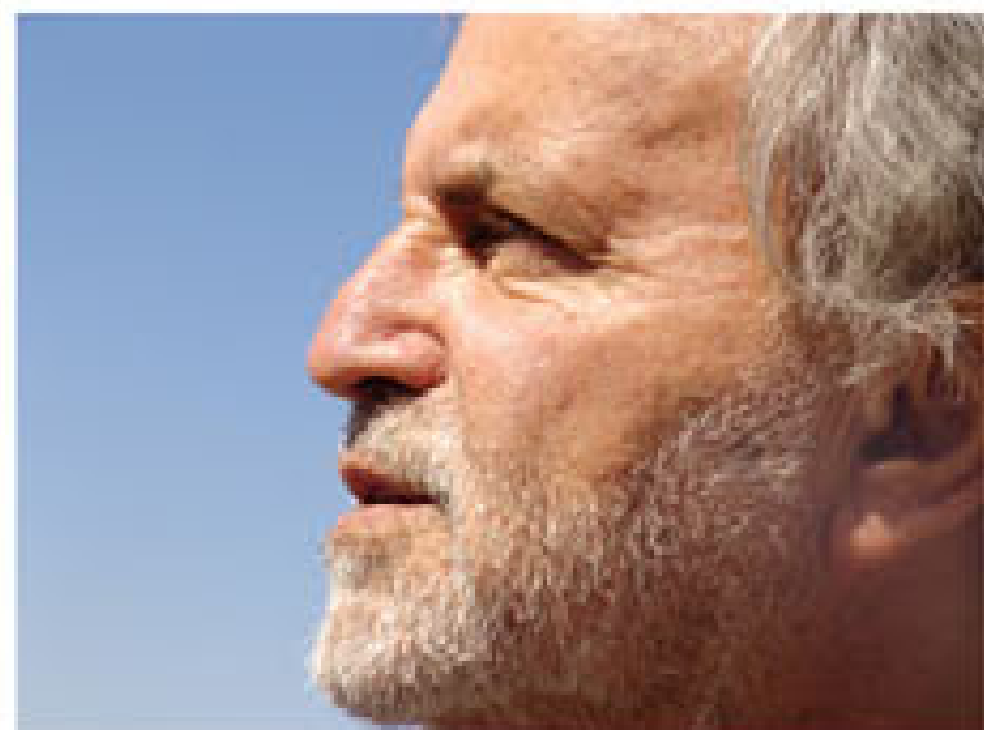




10 Days In Iran

**A Visit by The Academy of
Motion Picture Arts and Sciences**

February & March 2009



Sid Ganis

President of the Academy / Producer

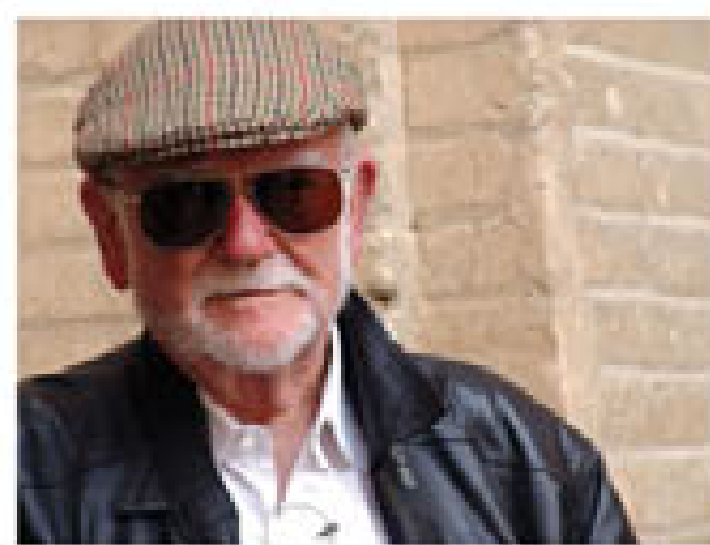
He is currently in his fourth consecutive term as President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He founded Out of the Blue Entertainment in 1996. Prior to that, Ganis held various positions at Sony Pictures, including Vice Chairman of Columbia Pictures and President of Worldwide Marketing for Columbia/Tristar Motion Picture Companies.

Frank Pierson

Writer

He served a four-year term as president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and is currently a governor.

Pierson's first feature screenplay was *Cat Ballou* (1965), which earned him an Oscar nomination. He went on to win an Oscar for *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975).

