

Norway honors Iranian musician

IranTimes: An Iranian musician has been named "Artist of the Year" by the Oslo municipality for his efforts in the realm of music. Born in Esfahan, Javid Afsari-Rad began studying the santur—a traditional Iranian stringed instrument—at the age of 16 with Parviz Meshkati and master musician Faramarz Payvar. Afsari-Rad moved to Norway in 1986 to continue his studies at the University of Oslo, where he



graduated with a degree in musicology. The mayor of Oslo, Fabian Stang, paid tribute to

Afsari-Rad's significant contribution to the world of music and entitled the Iranian musician Artist of the Year, saying, "Javid Afsari-Rad is known for his innovative performances and ingenious composition. He is a pioneer in world music in Norway and his various performances are highly regarded in multicultural areas." The Iranian musician also received the title of Artist of the Year from Norway Radio and Television in 2007. Afsari-Rad's career includes solo performances in numerous international world music festivals in Germany, India, Brazil, Spain, South Africa and Holland as well as ensemble performances with groups such as Zarbang, a world percussion ensemble made up of musicians from Iran and Afghanistan. His work includes the album "Combinations" featuring musicians from Iran, India, China, Morocco, Senegal, Gambia and Brazil and "Caravan," featuring musicians from Iran and India. In 2002, Afsari-Rad created and composed the music for the live concert, Asiatic Caravan, featuring international musicians and dancers from Iran, China and India.

Basij to patrol city streets in nighttime

IranTimes: For the first time, the Basij militia will make nighttime street patrols in the nation's cities. The patrols were announced last month to begin May 23. Ahmad Zolqadr, the Basij commander of operations, said the patrols would be run from dusk to dawn, not during daylight hours. He said the Basij members would patrol along with a policeman, not on their own. Zolqadr failed to say why the government felt a need for the Basij patrols other than to say they were launched "upon the public's request and due to the social circumstances." Zolqadr said, "They are tasked with providing security for governmental, public and private buildings, countering thugs and overt crimes. But under no circumstances are they to enter households without a warrant." However, he also said that each Basij member on patrol would carry a badge and



a warrant. The Basij is a subdivision of the Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards). The government claims the Basij has 10 million volunteer members, though that number is generally believed to be a substantial exaggeration. The Basijis serve part time in areas near their homes. They have limited training, mainly as an anti-riot force.

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Taxpayers...

cards for the sole purpose of issuing tax rebates. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, there are currently between 600,000 and 800,000 H-1B visa holders in the United States. H-1B visas are non-immigrant visas issued to foreign guest workers who have a highly specialized knowledge in a particular field where a U.S. citizen is not available. The exact numbers of H-1B visa holders who are married to spouses ineligible to work in the U.S. is unknown. Another group of immigrants, totaling about a million nationwide, are non-citizen green-card holders who are already facing seven-year waits to get permission

for their spouses to immigrate to the U.S. Amir Nikpouri, 31, of Orland Park, a suburb of Chicago, Illinois, was married three years ago, but his wife is not eligible to emigrate from Iran for a few more years. Nikpouri said, "I've been in America for well over 20 years, and I consider myself an American. All I'm trying to do is obey the laws, but this one seems really unfair." Aung Moe, 33, of San Jose, California, told the San Jose Mercury News, "We are here legally and paying taxes and enjoying what a married family should be enjoying." Moe is a Burmese political refugee who works as an engineer at Applied Materials. His wife, Mon, is an electrical engineer who cannot come to the United States from Singapore. "Already we cannot be together, and now she cannot get a Social Security number. This needs to be fixed," he said.

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Satellite...

(Venus), originally designed as a six-satellite constellation. The announcement said Iran would pay Russia \$132 million and the launch was expected in July 2007. Iran had previously signed a contract with another Russian firm in May 2001 to place the first Zohreh in orbit by mid-2003. That company was a middleman that lacked skills; the contract was eventually killed amid much anger in the Majlis over why the government had contracted in the first place with a firm that had no record with satellites.

- Omid: Originally called the Safir-313, this is the one satellite Iran has clearly announced will be made in Iran and launched from Iran. In September 2004, Iranian military officials said Iran would launch this satellite before Now Ruz 2005. In June 2005, then-Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani said the military would launch it in less than one year. After that, all was silence until February of this year, when Safir-mutated as Omid (Hope) with an announced launch date during May-June. Safir-313 was described as a 20-kilo (44-pound) homemade satellite to be lifted aboard a modified version of the Shahab-3 missile. The satellite was to do nothing but send out beeping signals like the first satellite launched by the Soviet Union half a century ago, officials said. If Iran succeeds in putting the

Omid into orbit, it will be only the eighth country—and the first Muslim nation—to place a satellite into orbit. The others are Russia, the United States, China, Japan, France, Israel and India.

