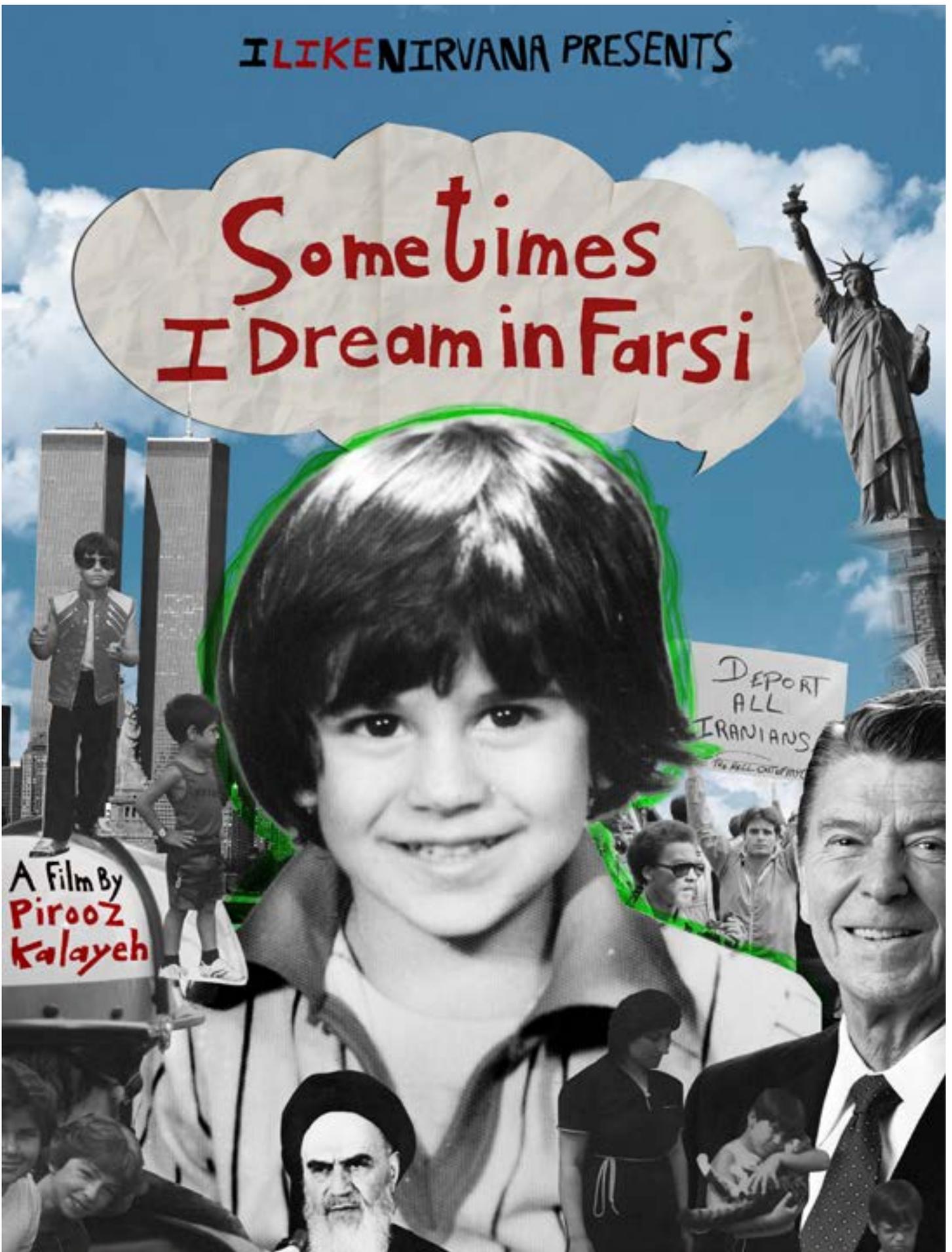


I LIKE NIRVANA PRESENTS

Sometimes  
I Dream in Farsi

A Film By  
Pirooz  
Kalayeh



# Sometimes I Dream in Farsi

Genre:	Documentary Feature
Release Date:	07/19/2021
Runtime:	93 mins
Country:	USA
Age:	12A
Director:	Pirooz Kalayeh
Contact:	<a href="mailto:pk@ilikenirvana.com">pk@ilikenirvana.com</a>

**SOME MOVIES ARE MADE TO HELP YOU REMEMBER.**



# Logline

Pirooz Kalayeh uncovers a traumatic event with racism when he was a child and seeks to heal himself and his family through interviews, therapy, and roleplays.

