



# ***Over My Dead Body***

A FILM BY MEITAL COHEN NAVARRO

EPK 2021



# OVER MY DEAD BODY

<i>Running Time:</i>	25 minutes
<i>Genre:</i>	Drama
<i>Language :</i>	Farsi , English (English subtitles )
<i>Shooting Location:</i>	USA
<i>Written &amp; Directed by:</i>	Meital Cohen Navarro
<i>Produced by:</i>	Meital Cohen Navarro
<i>Cinematographer:</i>	Bradford Joseph Hamilton
<i>Composer:</i>	Omri Lahav



# LOGLINE

When a young Jewish Persian-American woman tells her parents that her fiancé is Muslim, they make her choose between him and them.

# SYNOPSIS

Isfahan, a Persian-Jewish woman in Los Angeles, is considered, at thirty-one, to be well past marrying age. So her conservative parents are relieved when she announces her engagement to her younger boyfriend, Kambiz.

Until they learn he is Muslim.

Her father immediately vetoes the marriage, her mother calls the siblings over, and Kambiz gets kicked out of the house. The situation escalates into an all-out confrontation between Isfahan and her family.

As she defends her love, the family defends their traditions, demanding that she honor their religion and old-world values. This intergenerational struggle forces Isfahan to make a decision that will define the rest of her life.

# DIRECTOR'S NOTES

I am a grandchild of Yemenite and Moroccan refugees and immigrants who moved to Israel in the early 50's. I was raised in the clash of a traditionally conservative world and a much more liberal one. At the time, I didn't understand why my grandparents and parents fought over aspects of my future - how it should be shaped, who I should become, and which rules I should abide by to get there. I simply rebelled against all traditions and values that informed my family's dual lives. Now, filmmaking has allowed me to explore that clash, unpacking the values inherent in the old world and the new, demonstrating their effects.

As part of my life journey, I moved Los Angeles. Soon I was introduced to the Persian Jewish community, who welcomed me with kindness, warmth, support, rich cuisine and hospitality, immediately reminding me of where I grew up. The more I associated with them, the more I began to ask questions. Why does the younger generation tend to marry within their community, when Los Angeles is such a diverse city? Since Jews can marry other Jews from any culture, why do most Persian Jews marry within their own community?

I went on a journey, interviewing members of the Los Angeles Persian Jewish community, focusing on social and religious taboo. It amazed me as I listened to modern and successful young people who were born in the States explain why marrying within the community was, they felt, the only choice. Initially, I'll admit I found their decisions arrogant, but over time, I began to see it from a different perspective. I discovered a community purposefully making choices to preserve and maintain their identity, values and language. Their parents were forced to leave a country (in their case, Iran), but their determination to keep the culture alive fascinated me. This made me realize I was also trying to figure out my own family and choices.







Meeting these children of immigrants and their parents inspired me to write *Over My Dead Body*, an authentic Persian Jewish family drama inspired by the personalities I met on my journey, but also driven by my own personal experiences. In a sense, I married the stories they told me with my own memories of the culture clash that defined my family, creating a film about the deep and sometimes painful immigration experience, and how it leaves a yawning gap between old world and new world tradition.

My film focuses on one Persian Jewish family, but the narrative is universal. Anyone who has immigrated to another country can identify with and relate to the intergenerational struggle I explore each episode. My protagonist was born in a land of freedom, but she's trapped inside the conservative traditions of her family. Her parents are immigrants from a less tolerant, but culturally specific, land. And they live under the same roof.

At first, it was easy to write the parents in a rigid manner, casting them as the bad guys. But as I researched and further developed the characters, I began to empathize with the worry and disappointment of the parents, and their adult children's desire to protect them from it. I clearly saw the pain of young women who chose love and lost their family, and others who chose the conservative path rather than follow their hearts. Each family member had their own pain, their own pride. The adult child must constantly wrestle with the question, are my parents right? Since the most important value in Persian Jewish culture is family, this is not an easy question to ask.

