



Presents

# THE PERSIAN CONNECTION



**A Black Light District Production**

**A Film by Daniel Y-Li Grove**

**Theatrical Release Date:** July 14, 2017

**Running Time:** 103 minutes

**Rating:** Not yet rated

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/ThePersianConnectionMovie](http://www.facebook.com/ThePersianConnectionMovie)

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/TheLonerMovie>

**Instagram:** [www.instagram.com/thepersianconnectionmovie](http://www.instagram.com/thepersianconnectionmovie)

**To Download Materials:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/rs5cju9wg3qu2v/AAA8h1HYu2HFvWxBtZaR7kx1a?dl=0>

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## CAST AND CREW

Behrouz	Reza Sixo Safai
Oksana	Helena Mattson
Cirrus	Parviz Sayyad
Evgeny	Julian Sands
Lola	Laura Harring
Farid	Dominic Rains
Sepehr	Nikolai Kinski
Sasha	Gregory Kasyan
Danush	David Diaan
Young Behrouz	Daniel Zolghadri
Director	Daniel Y-Li Grove
Screenplay by	Daniel Y-Li Grove
Story by	Reza Sixo Safai Daniel Y-Li Grove
Producers	Seth Caplan Reza Sixo Safai
Executive Producers	Daniel Y-Li Grove Patrick Grove Luke Elliott
Associate Producer	Malcolm Granath
Director of Photography	Steven Capitano Calitri
Editor	F. Brian Scofield
Production Designer	Michael Bricker
Costume Designer	Kim Ngo
Casting Director	Yesi Ramirez

## **SYNOPSIS**

As a child soldier, Behrouz (Reza Sixo Safai) miraculously survived the Iran-Iraq War to be squirreled away to the streets of Los Angeles. After two decades under the ruthless Iranian mobster Cirrus Golshiri (Parviz Sayyad), Behrouz leaves the underworld to follow his American Dream of becoming a “Real Estate Man”. But after a chance encounter involving a high-stakes poker game, he is brought back into the life he left behind and accused of stealing from his former boss. Behrouz and his Russian girlfriend Oksana (Helena Mattsson), must hunt down missing drugs as events from his past and present clash spiraling out of control. **THE PERSIAN CONNECTION** is an electric neon-noir fever dream set in the Persian opium underworld of Los Angeles.

## **DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT**

In making **THE PERSIAN CONNECTION** our collective goal was to take you on a ride into the dark heart of the American Dream. Inspired by the life and struggles of an immigrant veteran of the Iran/Iraq war, **THE PERSIAN CONNECTION** re-imagines the classic noir as a neon-lit subversive fairytale in a hero’s quest to make sense of religious yearning in the godless dream factory of Los Angeles. Populated by a vagabond collection of dreamers, the film is infused with a lush electronic soundscape designed as a cinematic cocktail of poetry, drugs and violence. “So let’s take a little trip, baba...”

We started this journey just over four years ago. Reza Sixo Safai, who had performed outstandingly in my short *A Better Place Than This*, came to me with an idea. Reza told me the story of his uncle – an Iranian immigrant and veteran of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88). He volunteered to serve on the front lines because he thought it extremely unfair that people of privilege could abstain from doing so. But he miraculously survived the war and immigrated to America where over the years he managed to live some semblance of the American Dream. A job. A house. A family. Yet sadly he was unable to come to terms with what he had seen and the person he had become. During the press tour for the Sundance winning film *Circumstance*, Reza received a phone call. His uncle had commit suicide.

Los Angeles is an immigrant city replete with such stories. From the Bolshevik Revolution to the Vietnam War to the current Syrian Civil War, she has taken in swaths of people forsaken by their homelands due to revolution, war and genocide. Her geography mirrors modern geo-politics: Koreatown, Little Ethiopia, Little Armenia, Tehrangeles, etc. For unlike other major cities, L.A. affords space. Affordable housing. Real estate. The kernel of the American Dream. A dream sold by her very own dream factory – Hollywood and the “culture industry,” the nexus of American soft power and a lightning rod to displaced migrants and creative dreamers alike.