- Mesbah: Long ago, Mohammad Fathi, then head of the Scientific and Industrial Research Center, said the Mesbah satellite, built in Italy by Carlo Gavazzi Space Co., an established manufacturer of communications and environmental satellites, would be launched from Russia by May 2005. Then October 2005. Then "soon." The Russians said it was to be launched with the Sina-1, but was delivered too late and would be launched later. Last September, a deputy minister of science said the Mesbah was complete and "is in the queue to be launched by Russia." Mesbah was budgeted at \$10 million. The Mesbah is a cube about 50 centimeters (20 inches) on a side and weighing 60 kilos (132 pounds). It will orbit at an altitude of 900 kilometers (560 miles) and will remain in orbit three years, if all goes well.

- Asian Consortium: Iran has joined Pakistan, Thailand, South Korea, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mongolia and China in a \$44 million project (with Iran's share at \$6.5 million) to develop a satellite to carry out environmental observations in Asia. Each country will build part of the system. Pakistan's PTV television network reported in February 2005 that the satellite would be launched in 2006. China will handle the launch.

51st San Francisco International Film Festival



By: Jamileh Davoudi

51st SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

The 51st San Francisco International Film Festival ended on May 8 with a great success. An estimated 80,000 filmgoers celebrated the best cinema from 16 countries with 150 filmmaker guests in attendance. The festival sold out 94 screenings during its 15-day run (April 24 - May 8) illustrating the demand for the unique programming that the Film Society brings to the Bay area.

In the City of Sylvia (Spain/France), directed by Jose Luis Guerin was shown as part of the Mel Novikoff award given to Jim Hoberman, now celebrating 30 years as senior film critic. The movie plays with light, shadow and sound. The main character, Xavier Lafitte searches for



In the City of Sylvia

Sylvia, the woman he remembers from an encounter six years ago. He sits in the outdoor cafe and sketches women's faces, some seen directly, others reflected through glass. As he sketches, you learn about these characters without them saying a word. When a dark haired woman gets up and leaves, the young man follows her, and we follow him. Just like Travelling with Pets (Russian film by Vera Storozheva), the cinematography talks and the dialogue and special effects normally on display in other films seem to be clutter!

The Aquarium (Egypt), directed by Youssef Nasrallah opens with the mysterious voice of Laila in her radio program iNight Secrets. People call in to know about other people's love lives without revealing their own. Youssef, an



The Aquarium

anesthetist is a loyal listener who likes to listen to his patients in their delirium. The Aquarium is about the three days before these two very lonely, very closed and very scared characters meet!

Solitary Fragments (Spain), directed by Jaime Rosales is a very unique film that creates a nonjudgmental tapestry of people struggling with everyday challenges with the unusually creative use of a split screen. There is no back-



Solitary Fragments

ground music throughout the film. So, what moves you is what's happening on the screen(s) as there is no music to set up the scene. Here's the director's comment about the film: It all started with a diffuse feeling about life; about the world around us; about how we relate to each other. That feeling turned into the need to make

a film. A need to share with an audience certain concerns and some anguish as well. Death is somehow at the heart of that anguish. We are designed both to suffer and to overcome suffering. We are beings both sensitive and tough, although in the end, our toughness is greater than our sensitivity. The film portrays vulnerable moments in the lives of the characters. In the end, life continues its course over time.

Mataharis (Spain), directed by Iciar Bollain is



Mataharis

different from all the other detective films you may have seen. It is about three women detectives that are not defined by their guns or actions, but rather by their relationships and ethics in their daily lives. While working at the detective agency run by a man, these three surveillance specialists often invade others' privacy but are clueless about confronting their own secrets. All three will have to cross the thin line dividing public and private matters, bringing their own issues to light in order to solve more than just their professional cases!

Two Ladies (France), directed by Philippe Faucon portrays a very surprising culture clash



Two Ladies

between two women. Esther, an elderly Jewish woman who requires constant nursing and Halima, a Muslim woman who, regardless of all her pride, agrees to assist with Esther's daycare as she can use the extra cash to fund her long-planned pilgrimage to Mecca. The movie goes beyond a polemic between religions. The two overcome personal and political differences to form an unlikely bond that is very refreshing to watch.

The closing night film was the West Coast premiere of Alex Gibney's documentary portrait **Gonzo: The Life and Work of Dr. Hunter S. Thompson**, the great journalist at the Castro The-



Gonzo

ater. Even though this was a wrap up for the 51st San Francisco International Film Festival, starting on Friday June 13, the San Francisco Film Society will screen at the Sundance Kabuki Cinemas daily programming of international, independent and documentary films year-round. For more information and to learn about SF film Society, please visit: <http://www.sffs.org/>

Israel charges Iranian

Israel has charged an Iranian-born citizen with passing sensitive information to Iran. In a statement, Israel's Shin Bet counter-intelligence agency said the man was detained May 8 and subsequently told investigators he visited the Iranian consulate in Istanbul in 2006 where he allegedly disclosed the names "of people he knew whom he said were serving in Israel's defense establishment." The unidentified suspect was indicted behind closed doors Sunday. Israel is home to tens of thousands of Iranian immigrants, many of whom still maintain ties with relatives in Iran and periodically visit there. Last year, a Shin Bet official alleged many Iranian émigrés first stop in Istanbul to receive permits from the Iranian consulate and are pressured there into spying against Israel.

حل جدول شماره ۲۰۴