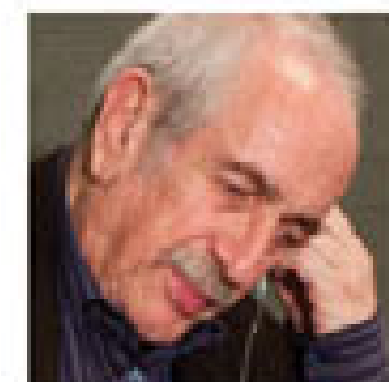


Annette Bening

Actress

After roles in *Valmont* (1989) and *Postcards from the Edge* (1990), Bening received her first Oscar nomination for *The Grifters* (1990).

Her performances in *American Beauty* (1999) and *Being Julia* (2004) earned her second and third Oscar nominations.



Tom Pollock

Producer

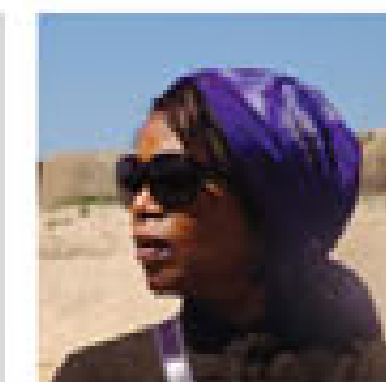
He served as Chairman of Universal Pictures, from 1986-1995. During his tenure as Chairman, Universal released over 200 films that grossed in excess of \$10 billion worldwide. Also during this time, Universal had seven Academy Award Best Picture nominees, including *Field of Dreams* and *Born on the Fourth of July*.



William Horberg

Producer

Horberg previously headed his own independent production company, Wonderland Films, and for 11 years was a partner, with Sydney Pollack and Anthony Minghella, in the film production company Mirage Enterprises. At Mirage, He was a producer of *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, *The Quiet American* and *Cold Mountain*.



Alfre Woodard

Actress

Her performance in *Cross Creek* (1983) earned her a Oscar nomination for Best Actress in a Supporting Role. Other films include *Heart and Souls*, *Crooklyn*, *Primal Fear*, *Down in the Delta* and *Love & Basketball*. Woodard's work on television has garnered the actress five Emmy Awards.



James Longley

Documentary Filmmaker

His student documentary, *Portrait of Boy with Dog* was awarded a Student Academy Award in 1994. In 2002, Longley traveled to Iraq to make *Iraq in Fragments* which was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Feature Documentary. In 2006, he completed his short documentary film, *Sari's Mother* which was also nominated for Oscar.



Phil Robinson

Writer and Director

His *Field of Dreams* (1989), earned three Oscar nominations, including Adapted Screenplay and Best Picture.

In 1990 Robinson was named Screenwriter of the Year by the National Association of Theatre Owners.

Ellen Harrington

Director of Exhibitions and Special Events for the Academy

During her 15 years in this position she has organized and designed the installations for over 70 exhibitions of motion picture-related material in two galleries at the Academy's world headquarters in Beverly Hills, California. She recently developed and heads the Academy's International Outreach Project.



Meeting with the House of Cinema's Board of Directors



In a 3 hour meeting, House of Cinema's Board of Directors and members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences discussed their respective viewpoints and different solutions for exchange of experiences and information, as well as differences and commonalities between the filmmaking processes in the two countries. During the meeting, House of Cinema's Managing Director and COB Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour gave an account of the advent and history of cinema in Iran, describing the Islamic Revolution as a turning point in the Iranian cinema with respect to theme as well as production volume. In turn, Academy President Sid Ganis expressed his pleasure at being among the Iranian filmmakers, and sounded his hope that this trip could pave the ground for more and broader relations between the two countries' filmmakers in educational and trade related fields.

House of Cinema's board members Farhad Tohidi, Amin Tarokh, Dr. Mohammad Sarir, Mohammad Reza Sokout, Morteza Razzagh Karimi, Kamran Maleki and Ebrahim Mokhtari also attended the meeting.



Meeting with the Iran Cinema Celebration's Regulations Committee

During this meeting which attended Academy President Sid Ganis and House of Cinema's Managing Director Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour, the two sides discussed Iran Cinema Celebration and the Oscar Award Ceremony. Other participants were Frank Pierson, Annette Bening, Phil Robinson, Ellen Harrington, Ahmad Amini, Katayoon Shahabi, Abol-Hassan Davoodi, Abdollah Eskandari, Hassan Hassandoost, Nezamoddin Kiaie, Turaj Mansoori and Seyyed Mohsen Hashemi.