# Synopsis

After remembering a traumatic racist incident in his childhood, Pirooz Kalayeh decides to document his journey to recovery, traveling back to the barbershop where he was refused a haircut as a child, and then doing a series of roleplays with family, friends, and children to understand how racism leaves lasting effects and how he and others can heal and move forward.

# Topic Summary

My multicultural upbringing and adult pathways have led me towards a life of independent thought and self-reliance. In fact, such ideals were encouraged early on in my childhood having emigrated to the United States after my family's forced upheaval after the Iranian Revolution. This was a major shift in my perspective of government systems and authority that led me to question everything, and eventually shaped my decisions towards the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr., The Jack Kerouac School, independent cinema, Zen Buddhism, and ultimately six feature films that explore the ways in which multicultural representation, the American dream, social media, and technology are taking shape in society.

# Cast

(in alphabetical)

Camera Operator Andy Chinn  
Cinematographer Aaron Lee Dowell  
Actor Ray Haratian  
Friend Aquiles La Grave  
Uncle Farahmand Kalayeh  
Father Hooshmand Kalayeh  
Brother Panauh Kalayeh  
Subject, Director Pirooz Kalayeh  
Cousin Meina Kalayeh  
Mother Shahin Kalayeh  
Actor Kevin Ramsey  
Zen Teacher Brad Warner

## Intended Audience

America is as racially charged as ever. Each week that passes, offers different examples of how disenfranchised people are facing adversity, whether this is due to color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, or religious discrimination. Since this film deals with racial trauma experienced in childhood and the unspoken story of Iranian immigrants living between Iran and America, we believe this film will have a wide appeal to first generation immigrants, as well as those segments of society who have firsthand experience dealing with racial tension. Because the film approaches its topic in a therapeutic fashion, with hopes for uniting humanity, to see how such traumas affect the youth of America, we believe that the film will be a peace offering, whereby all – regardless of classification – will be able to relate to the adversities felt by this child and family and form a lasting empathy. For this reason, the film appeals to all who hope to create a dialogue of mutual exchange and goodwill. Its effect may also extend beyond those already compassionate to such events to others who may not realize that such childhood traumas can have such lasting effects.

# Artistic Approach

I often mix genres and mediums in a film like I would in a painting. This is one of the main focal points of *Shoplifting for American Apparel*, which operates as much as a painting as it does a hybrid narrative. The film incorporates animated g-chat sequences, Flash-animated paintings behind longer text sequences, and shifts in camera and image quality for a varied texture to the overall film.

My mixing also includes an exploration into performance and authenticity, for which I will often keep shifting directing approaches to keep actors or subjects in a state of immediacy. These methods might include puzzle-piecing actors, shifting between scripted material to improvised outlines and vice-versa, using no script or outline, or even co-creating sequences with actors with and without rehearsals. Sometimes I will stick to a script for an entire film as in *The Human War*, operate completely from a structured outline as we did for *Brunch on the Fourth of July*, or allow a documentary to have fictional elements breathed into it, as we did in several of the sequences in *Brad Warner's Hardcore Zen*.

Since I have worked as a touring musician, music is often an integral piece of my films, usually delivered in short, music montages as we did in *The Human War* or *Shoplifting*, or in blatant Giligan's Island type centerpieces, as we did in my horror comedy release *Zombie Bounty Hunter M.D.*, which includes narrated musical numbers (with LA based band Spindrifft), fight sequences, and stop-time animation to create a stylistic, adventure satire and cautionary tale on the hits-driven culture of the Facedown Generation.

My references for *SIDIF* are the works of Abbas Kiarostami, Keith Haring, Caveh Zahedi, and Marlon Riggs. My hope is to make a film somewhere between Riggs's *Black Is*, *Black Ain't* and *Tongues Untied* that reflects the Iranian American experience, and the constant mediation between cultures immigrants face.



# Director's Statement

Although I have been making films for the past 12 years, I feel as if I've finally found my voice within cinema and consider *SOMETIMES I DREAM IN FARSI* to be my first film on that new path.

My writing mentor, Bobbie Louise Hawkins used to tell me: "A good writer is a good talker and, and a good talker is a good writer." So, I've been talking my story for the past 12 years, trying, with each film, to re-tell something I couldn't quite put into words. Then, in 2016, shortly after President Trump's Muslim Ban, I was making a comedy film titled *APOCALYPSE LATER*, when I was innocently asked what my apocalypse might be.