Our dreamer Behrouz is plucked from the Iranian warfront and thrown into the Technicolor urban jungle of the Hollywood Hills. Replacing one dream of Paradise with another. For L.A. is where all come to shed their cultural baggage and grow a skin adorned with self-styled aesthetics, icons and ideology. Where ids live on sleeves and egos are formed in the veil of appearances, L.A. is a cultural swap meet and a kaleidoscope of becoming where identity is performed and meaning is self-created.

THE PERSIAN CONNECTION is filled with such performers: a real estate man come James Dean nihilist; a former prostitute turned Cyndi Lauper romantic; a Russian gangster gone Hollywood tribal. “We’re all Americans now. Yankee Doodle Dandy.” “But Paradise doesn’t last forever...” Between the cracks and the crevices, beneath the picturesque hotel pools and Sunset views there still remain the haves and have-nots. Like an opium-induced fever dream the film transports us through layers of a multifaceted Los Angeles, dark, colorful, moody, absurd, violent, obscene, uncanny and sublime.

THE PERSIAN CONNECTION is about immigrant others who dream their way up the Technicolor Hollywood Hills. From martyrdom, Jihad and the child’s foolish vision of Paradise to individual liberty, freedom and the romantic and nihilistic pursuit of the American Dream.

Sincerely,  
Daniel Y-Li Grove

## **ABOUT THE CAST**

### **Reza Sixo Safai (Behrouz / Producer / Story)**

Reza Sixo Safai co-starred in the 2011 Sundance Audience Winner CIRCUMSTANCE, prompting the Huffington Post to declare that he “deserves to be a frontrunner for the Best Supporting Actor Oscar.” The film went on to win key awards at OUTFEST, Rome, Madrid and NYC New Fest, in addition to earning a Spirit Award Nomination for Best Film. Since Reza's short film THE MARIO VALDEZ STORY took home 2nd place at Cannes and the award winning short A BETTER PLACE THAN THIS, in which he starred, became PBS' flagship film, he has been a mainstay in the US indie film scene as both an actor and producer in many films including MEET ME IN MONTENEGRO, PREVERTERE and SHAH BOB with legendary Iranian actor Parviz Sayyad. The first film from his newly minted shingle Black Light District, which he co-founded with his partner in crime Daniel Grove, was the Sundance sensation A GIRL WALKS HOME ALONE AT NIGHT, the world's first Iranian Vampire/Western that made many top 10 lists for 2014 including Newsweek, The New Republic and Salon. In addition to winning a Gotham Award, the film received Spirit Award Nominations for Best First Film, Best Cinematography and the "Someone to Watch" Award. Along with Elijah Wood, Reza executive produced and played Rockabilly. His next leading role will be in the French/Thai co production Ai BETTER PLACE THAN THIS, a feature adaptation of the award winning short, also to be directed by Daniel Grove. The script was an SFFS/KRF finalist along with Sundance winner FRUITVALE STATION and SXSW winner SHORT TERM 12. Reza produces along with French producer Raphael Benoliel ("Midnight in Paris", "Les Miserable"). THE PERSIAN CONNECTION is Reza's 2nd collaboration with Daniel Grove.

### **Helena Mattson (Oksana)**

Helena Mattsson will next be seen on the big screen in the Steven Segal thriller Code of Honor; and in the independent films, THE PERSIAN CONNECTION and Smartass. Lately, she appeared in the recurring role of Agnetha in FX's American Horror Story, and she filmed the pilot, Paradise Pictures, for USA in the recurring role of Isabelle Yates. The year before, she recurred as Greta in ABC's Mistresses, as well as Jemma in FX's Fargo starring Billy Bob Thornton.