In my film, the protagonist, Isfahan, hopes her parents have softened over the years, and that living in the United States has changed them just enough to embrace who she wants to be. Because, at 31, Isfahan has fallen in love with a Persian who is Muslim. This is the greatest and most unforgivable taboo within the Persian Jewish community because the Muslim majority in Iran forced the Jews to flee. Isfahan's announcement creates a firestorm in the family as the moral push and pull of the film asks, will she marry the love of her life? Or will she choose her family's traditional values and reject him?



I worked hard to represent both sides fairly and sympathetically. I created a window for viewers to understand the immigrant experience, both from the parents' point of view, but also through Isfahan's dilemma, and the way her wants and needs hold a mirror on her siblings choices. It's my hope *Over My Dead Body* will help families with generational rifts to have more empathy and that, through Isfahan's devastation, parents will see the toll taken on their own children, especially the next generation of women. And, with any luck, the younger generation will see their parents' equally heartbreaking cultural challenges and embrace their fear of losing what has always been their world.

Love is difficult, and even more so when you must choose.

Meital Cohen Navarro  
Writer and Director





## Nakta Pahlevan as *Isfahan*

Nakta is an Iranian-American actress and a Producer based in LA. She is a theater trained actress and has studied acting in Gloria Gifford Conservatory. She worked with Jamaica Moon Production theater Company. Nakta is currently starring in Houshang Touzie's Play "Shaaer E Noghrehee". She is also producing and starring in an original musical comedy satire "Alice in Persialand" directed by Majid Mirfakhraei.



## Bahram Vatanparast as *Parviz*

Bahram Vatanparast is a seasoned, classically trained actor. He has been performing in theatrical and cinematic roles, as well as television and radio dramas since the age of 14. He has appeared in over 18 films, including 'Topoli' (1972) (Iranian film based on John Steinback's Of Mice and Men) and 'Guests of Hotel Astoria' (1989). His work range includes comedic and dramatic roles.



## Mary Apick as *Rachel*

Mary is an International Award winning actress known for starring in "The Mothers", "Monday Nights at Seven" and "Price for Freedom" which won Best Feature at Palm Beach International. She has played opposite Burt Lancaster, Paul Sorvino, Edward James Olmos among many other world class actors. She is also known as a producer and is an internationally recognized human rights activist.



## Afshin Katanchi as ***Ezra***

Afshin Katanchi received his B.A. in acting and directing at the University of Art and Architecture in Teheran; and he's been a member of the prestigious Theatre Forum of Tehran since 2005. Living in Los Angeles the past 4 years, Afshin has appeared on stage in "Switch," "Sogoli," and "Sefr-21." He has also appeared in over 30 plays and TV shows in Iran.



## Mahsa Shamsa as ***Sarah***

Born in Iran and moving to the United States at the age of 7 years old she credits her biggest accomplishment in life as being her 3 children; Brooke, Brianna, and Ryan. And, living happily married to the love of her life who lets her be her! Mahsa's passions lie in a wide range of places including helping the sick, playing the piano, reading, acting, and traveling the world!



## Ash Dadvand as ***Kambiz***

Ash's goal is to put on a good show! Ash brings you into his world and takes you for a wild adventure. With infectious energy that lights up the entire room, not only is Ash charming; he's incredibly funny and humble to boot! When asked how he can be so happy all the time, Ash responded with: "I try to approach every day with the excitement of a puppy. The world is a really beautiful place if you choose to see it that way." "



# WRITER and DIRECTOR, Meital Cohen Navarro

Meital Cohen Navarro is an award-winning, Israeli-born narrative and documentary writer/director based in Los Angeles. She has written, directed and produced several acclaimed short films and feature screenplays which have been won and selected at festivals including the International Jerusalem Film Festival, Austin Film Festival, Dances with Films, Raindance Film Festival, San Luis Obispo International Film Festival, Julien Dubuque International Film Festival , among others. She earned an MFA in Filmmaking from the New York Film Academy in Los Angeles and holds Bachelor's degrees in Business Management and Communication from the Open University of Israel.