That's when I remembered being turned away from a barber because I was Iranian and how my father conducted a sit-in before the police arrived. I had completely forgotten this happened, and when it came back to me, I started crying uncontrollably.

*SOMETIMES I DREAM IN FARSI* deals with this traumatic racist incident in my childhood and my journey through filmmaking and therapy over the past five years. I didn't know my film would mirror what was happening in America when I began. I wasn't sure if I'd even make it through to recovery.

Now, with the film completed, I agree with Bobbie that talking our stories can help our writing, but it also takes listening to each other, especially when it's hard, to help us come together.

# Pirooz Kalayeh

Writer, Editor, Director, Producer

Pirooz Kalayeh is a filmmaker, artist, and author. His films include *Shoplifting for American Appeal*, *The Human War*, *Brad Warner's Hardcore Zen*, *Zombie Bounty Hunter M.D.*, and *Ctrl Alt Del*. His web series is *Stories Between Iran & America*. His latest documentary feature is *Sometimes I Dream In Farsi*.



# Aaron Lee Dowell

Producer, Cinematographer



Aaron Lee Dowell is a filmmaker and professor from Compton, CA. He's made more than half a dozen short films as well as worked on several feature films and webseries. His work tends to explore the mundane in the lives of Black American. He's currently an Adjunct Professor of Film/Video at different community colleges in Los Angeles. He has a B.A. in African-American Studies from Morehouse College and an M.F.A. in Film Production from Loyola Marymount University.

# Thomas Bellier

## Composer

Thomas Bellier, is a French musician, composer and producer based out of Los Angeles, CA. Bellier is currently active with the world music 'Arabian fuzz' psychedelic six-piece, Al-Qasar as well as with his thunderous psych outfit, Blaak Heat (Tee Pee Records/Svart Records). The 2011 production of Patrick Dubost's theater play Les Neuf Coriaces featured an entire



score by Bellier. He has also worked on recording, mixing, and mastering sessions for the likes of the Deftones, Danzig, Soulfly, Behemoth, Monster Magnet, Bill Ward (Black Sabbath), and Marty Friedman (Megadeth). Bellier trained under Grammy-winning producer Matt Hyde (Slayer, Deftones) and started engineering and producing records in 2014. Bellier obtained a Master's in Public Administration from Science Po (Paris, France) in 2009 after an undergraduate exchange program in philosophy and sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. He has contributed articles to Rolling Stone Magazine, Vice Magazine, leading French newspaper Libération, and New Political Science.

# Current Sampling



# Other Work Samples



# Additional Samples

## Prior Work



*Stories Between Iran & America* (2020)

[View Series Online](#)

STORIES... is a new video series created by Pirooz Kalayeh that documents his life between Iran and America. Each story is filled with archival footage, drawings, photographs, animation, re-enactments, and phone calls with his family now during the pandemic and from archival footage of when they first arrived to America in 1979.

*Brad Warner's Hardcore Zen* (2013)

[View Film Online](#)

Password: enlightenment

A documentary on Zen master Brad Warner that premiered at the Buddhist Film Festival in Amsterdam in 2013.



*Zombie Bounty Hunter M.D.* (2016)

[View Film Online](#)

Password: oui

A satire on zombies and the Facedown generation that premiered at On Vous Ment Film Festival in Lyon, France in 2016.

# Supplemental Questions & Information

## SIDIF Blog Excerpts

### Day 1: Sometimes I Dream in Farsi

April 25, 2018

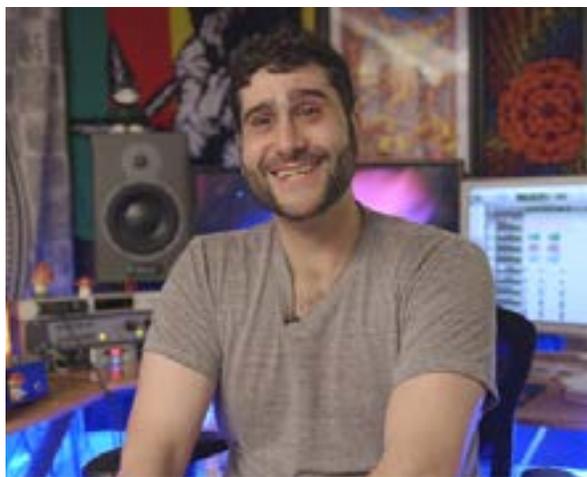
*Pirooz Kalayeh*

Today was the first day of shooting, and I already cried like a baby.

My therapist warned me that I'd have issues. She wanted to do this Gestalt Therapy during our sessions, but I told her I'd save it for the camera.