Helena also was seen in a large recurring role in ABC's Betrayal as well as a series regular in 666 Park Ave, following recurring roles in Desperate Housewives and Nikita. Helena starred in Matthey McDonagh's Seven Psychopaths, opposite Colin Farrell and Woody Harrelson and Guns, Girls and Gambling opposite Gary Oldman. Her other feature film credits include: Surrogates with Bruce Willis and Iron Man 2 with Robert Downey Jr. Born in Stockholm, Sweden, Mattsson studied acting in London, New York and Los Angeles.

### **Parviz Sayyad (Cirrus)**

Parviz Sayyad is a highly famed actor of Iranian Cinema. His first film, the comedic Hasan Kachal (1970), or "Hasan the Bald", is well remembered. He gained more fame starring in one of the oldest Iranian TV series "OKTAPUS" playing the role of a well-mannered, diplomatic sneaky and soft-spoken board member. His real break came with one of the most famous Iranian TV series "Sarkar Ostovar" when he created and played the role of a naive but street-smart country boy "Samad". After this, Sayyad went on to star in the famous "Samad" film series

(somewhat reminiscent to Charlie Chaplin's The Tramp character). His character, Samad (or Samad Agha, as he demanded others to call him), was a prominent comedic icon of Iran during the 1970s. Other noteworthy roles include "Asdollah Mirza" in *Daii jan Napoleon*. In addition, he is the director/writer of the 1st films of the Iranian New Wave made outside of Iran in the early 80's, which premiered at Berlin and won the Grand Jury Prize at Locarno. He is also the first Iranian filmmaker to have his films banned by both the Shah and the Ayatollah.

### **Julian Sands (Evgeny)**

Julian recently recurred on *GOTHAM* and was seen last season throughout NBC's *CROSSBONES*. He also starred in *A CELEBRATION OF HAROLD PINTER*, a critically acclaimed one-man show directed by John Malkovich. He recently wrapped two indie films: *THE CHOSEN*, about the assassination of Leon Trotsky, and *THE PERSIAN CONNECTION*, playing a deadly Russian Mafioso.

### **Laura Harring (Lola)**

Ever since astounding audiences and critics with her breakthrough performance in David Lynch's award winning "*Mulholland Drive*" for which she received an Alma Award, Laura Harring has been one of Hollywood's most versatile stars. The International Herald Tribune compared Laura to Ava Gardner, and film critic Roger Ebert likened her to Rita Hayworth. The Cannes Film Festival's "*Nice Matin*" compared Laura's sensation to Marilyn Monroe's when she first arrived. Laura got her first taste as an actor at the age of five, after playing an angel in the Christmas play "*The Nativity Story*".

As a teenager, she drew inspiration for the pursuit of excellence from her grandfather Isauro Martinez Cairo, a world-class athlete who in 1954 became the National Champion in Fencing and Equestrian for Mexico. During her teen years Laura studied abroad at the prestigious boarding school Aiglon College in Switzerland, one of the top schools in the world, where she graduated with an Academic Diploma. It was here that Laura met her future husband of two years, Count Carl von Bismarck, making her Contessa von Bismarck. After graduating from boarding school, she travelled the world and spent time as a social worker in India, performing manual labor, to fix the soil erosion problem that hit the foothills of the Himalayas. Upon returning, Laura became the first Latina to win the Miss USA title (yes you can catch that clip on Youtube) and after being cast opposite Raul Julia in "*The Alamo: Thirteen Days to Glory*", her passion was sparked and Laura went on to become Classically trained, at The London Academy of Performing Arts, in which she relished playing Shakespeare.

Laura played opposite Denzel Washington in "*John Q*", and went on to work opposite John Travolta in "*The Punisher*", then with William Hurt in "*The King*", and Emma Roberts in "*Nancy Drew*" and finally Javier Bardem in New Line's "*Love in the Time of Cholera*" written by Nobel Prize Winner, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and directed by Mike Newell. She gained 20 pounds for the role. Other credits also include: "*The Caller*" which won the 2008 Tribeca Film Festival's "*Made In New York Best Narrative Feature*" and the 2009 Grand Jury Award at Outfest, for Outstanding Actress in the Feature Film "*Drool*", a dark comedy for which she also won Special Mention Female at the Gasparilla International Film Festival, among others. At her first Oscar appearance, she wore the million dollar shoes designed by Stuart Weitzman, making

her the most photographed woman at 2002 Oscars. Her more recent Television work includes critically acclaimed "The Shield", "Gossip Girl", and "Chasing Life".

