV, 2007

Where Is Leili? — 73 min, DV, 2006

President Mir Qanbar — 65 min, DV, 2005

The Calm City — 2 min, DV, 2005

Seven Blind Women Filmmakers — 106 min,
DV, 2004–2008

Iranian Conserve — 14 min, DV, 2003

The Cherries Which Were Canned — 13 min,
35mm, 2002

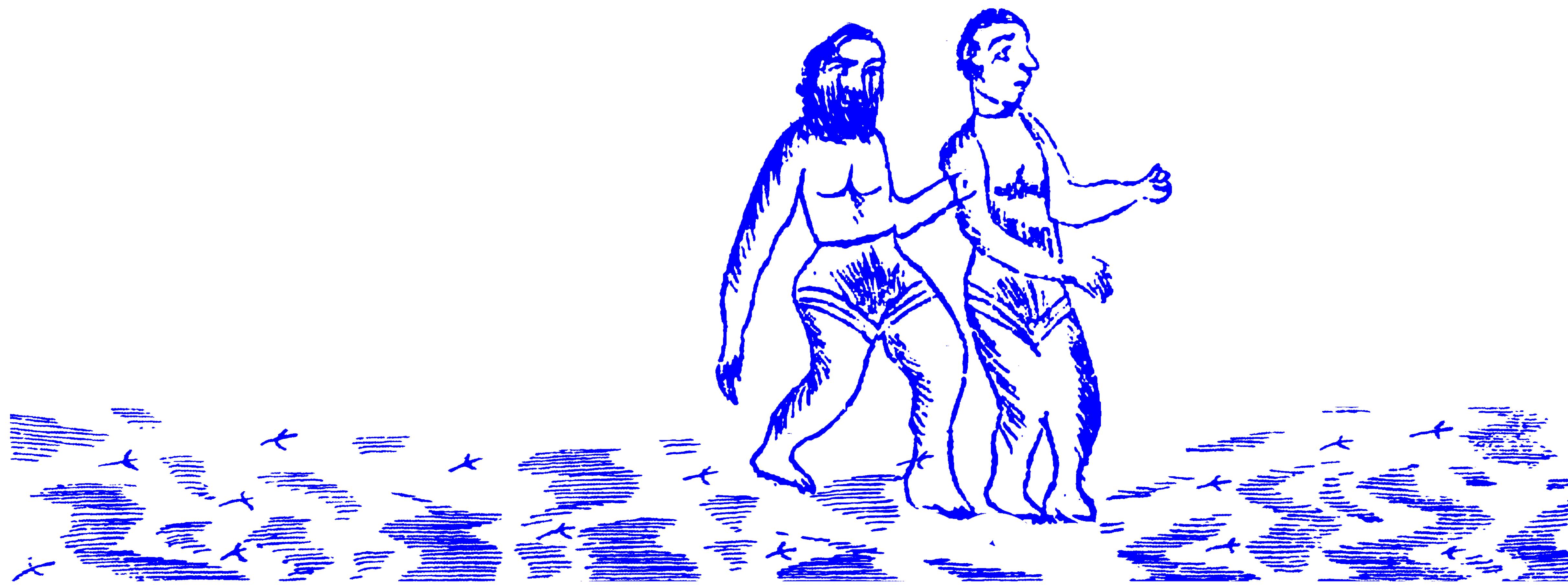
Navel — 82 min, DV / 35mm, 2002

Souvenir — 20 min, DV, 2001

To Consent — 20 min, DV, 2001

The Candidate — 15 min, DV / 35mm, 2000

The Circle — 12 min, 35mm, 1999





Alternative Film Lab - 2026