When I told Aaron that, he bagged up laughing.

I guess everything is for art. Like Nemanja says: "I would die for art."



In the morning, we did an interview with Panauh. Aaron was surprised with how open he was and even critical of me.

"That's healthy," Aaron said.

"I guess," I said.

Then we went to the college and had Aaron chat with the Topics in Cinema course. I wonder if they know how amazing Aaron is.

After that, we headed home to shoot me opening a Transformer toy I got in the mail. I explained that right around the time the Iran hostage thing happened and that barber refused to cut my hair, I also got a Transformer stolen from me.

Anyway, it showed up in the mail, and I figured we might as well get me opening the box.

Then I played with the transformer, and my dad came out of nowhere and patted my head and said: "We have to find this little guy in you."

"Oh, yeah," I said, humoring him.

"Yes," he said. Then he pointed to my shoulder. "Is it here?"

"No," I said.

"Is it here?" he said and pointed at my stomach.

"No," I said.

"It's here," he said and pointed to his head.

Then he talked about the stories in our heads.



I knew where the kid was in me. It was in this film and in my heart, but it was nice to hear my dad talk, so we let him keep going right into us watching Gandhi.

As soon as we did, I started crying. Just talking about the barbershop scene makes me start tearing up ugly.

But we got through it.

Tomorrow is the tattoo and then the first barber shop scene.

I hope I survive.

## **Day 2: Sometimes I Dream in Farsi**

April 26, 2018

*Pirooz Kalayeh*



Today was an emotional day, but it started out really unemotional.

First, I got a tattoo of "Sometimes I Dream in Farsi" inside a heart I drew. That might sound funny. Let me start again. Voodoo from Voodoo Monkey Tattoo in Rochester gave me a tattoo of a drawing I did of the film's title in a heart.

Such a cool guy and place. I talked about what the film was about -- a doc on me and my films, but also



my family coming to America, and then me dealing with racism as a nine year old when this guy kicked me out of a barbershop in Delaware.

"The tattoo is to to bring this nine year old back into my heart," I said.

"I love the concept, man," he said.

And, he really did. There's this amazing thing about people in Rochester. They're so real, you know?

Anyway, after we shot in the tattoo parlor, we went to Starbucks. I didn't even think how there was that incident the other day, but then Aaron reminded me.

"You do know what happened with those two black men?" he chided me.

"Oh, man," I said. "I didn't even think about that."

We stayed regardless. I was already tired. Not physically. Well, yeah, maybe physically a bit too. But, definitely, emotionally.



Two students, Brooke and Patrick, who volunteered to help on set talked with Aaron and I about their aspirations to be in the entertainment business. Aaron gave them advice about computers and what avenues they could choose.

I was more thinking about the next scene that we had to do.

"So what are you going to do exactly?" Brooke asked.

"I don't know," I said. "It could go many ways."

Then I told her how everyone was chosen like cast members and not a documentary. That first, my dad and I would get a haircut and talk about the incident. Then, we'd do the Gestalt Therapy and have us all switch places, taking turns being the little kid that experienced the racism, the racist, and then my father.

Diane of The Barbershop on 768 Monroe Avenue was nice enough to let us have the dialogue, while she cut my hair and then my father's.

It wasn't about two minutes before I started crying. I went straight into that child in me saying, "I was afraid they were going to take you away!" to my dad.

"I didn't know this incident was so bad for you," my father kept saying.

Then he went in on how we have to be strong in the face of adversity. After a few minutes, I couldn't take it. I told him that I was just a little kid. I wanted to just be told that he loves me and it's okay.

My dad couldn't do it though.

Then, it all shifted once we started role playing. As soon as my dad played me, and I played him, he broke down.

Aaron says it was right after he talked about my grandfather experiencing a beating for being a Bahai in Iran by a group of Muslims and he was never the same after that.

"How old was he?" I asked my dad.

"42," my dad said.

"That's exactly how old I am now," I said. "Imagine that happened to him when he was an adult. Can you imagine when it happened to me when I was nine years old? What did I do wrong? I was just a kid. What could I do to the barber? I wasn't going to hurt him by being Iranian. I was just a sweet and innocent kid."



Then I started talking about macho aggressive behavior. That I'm fragile and sensitive and that's okay. I'm a kid.



Stuff like this.

Then my dad broke down.

Then, we had my student Brooke play me as a kid, and my dad play the barber.

"You just have to ask her ethnicity and then tell her to get out," I directed.

My dad stood there motionless.