Her European upbringing and travels made it easy for her to find a niche playing strong, upscale, matriarchal women. Her early social work instilled a strong sense of philanthropy and Laura has worked as a Goodwill Ambassador to the "David Lynch Foundation", supported "Children Uniting Nations", travelled to Africa with "Stop Hunger Now" as well as visited more than 100 nursing homes and hospitals in personal appearances. Her passions include dancing Tango, Salsa, Merengue, some ballroom, and performing Commedia Dell' Arte in both the Italian and French styles. Laura resides in Los Angeles.

### **Dominic Rains (Farid)**

Dominic Rains is an American Actor best known for his leading roles in films such as The Taqwacores, A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night, and the soon to be released, The Fixer-starring James Franco, Melissa Leo and Rachel Brosnan. Dominic was born in Tehran, Iran and grew up in Dallas, Texas. In 2010, he gained recognition for his lead performance in the breakout Sundance film, The Taqwacores – a film about a young Muslim man struggling to find identity in contemporary America. The New York Times praised his performance as "particularly eye-catching", while he also went on to win 'Best Actor' at the 2010 Festival De Cine Internacional de Ourense. In 2014 Dominic played one of the leads of one of the most critically claimed Iranian films of our time, A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night. Directed by Ana Lily Amirpour, the film was one of the best-reviewed films of the year and went on to win numerous awards including a Gotham Award for 'Best Breakthrough Director', as well as three Independent Spirit Award nominations. In addition to film and television, Dominic remains active in the Theatre community and is a member of the Los Angeles based Elephant Theatre Company. He has appeared in acclaimed productions such as Desert Sunrise, Block Nine, Love Sick, Baby Doll and The North Plan. Dominic resides in Los Angeles.

### **Nikolai Kinski (Sepehr)**

Nikolai Kinski was born in France and grew up in the United States. He made his film debut at the age of 11 in Klaus Kinski's final film "Paganini". Kinski studied Theater at UCLA, and went on to act in American independent films ("Tortilla Soup") and off-Broadway productions in the early 00's. In 2004, he moved to Berlin where he became fluent in German and has acted in a wide range of European art house films such as Raoul Ruiz's "Klimt", playing Egon Schiele opposite John Malkovich (for which he won the Austrian Academy Award), Hal Hartley's "Fay Grim", "The Two Lives of Daniel Shore" and as Karl Lagerfeld in "Yves Saint Laurent", in addition to studio films ("Aeon Flux") and European television ("Krupp", "The Sinking of the Laconia", "Adrenalin").

### **Gregory Kasyan (Sasha)**

Gregory Kasyan can be seen in the feature War Dogs, directed by Todd Phillips, starring Johah Hill and Bradley Cooper due out later this year. Kaysan also stars in the gritty indie "Quest," with Betsy Brandt (Breaking Bad), Lou Diamond Phillips (Longmire), Dash Mihok (Ray Donovan), and Keith Stanfield (Straight Outta Compton). A Los Angeles native, who has pursued acting since the age of eight, Kasyan discovered his love for acting after he booked his first audition on ABC's hit series "The Middle." Thereafter, Kasyan has been seen in a variety of

shows such as, CBS's "NCIS: New Orleans" and "Hawaii Five-O," Amazon's "Bosch," as well as features, and numerous national campaigns. When Gregory is not on set, he enjoys playing basketball, spending time with his dog Archie, and going out for sushi with his family.