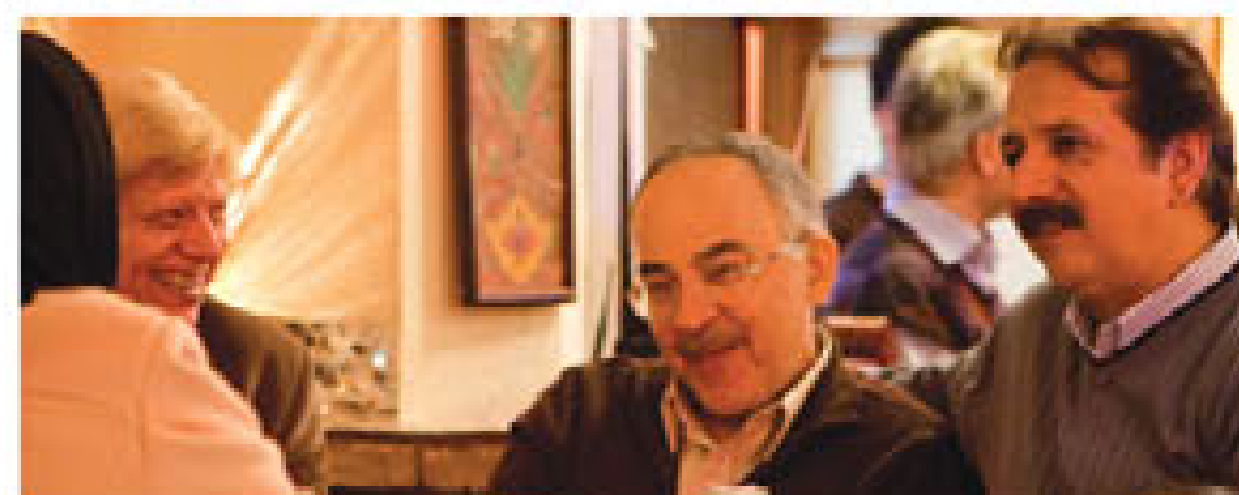
At the beginning of the meeting, the Iranian attendees provided an account of the Iran Cinema Celebration and its similarities to the Oscar Awards Ceremony, then proceeded to ask questions about the Academy membership process, decision making, balloting, selecting the nominees, and running the actual ceremony. Describing the Oscars' rules and regulations, Academy members answered the questions and clarified some hazy points, offered more information about the Oscars' foreign language film category, and called for a more pronounced presence by the Iranian cinema in this category.

In conclusion, copies of the documents related to the 81st Annual Academy Awards were presented to the House of Cinema for further studies.

Meeting and Luncheon with Iranian Filmmakers

Members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences met with the Iranian filmmakers at a 3 hour luncheon. During the event which attended a large number of prominent Iranian filmmakers, the two sides shared common experiences and questions which helped them achieve a more precise understanding of each other.

In addition to the members of House of Cinema's Board of Directors and directors of the Iranian motion picture guilds, the attending guests included Dariush Mehrjui, Nasser Taghvai, Seifollah Dad, Rakhshan Bani Etemad, Seyyed Mohammad Beheshti, Khosro Sinai, Mohammad Hassan Pezeshk, Alireza Shojanoori, Fatemeh Moetamed Arya, Nouredin Zarrinkelk, Reza Mirkarimi, Asghar Farhadi, Majid Majidi, Kambuzia Partovi, Ali Moalem, Mehdi Karampoor, Minoo Farshchi, Rasul Sadrameli, Hooshang Golmakani, Shadmehr Rastin, Jamshid Hashempur and many others.



Dinner with Iranian Documentary Filmmakers

In a 2 hour dinner party hosted by the Iranian Documentary Filmmakers Association, visiting Academy members met and conversed with active filmmakers in this field. During the event, Association Director Morteza Razzagh Karimi welcomed the presence of Academy members in Iran and called for a more extensive interaction between the documentary filmmakers of the two countries.



Seminar: Writing and Directing

The seminar on Writing and Directing in Film was held at the House of Cinema, led by speakers Frank Pierson and Phil Robinson, moderated by Farhad Tohidi and Alireza Raisian and attended by 107 Iranian filmmakers.