"I can't do it," he said. "I just can't say it."

Then everyone started crying.

"That's okay, Dad," I said. "Just play it the way you want."

"Where are you from?" my dad asked.

"Iran," Brooke said.

"That's great," my dad said and patted her back. "Welcome."

Tomorrow, we're back at it again.



# PIROOZ KALAYEH

## Extended Bio

Pirooz Kalayeh loves combining his multifaceted experiences as an artist, musician, writer, actor, and director to create new hybrids and innovations in storytelling. Formerly a neuroscience major and obedient first generation immigrant, Pirooz broke with tradition and gave heart attacks to Iranian parents everywhere by joining musical group Cecil's Water and touring with such acclaimed artists as The Caulfields, The Toasters, Ruder Than You, Spindrift, The Verge, and others.



He received his BA in English from The University of Delaware and an MFA in Creative Writing from The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics. His multicultural stories, poetry translations, and corporate satires have been widely published in journals and anthologies, including *Looking Back* (New Brighton Books, 2003), *Wigleaf*, *Ducts*, *Past Simple*, *Horseless Press*, and *No Tell Motel*.

Poet Jim Goar describes his debut novel *The Whopper Strategies* as “a book that demystifies and devours our corporate culture”, while screenwriter and novelist Charles Yu commends it for being “like nothing you have read before” and novelist Laird Hunt calls him “a writer to watch.”

In 2005, Pirooz continued his exploration in storytelling as an Associate Producer and Post Production Coordinator at Weller Grossman Productions. Some of the national television programs he worked on include *Strictly Sex With Dr. Drew* (DISC), *Craftlab* (DIY), and *Look What I Did* (HGTV).



In 2008, Pirooz left Hollywood for a two year exploration of Asia, where he produced *Transistor Radio* with musical group The Slipshod Swingers, interviewed artists and filmmakers on his blog *Shikow*, and wrote the screenplay that would lead to his eventual return stateside for a directorial debut.

In 2012, Pirooz's first feature *Shoplifting From American Apparel* was released by Indie Screen and played to sold out audiences across America, with *Dead End Follies'*

Benoit Lelievre extolling the film for requiring “every bit of your wits” and not being a “sit-and-watch, turn-your-brain-off movie.”

His documentary feature about Buddhist teacher Brad Warner, *Brad Warner's Hardcore Zen* (2013), premiered at the Buddhist Film Festival in Amsterdam on October 5, 2013, played in select theaters across the United States and Europe, and was featured in major Buddhist publications and city papers, such as *Lion's Roar*, *The Daily Camera*, and *Nomos Journal*.



*The Human War* (2014) was co-produced and co-directed by Pirooz and premiered at the Beloit International Film Festival on February 21, 2014, played select theaters across America.

*Zombie Bounty Hunter M.D.* (2015) premiered at the On Vous Ment Film Festival in Lyon, France on May 24, 2016.

Pirooz's films have been featured in L.A. Weekly, Village Voice, Vice, and Indiewire. L.A. Weekly calls him "an energetic and loquacious multi-hyphenate" with Indiewire labeling *Shoplifting* as "five projects we're rooting for" and Village Voice crediting him for "capturing much of the tone of the novella."

Pirooz is a recipient of the Zora Neale Hurston Scholarship Award from Naropa University and a Best Screenplay Award for *The Human War*. His past film projects have been featured in L.A. Weekly, Village Voice, Vice, and Indiewire. L.A. Weekly calls him "an energetic and loquacious multi-hyphenate" with

Indiewire labeling *Shoplifting* as "five projects we're rooting for" and Village Voice crediting him for "capturing much of the tone of the novella."

Pirooz's latest documentary feature, *Sometimes I Dream In Farsi*, examines a traumatic racist incident in his childhood and how Gestalt Therapy and discussions with friends and family can offer a path forward for children and adults who have had similar experiences.

Pirooz received his PhD in Media and Communication from The European Graduate School. His dissertation was on digital media and new hybrids within contemporary Iranian Cinema. His instructors included Terrence Mallick, Wim Wenders, Wendy Brown, and Barbara Hammer. His supervisor was Mike Figgis.

Coinciding with his professional work in film and television, exhibitions, and musical and theatrical performances, Pirooz has continued to teach screenwriting, cinema studies, creative writing, acting, and film production courses to a diverse array of students around the globe, including UCLA Extension, The American Musical and Dramatic Academy, Yonsei University, Compton Community College, Baker College, and Naropa University. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Screenwriting and Media Arts Production at Southern Illinois University.