**Nikohl Boosheri (Sara)**

Nikohl Boosheri is an Iranian-Canadian actress based in Los Angeles. She had her introduction to the indie-film world in the film "Circumstance" which won the Audience Award at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival. Her acclaimed performance in the film was named Best Performance at the LA Outfest, the International Rome Film Festival, and the Noor Film Festival. Other credits include Farah in Meera Menon's first feature film "Farah Goes Bang" at the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival where she was named one of Indiewire's 10 Actors To Watch, the award winning short "Refuge" directed by Mo Gorjestani, and the colorful Sara in Daniel Grove's "THE PERSIAN CONNECTION" premiering at the 2016 Tribeca Film Festival. She is also a songwriter, frequently collaborating with LA artist Wild the Coyote.

**Daniel Zolghadri (Young Behrouz)**

Daniel Zolghadri was born in Montreal, Canada and got bit by the acting bug when he first saw the work of Philip Seymour Hoffman. As a sixteen-year-old actor Daniel has worked in theater, television and film, recurring in hit TV series such as Scorpion and NCIS. He has been a 2016 finalist and recipient of the First Order Award of the National Young Arts Foundation in Miami. Daniel currently resides in California where he studies theater at the Orange County School of the Arts.



## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

### **Daniel Grove (Director / Writer / Executive Producer)**

Daniel is a writer, director and producer who was born in Singapore and grew-up between Singapore, Jakarta, Sydney and Los Angeles. A Better Place Than This – his award winning short about the Hangman of Singapore’s Changi Prison – continues to broadcast nationally on PBS and marked the first creative collaboration between the writer-director and his creative partner Reza Sizo Safai. They followed up with Executive Producing the beloved Sundance hit A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night under their newly formed Black Light District label. Previously Daniel’s screenplay for the short Blackbird about inner city Latinos at the age of sexual awakening was a finalist for the 2011 Student Academy Awards for Best Dramatic Short. During his Master of Fine Arts at the University of Southern California he was a recipient of the Panavision Young Filmmaker Award, the Eastman Kodak Film Grant and the Jeffrey Jones Scholarship for Screenwriting. Daniel has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Sydney where he read philosophy, journalism and film studies. At the time he was heavily involved in the Sydney University Dramatic Society (SUDS) – the oldest living theatre group in the Southern Hemisphere – where he played the John the Baptist in Oscar Wilde’s Salome and produced numerous Harold Pinter plays. He previously worked as a journalist in Sydney, Singapore and Beijing. THE PERSIAN CONNECTION is his feature film directorial debut.

### **Seth Caplan (Producer)**

Seth Caplan is an award winning filmmaker who has written and produced an acclaimed collection of feature films, animated movies, and documentary programs. Seth has won numerous awards including the audience award for best film in the Next category at the Sundance Film Festival for “FIRST GIRL I LOVED” and the John Cassavetes Independent Spirit Award for his film “IN SEARCH OF A MIDNIGHT KISS”. Seth co-wrote and produced “FLATLAND: The Movie”, an animated film starring the voices of Martin Sheen, Kristen Bell, and Michael York. Seen by over 1 million students around the world, “Flatland” has been licensed by the U.S. State Department and Ministries of Education in numerous countries. Seth’s movies have been featured at film festivals including: The Sundance Film Festival, Tribeca Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, SXSW, LAFF, The Edinburgh Film Festival, Chicago International Film Festival, AFI Fest, UrbanWorld, Raindance, Woodstock, Istanbul, Bangkok, Krakow, Sarajevo, New Zealand and many more. In addition, his films have been televised on Net ix, Amazon, Hulu, Showtime, The Sundance Channel, IFC, PBS, Starz and NBC/Universal Sports Network. Seth has served on the jury for the Austin Film Festival and for the Piaget Independent Producer of the Year award. He holds degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and an M.F.A. from the American Film Institute where he was awarded a student Emmy and Academy Award nomination for his thesis film “DUNCAN REMOVED”. Prior to his film work Seth co-founded Enspire Learning, an innovative online learning company. Enspire has been in business for over 15 years and is a recognized leader in the creation of transformative learning experiences. At Enspire Seth managed the development of courses for clients including the U.S. Department of Education, Harvard Business School, and The World Bank.