As a result of the great interest shown by the Iranian screenwriters and directors, the seminar concluded one and a half hour later than the scheduled timeframe.

Different subjects were touched on during the seminar, including stages of writing a script, the producer-director interactive cooperation, creation of the characters and the tone of the story, writing dialogs, the differences between original and adapted screenplays, the relation between the director and studio executives, etc.



Seminar: Acting

The Seminar on Acting in Film was held at the Film Museum of Iran, attending Annette Bening and Alfre Woodard. 43 members of the Iranian acting community participated in the seminar which was moderated by Fatemeh Moetamed Arya. Among the topics discussed during the event were script selection, casting process, interaction with the director and other members of the production team and preparation for the part. In addition, legal and trade issues related to the acting guild was brought up during the session.

Seminar: Documentary Filmmaking

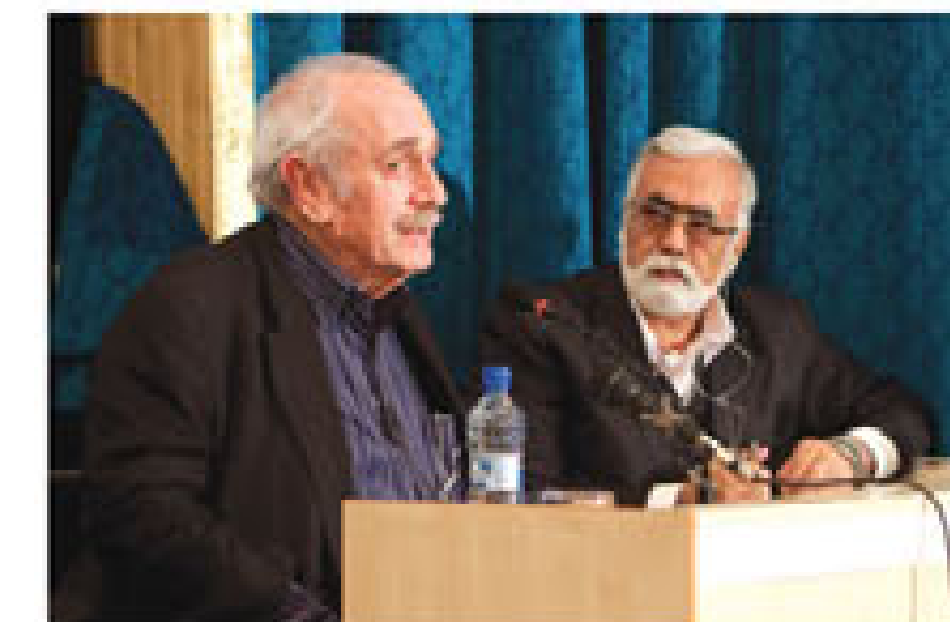
The Documentary Filmmaking seminar was held at the House of cinema, led by documentary director James Longley and moderated by Katayoon Shahabi. 73 Iranian documentary filmmakers attended the event. Parts of Longley's documentary "Iraq in Fragments" was screened at the beginning of the seminar, which led to questions by the audience on the reasons for the nomination of a documentary for an Oscar. Among the topics discussed were the process of selecting a subject, research stages, differences between fiction and non-fiction documentaries and the interaction between the director and the cast.



In two separate seminars, Sid Ganis, Tom Pollock and William Horberg talked about different stages of producing, marketing and distributing a movie in movie theaters. During the production seminar, which was moderated by Iraj Taghipoor, an audience of 39 Iranian producers brought up a variety of questions on the producer's responsibilities, script selection process, cast and crew selection, and the interactive relation between the producer and other members of the production team.

The second seminar, moderated by Gholamreza Moosavi, was dedicated to the post production issues, specifically marketing and distribution. During the event, an audience of 65 Iranian filmmakers active in this stage of production discussed issues such as testing the target audience, the role of producer in marketing and distribution, media advertisement approaches and using modern media, choosing the right distributor, negotiating with distributors and cinema owners and also issues concerning copyright.