Meital's experience includes working at the Israel Broadcasting Authority on documentary films and the renowned weekly investigative documentary show called "Mabbat-Sheni". Her passion for diverse cultures led her to live in Africa, where she wrote and reported for the Israeli newspaper Maariv. Her stories depicted social conflict, and daily life in countries like DR-Congo, Mozambique and South Africa.

Meital's background in documentaries and journalism imbues her narrative filmmaking with a detail-oriented realism. Her films tell stories of ordinary people and life's unassuming moments that contain a deeper resonance with a specific focus on the unique challenges that women face in their daily lives. Meital's work captures the notable moments of womanhood from unique and unexpected perspectives.



## **CINEMATOGRAPHER, Bradford Hamilton**

Joseph Bradford Hamilton is a Multi-Award-Winning cinematographer based in Los Angeles. He has worked as a Director of Photography on two feature films and over two dozen narrative shorts. Brad grew up in Fort Worth Texas where he started creating films at the age of 11. He now has a Masters degree in Cinematography and works on projects that are both thought provoking and entertaining.



## **LINE PRODUCER, Dhriti Borah**

Dhriti is currently an MBA student with concentration in Business and Marketing for Films. She wants to start her own production house one day and MBA was the best foot forward. She has worked as a producer in various International Films and TV shows. Along with being a producer she is a gifted Director who has won multiple awards for her on creations all over the world. For her creativity comes as a puzzle and she loves solving them.



## **COMPOSER, Omri Lahav**

Israeli born composer, songwriter and instrumentalist Omri Lahav creates music with the approach of a storyteller - blending a lush, melody-driven style with a strong sensibility for story and world-building. Educated in Western classical music and a self-taught folk artist, Omri's passion for folklore and music from around the world allows him to bring some truly unique colors to every piece of music. He is a graduate of Berklee College of Music and alumni of the Society of Composers and Lyricists' Mentor Program, 2017.





## TRAILER

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## PHOTOS

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## SOCIAL MEDIA

[\*Instagram Page\*](#)

[\*Facebook Page\*](#)

# CREDITS

*Written, Directed & Produced by*

*Director of Photography*

*Line Producer*

*Production Designer*

*Editor*

*Costume Designer*

*Hair & Make-up*

*Music by*

*Production Sound Recordist*

*Production Sound Studios*

**Meital Cohen Navarro**

**Bradford Joseph Hamilton**

**Dhriti Borah**

**Aditya Mohite**

**Meital Cohen Navarro**

**Naina Shetty**

**Bree Annmarie**

**Omri Lahav**

**James Parnell**

**MONKEYLAND Audio, Inc.**





*Production Manager:*  
*First Assistant Director:*  
*2nd Assistant Director:*  
*Script Supervisor:*

**Dhriti Bohat**  
**Shubham Sanjay Shevade**  
**Nida Arif**  
**Agnes Shinozaki**

*Art Director:*  
*Art Department Assistant:*  
*Make-up and Hair Artist:*

**Aditya Mohite**  
**Diva Yazdian**  
**Bree Annmarie**

*Sound mixer*  
*Boom*

**Brad Bryan**  
**Mahmoud Abul Burghul**

*1st Assistant Camera:*  
*2nd Assistant Camera:*

**Mayur Patankar**  
**Bradly Power**

*Gaffer:*  
*Key Grip*

**Emiliano Rago**  
**Naina Shetty**  
**Vaibhav Ashok Handore**  
**Sharwin Samat**  
**Kritika Chawla**  
**Ryan Mechling**  
**Ariel Spaugh**

*Electricians:*

*Production Assistant:*

**Chelsea Nwasike**  
**Chikeershu Rawat**  
**Crystal Dowson**  
**Joanna Coyote**  
**Gabriele Fabbro**

*Title & End Credits*

*Music recorded by:*  
*Colorist:*

**Jamse Parnell**  
**Roy Sun**

*Camera & Grip Equipment:*

**King USA**  
**Lee Filters**

*Still Photographer:*  
*Poster Photographer:*

**Emerson Lee**  
**Kormi Lamarr**





# CONTACT

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# SOCIAL MEDIA

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