### **Steven Capitano Calitri (Director of Photography)**

Son of a Colombian immigrant mother and Italian-American father, Steven Capitano Calitri worked in the control room of MSNBC during the 2003 Iraqi war and climbed up the ranks as a crew member in NYC film and television productions. He made his DP Feature debut as the Director of Photography for NATURAL SELECTION, which swept the 2011 SXSW festival awards and was nominated for two Independent Spirit Awards, and for BENEATH THE HARVEST SKY, which debuted at the 2013 Toronto International Film Festival and screened at the 2014 TriBeCa Film festival. He's the Director of Photography for the critically acclaimed Comedy Central show BROAD CITY and shot the first season of the Hulu show DIFFICULT PEOPLE. He continues to dive in into narrative feature work and explore varying genres.

### **Photek (Score)**

Rupert Parkes, known as Photek, is an LA-based British record producer, film & TV composer, and electronic music DJ. Photek is currently the composer on the ABC's hit show "How to Get Away with Murder". Photek was a game-changer in the UK dance music explosion of the 90's, and after three consecutive Grammy Award nominations, his music has earned universal respect and acclaim. His other film credits include "Tron" and "The Italian Job".

### **Brian Scofield (Editor)**

F. Brian Scofield is a filmmaker living in Los Angeles by way of Austin, Texas. He has edited films for Terrence Malick, Warren Beatty, and some other really cool people. He studied philosophy and literature at the University of Notre Dame and received his MFA in film production from USC, where he formed a strong friendship and collaborative bond with Daniel (Brian directed the Student Academy Award nominated Blackbird, which Daniel wrote). He's currently editing a new feature with actor/director Pat Healy, directing a documentary about Los Angeles icon Angelyne, and developing his own first narrative feature.

### **Michael Bricker (Production Designer)**

Michael is a production designer and producer whose most recent design credits include RESULTS (Sundance 2015, starring Guy Pearce & Cobie Smulders), LOST IN THE SUN (starring Josh Duhamel), Andrew Bujalski's COMPUTER CHESS, and Robbie Pickering's NATURAL SELECTION, winner of the 2011 SXSW Grand Jury Prize. In addition to his film work, Michael is the Founder and Chief Innovator of PEOPLE FOR URBAN PROGRESS (peopleup.org), an Indianapolis-based non-profit and urban design do-tank that works primarily with upcycled materials. Michael earned his Master in Architecture from the University of Texas at Austin. He has taught production design and architecture at the University of Texas Film Institute and Wabash College. He splits his time between Indianapolis, Austin, and Los Angeles.

### **Kim Ngo (Costume Designer)**

Kim Ngo is a Los Angeles based costume designer. After completing her degree at the University of Texas at Austin with a concentration in Costume Design for Theater Arts, she worked for several years designing costumes and producing for theater before transitioning to film with critically acclaimed feature film Harmony and Me (New Directors, New Films) directed by Bob Byington. Since moving to Los Angeles, Kim has costume designed several award winning feature films and worked with esteemed actors such as Bryan Cranston, Jennifer Garner, John Hawkes, Shailene Woodley, JK Simmons, Mark Boone Jr and Nick Offerman. In

addition to THE PERSIAN CONNECTION, directed by Daniel Grove, premiering at the Tribeca Film festival this year, her latest features are Wakefield, directed by Robin Swicord and produced by Bonnie Curtis and Julie Lynn in 2016. Ghost House, directed by Rich Ragsdale was shot in Thailand February 2015, Run the Tide directed by Soham Mehta, and Break Point directed by Jay Karas which premiered at SXSW 2014. In addition to films, her work includes a wide range of specialty costume design and construction for national commercials such as Virgin America, Princess Cruises, United States Air Force, Bose. Kim and her team are innovative in their craft, efficient in their execution and present fresh and diverse perspectives.