Seminar: Producing, Marketing and Film Distribution





Film Screenings

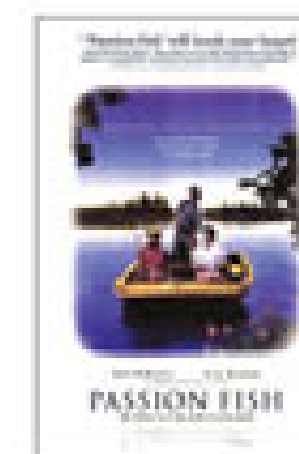
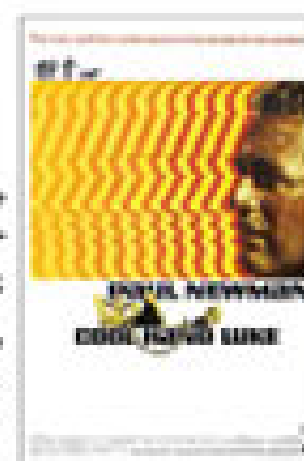
Akeelah and the Bee

Film's producer Sid Ganis answered the audience's questions after the screening of the film at the House of cinema. During this Q&A session, which was moderated by Kamran Maleki, most of the questions were centered on producing and reasons behind choosing this script for production. In response, Ganis provided some explanations on the filmmaking process from preproduction to exhibition.



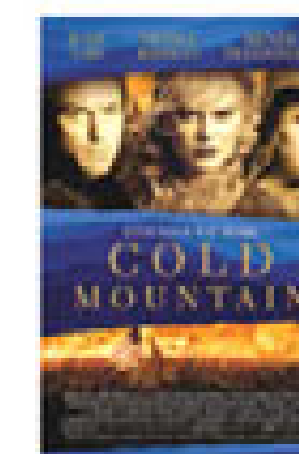
Cool Hand Luke

Writer Frank Pierson, who also has "Dog-Day Afternoon" in his professional profile, described the process in which a screenplay is shaped up or adapted from a book.



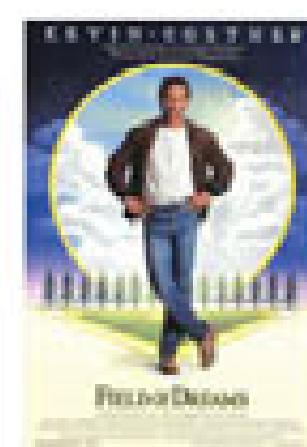
Passion Fish

Actress Alfre Woodard described the experience of working with the film's director, and explained her personal techniques and practices in building up her character in the film.



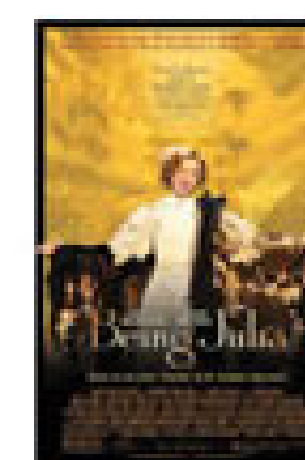
Cold Mountain

Independent producer and one of the film's producers William Horberg described the production process and the related difficulties for the audience.



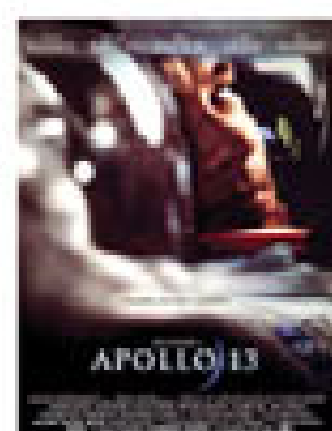
Field of Dreams

Writer and director of the film Phil Robinson spoke with the audience in two parts. Before the screening, he offered explanations on two points which would help nonnative viewers get a better understanding of the film. He also answered questions about the process of writing the story and directing the film at the end of the session.



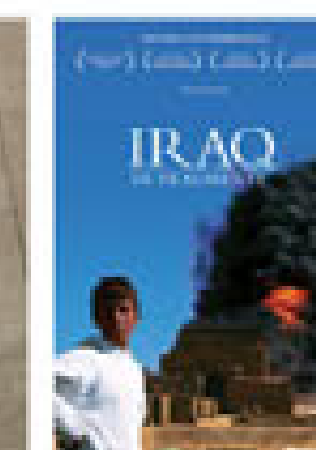
Being Julia

Actress Annette Bening, whose performance in the leading role of this film brought her an Oscar nomination, answered the audience's questions about her experience from this production project, and her reasons for choosing a script and joining a production project.



Apollo 13

Tom Pollock, who has been the chairman of Universal Pictures for 10 years, talked about the differences between the duties of a studio head and a producer. Recounting some memories from the production of this movie, he provided more detailed information about the production process.



