

A Grasshopper Film Release



AVA

A film by Sadaf Foroughi

103 minutes / DCP / Canada, Iran, and Qatar / In Persian with English
Subtitles/ Not Rated

Synopsis

Based on her own adolescent experiences, Sadaf Foroughi's *Ava* is a gripping debut about a young girl's coming-of-age in a strict, traditional society. Living with her well-to-do parents in Tehran, Ava is a bright and focused teen whose concerns — friendships, music, social status, academic performance — resemble that of nearly any teenager. When Ava's mistrustful and overprotective mother questions her relationship with a boy — going so far as to visit a gynecologist — Ava is overwhelmed by a newfound rage. Formerly a model student, Ava begins to rebel against the strictures imposed by her parents, her school, and the society at large.

About the Director

Biography

Sadaf Foroughi is an Iranian-born, Montreal-based filmmaker. She began her artistic career in 2003 by creating and producing short films, documentaries and video art. In 2005, she was selected to participate in the Berlinale Talent Campus as a writer/director.

Foroughi participated in the Berlinale Talent Campus, where she was selected to participate in the Why Democracy? short film project. Her short documentary "Féminin, Masculin" (2007) was nominated for the Best Non-European Film Award at the Grand Off-European Off Film Awards in Warsaw and won the Best Short Film award at the Oxford Brooks University Annual Film and Music Festival.

Foroughi graduated with an MA in Film Studies from the University of Provence and obtained a degree in Film Production from the New York Film Academy. She co-wrote, co-produced, and appeared in Kiarash Anvari's feature-length film *The Pot and the Oak* (2017), which had its world premiere in the Bright Future Competition Section of the International Film Festival Rotterdam. Sadaf's debut feature film *Ava* had its premier in the Toronto International Film Festival in 2017. *Ava* was given an honorable mention as the best Canadian debut feature film and awarded the Discovery Section FIPRESCI Prize at Toronto International Film Festival 2017.

Filmography

2017	AVA
2011	THE FINAL SCENE
2007	FÉMININ, MASCULIN
2004	AN IMPRESSION

Director's Statement

Ava is a women-driven coming-of-age drama which has the cinematographic aesthetic of a country in which there are restrictions on portraying women.

The film tells the story of a teenage girl who is banished from all social institutions simply because she wants to be different.

My main inspiration in making *Ava* is to examine the role and influence of women in the society. In this respect, my point of departure is a mother and a daughter in a small society called home.

Mother as a person who gives birth to and nurtures her daughter as the generation that follows her own.

Written and directed in the form of a musical variation, *Ava* pictures the possibilities in a society where external determination has become so overwhelming that the inner-motive forces have lost their weight.

Interview with Sadaf Foroughi

How did your childhood and adolescence in Iran inspire you to make *Ava*?

My main inspiration in making *Ava* is the taboos that have been engraved in my mind as a woman growing up in a traditional society as well as the major detrimental impact that such tradition/repression can have on the adolescent well-being. The film portrays what women are confronting in Iranian society, telling the story of a teenage girl who is banished from all social institutions just because she wants to be different. I wanted to examine the function of a small society called home, the role of women of this generation as persons who give birth and nurture the next generation.

The cinematography of the film is so striking and beautifully composed. How did the look of the film come together?

I am very influenced by painting culture since I have a strong background of plastic art. By considering the impressionist approach for the ambience and aesthetic of the film I wanted to move away from the daily realities and getting more closer to the truth behind the images. I carefully designed each shot, analyzing my text and my characters to find the best expression for the sense of each scene.

The camera appears as a voyeur who is trying to record family secrets, as long takes show pressures and embody time in its eternal process.

I believe that storytelling is a medium of communication, evolving into a visual language. *Ava* has the cinematographic aesthetic of a country in which there are restrictions on portraying women. I tried to create a personal language from the limitations I faced, trying to achieve my own aesthetic.

What other films or filmmakers were you influenced by in making this film?

Ingmar Bergman, Ingmar Bergman, and Ingmar Bergman. Both for his character driven storytelling and his pictorial language.

***Ava* has two important female relationships in her life, with her mother and with Melody. Can you discuss these relationships and how they shaped the film?**

Ava's mother and Melody are two different aspects of *Ava*'s identity. *Ava* defines herself in both of them and this is the internal contradiction of *Ava*'s personality.

Tell us about the casting process. How did you find the young actresses to play *Ava* and Melody?

It was a long process which took about a year. I was looking for a form of expression in *Ava*'s face that I couldn't find; Someone who can also play violin. So I searched almost all the girl high school in Tehran. I went to all violin classes and conservatory. Finally, I found my *Ava*, Mahour Jabbari, in a theatre school in Tehran. Concerning Melody, it was quite different. I found Shayesteh Sajadi in an acting school and I chose her within an audition. As soon as I saw her, I realised that she is the Melody.

Can you discuss the role of music in the film and how it shaped the narrative?

Ava has been written and directed as a piece of music, in the form of a Variation. The formal technique where the material repeated in an altered form and evolve at the same time. It is how I shaped the narrative and cinematic language of *Ava*.

Cast

<i>Ava</i>	Mahour Jabbari
<i>Mother</i>	Bahar Noohian
<i>Father</i>	Vahid Aghapour
<i>Melody</i>	Shayesteh Sajadi
<i>Ms. Dehkhoda</i>	Leili Rashidi

Crew

<i>Directed by</i>	Sadaf Foroughi
<i>Written by</i>	Sadaf Foroughi
<i>Produced by</i>	Sadaf Foroughi
	Kiarash Anvari
<i>Director of Photography</i>	Sina Kermanizadeh
<i>Editor</i>	Kiarash Anvari
<i>Sound</i>	Amirhossein Ghasemi

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