Iraq in Fragments

Director of this Oscar nominated documentary James Longley answered the audience's questions and provided explanations on his reasons for choosing this subject, the film's production process and the difficulties during the shooting of this documentary.



Film Museum of Iran

In a visit to the Film Museum of Iran, members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences got more acquainted with the 107 years of cinema in Iran. During the 2 hour tour, the visiting delegates had a look at the portraits and credentials of the influential members of the Iranian cinema from actors to directors, and the awards and honors achieved by the Iranian filmmakers. In other parts of the tour, the guests visited the exhibitions of Children and Young Adults, Cinema of the Sacred Defense, movie theaters and film posters.

At the end of the visit, Academy members discussed their questions and views on the museum, its history and the resources and collections with the museum's Managing Director Mohammad Hassan Pezeshk.



**"Mokhtar-Nameh"
Shooting Location**

Academy members visited the location of the "Mokhtar-Nameh" series and had a look at an Iranian studio up close and personal. Guests of the Iranian cinema expressed their amazement after inspecting the decors and models made for the production project, and compared them with what is used in Hollywood. Closing the visit, the Academy members watched a few minutes of the edited scenes from the series to observe the production quality.



Shiraz Trip

A one day visit to Shiraz was another part of the visiting Academy members' itinerary in Iran. Tours of Persepolis, Naqsh-e Rostam and Naqsh-e Rostam gave them an opportunity to observe manifestations of the Iranian history and civilization. A tour of the old Bazaar of Shiraz and buying handicrafts concluded the Shiraz trip.

Isfahan Trip

During the 2 day trip to Isfahan, the Academy members observed the remaining structures and monuments from the time of the Islamic Civilization; a significant period in the history of Iran. The Isfahan itinerary included visits to the Naghsh-e Jahan Square, Ali Ghapu Palace and Chehel Sotoon Palaces and Sheikh Lotfollah and Imam Mosques, as well as shopping at the Isfahan Bazaar.





Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour

Managing Director and
COB of the House of
Cinema

*Peace and harmony are the ways of
the God Merciful*

In a political world filled with uncertainty and misunderstanding, it is only art that can establish and build up friendly interactions to bridge the gap between human communities. That is why the development of human relations can be considered the most significant purpose and function of art and in specific, cinema.

With that outlook, the establishment of multilateral relations between artists from different nations is primarily an effort to share a variety of experiences in mutual fields of interest. The visit of a delegation of prominent moviemakers from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to Iran on the invitation of the Iranian Alliance of Motion Picture Guilds (House of Cinema) is indeed a symbol of constructive relations between two nongovernmental art organizations which represent countries from the opposite sides of the world that are striving for the pride and glory of their countries' visual art and culture.

From the Iranian perspective, this event is an opportunity to become more acquainted with a successful motion picture organization with more than 80 years of history and over 6000 active members. It is also a welcome opportunity for the Iranian moviemakers to show that, contrary to the massive propaganda of the western media, their country is neither belligerent nor pro-war, but in fact adheres to the teachings of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in genuinely aspiring to peace and reconciliation for all humankind.

I hope that such interactions between cinema communities of Iran and the United States of America will turn out to be the beginning of a new chapter for thriving professional activities within the motion picture bodies of both countries.

Lastly, I should express my appreciation for the good will of Mr. Behrooz Hashemian (Iranian producer residing in France) who was the initiator of this eventful experience, and also for the sincere efforts of Ms. Ellen Harrington of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and the Executive Deputy Director of the House of Cinema Mr. Seyyed Mohsen Hashemi, whose joint diligence made this auspicious event possible.



Seyyed Mohsen Hashemi

Executive Deputy Director

The Report

It was mid August 2008 and I was talking to a friend of three years Behrooz Hashemian, the film producer residing in France, when he told me that in his recent trip to the United States he had been approached by the executives of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences with an expression of interest to visit the filmmaking community in Iran. He asked me if it would be possible to follow up this proposition and actually make it happen, considering the circumstances in Iran. I immediately told him that the Iranian Alliance of Motion Picture Guilds had recently elected Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour as the new Managing Director, that he was a daring and intelligent man, and that the Alliance, better known as the House of Cinema, has just the kind of potential and position to pull off such a trade initiative. Two weeks later, I received an email from Behrooz, and he was forwarding me an email from the Academy's Director of Exhibitions and Special Events Ellen Harrington. I contacted Asgarpour to discuss the proposition with him, and he welcomed the idea and gave me his approval on the spot. Grabbing the opportunity, I immediately forwarded him the email I had received and asked him to communicate his agreement and support to the Academy in writing as the Chairman of the Board of Directors at the House of Cinema.

Finally in mid October, House of Cinema sent an official fax to the Academy, announcing House of Cinema's agreement with the proposition and offering to host the event during the stay of the visiting delegation in Iran. A month later, I joined the House of Cinema on Asgarpour's invitation to act as his assistant and House of Cinema's Executive Deputy Director, and we immediately set off to work in an organized and official manner on the process involving the trip of the Academy members to Iran and arranging meetings and get-togethers with the Iranian filmmakers. In the period between the first approach and the actual trip, a total of 126 emails were exchanged between me and the Academy's Director of Exhibitions and Special Events to make the necessary arrangements and coordinate the different aspects of the event including visa applications, trip schedule, timeframes and program itinerary.

The constant counseling and the exchange of information and suggestions finally paid off and a delegation of 9 Academy members and filmmakers including the Academy's president traveled to Iran to get to know the Iranian filmmakers as well as the art and culture of the Islamic Iran. The activities planned and later executed during the 10 day visit were mainly categorized in the four groups of A) Seminars, B) Meetings and gatherings, C) Film screenings and Q&A sessions with the filmmakers and D) Sightseeing tours.

In conclusion, I should express my sincere gratitude to all the colleagues mentioned at the end of this booklet who helped me plan this momentous event and make it happen. I am also grateful to the Iranian filmmakers who encouraged us with their support and participation in the programs. I hope such relations and exchanges of experiences between all people would be acknowledged not as an exception but a practiced principle, as we have learned from the tradition of our prophet.



Isfahan, A traditional restaurant



The House of Cinema, Meeting with the Board of Directors

“ No film is capable of
distorting the Iranian
culture and civilization

Sid Ganis



Isfahan, Sheikh Lutfollah Mosque

“ We want them (Iranian filmmakers)
to participate not only in the
Academy Awards, but in our film
festivals in general

Annette Bening

“ It was an utterly fascinating trip

William Hoberg



Tehran, The Museum of Cinema



Shiraz, Persia



Tehran, Imam Khomeini Airport

“ Iranians are very sophisticated,
educated and culturally
literate people

Sid Ganis



Shiraz, A tea house

House of Cinema's Managing Director: *Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour*
Executive Deputy Director: *Seyyed Mohsen Hashemi*

Specialized Meeting Moderators: *Farhad Tohidi, Alireza Raisian, Fatemeh Moetamed Arya,*
Katayoon Shahabi, Iraj Taghipoor, Gholamreza Moosavi

Meeting and Film Screening Administration: *Kamran Maleki*
Secretariat: *Hedieh Daemi, Mansoureh Vaferi*
Ceremonial Coordination: *Hamidreza Pournasiri*
Logistics: *Shapour Alidai, Ali Mortazavi, Tahereh Zeynal*

Guides and Translators: *Parastoo Dokouhaki, Eftekhar Hashemi, Katayoon Khalili,*
Niloufar Zia, Farkhondeh Zarei, Maliheh Mozaffari, Parto Mohtadi

Information Providing and Public Relations: *Mina Jahangiri*

Film Subtitles: *Nastaran Nourbakhsh, Hamidreza Pournasiri, Elham Nasiri,*
Afsoon Panahi, Alireza Baghi

Seminar Interpreters: *Hamed Abdi, Farid Besmi*

Film Preparation and Screening: *Saeid Saleh, Parviz Vakil-abad*

General Services: *Ali Keshkari, Gholamreza Sheikh-Langaroodi, Mohammad Mohammadian*
Afrasyab Biabani, Abbasali Salehi, Bahram Milanian, Mehdi Yousefi
Catering Services: *Firoozeh Kouhi, Azam Sodagari*

Photo Documentation: *Soroosh Milanizadeh, Babak Mehrabani Irani*

Video Documentation: *Masoud Haghighi, Khosrow Naghibi*

Camerasmen: *Kazem Halimi, Mohammadreza Saeidi, Maryam Halimi, Mahnaz Saleh-abadi*

Brochure and Guidebook Designer: *Hamidreza Pournasiri*

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