



presents

WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY

A Film by Iram Haq

****WINNER | AUDIENCE AWARD, NEW AUTEURS | 2017 AFI FEST****
****WINNER | AUDIENCE CHOICE PRIZE | 2017 LES ARCS EUROPEAN FILM FESTIVAL****
****OFFICIAL SELECTION | 2017 TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL****
****OFFICIAL SELECTION | 2018 INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ROTTERDAM****
****OFFICIAL SELECTION | 2018 HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH FILM FESTIVAL****

Norway/Germany/Sweden 2017
106 Minutes, Norwegian & Urdu
Color/Scope

Publicity Contact:

Sara Sampson
sarasampsonpr@gmail.com

Distributor Contact:

David Ninh
dninh@kinolorber.com

Kino Lorber, Inc.
333 West 39 St. Suite 503
New York, NY 10018
(212) 629-6880

Press Materials:

Kinolorber.com/film/whatwillpeoplesay

Synopsis

Sixteen-year-old Nisha (Maria Mozhdah) lives a double life. When out with her friends, she's a normal Norwegian teenager. At home with her family, she is the perfect Pakistani daughter. But when her father (Adil Hussain) catches her alone with her boyfriend in her room, Nisha's two worlds brutally collide. To set an example and escape the judgment of their peers, her parents send Nisha against her will to a small town in Pakistan to live with extended family. There, in an unfamiliar country surrounded by people she barely knows, Nisha must adapt to a rigid culture that denies her the freedoms she once enjoyed. After returning to her family in Norway, Nisha faces another crossroad as her parents continue to plan for her future and the hope of repairing their collective honor.

Logline

Nisha is a normal Norwegian teenager by day and a perfect Pakistani daughter by night. But when her father catches her alone with her boyfriend and ships her off to Pakistan, Nisha's two worlds brutally collide. Based on the director's own experiences, and winner of Audience Awards at AFI Fest and Les Arcs European Film Festival.



Director's Statement

The story of *What Will People Say* is my most personal so far. When I was 14 years old, I was kidnapped by my parents and forced to live for one and a half years in Pakistan. I have waited until I felt ready as a filmmaker and as a person to be able to tell this story in a wise and sensible way. That is to say, without making the girl appear as just a victim and her parents as merely her perpetrators. I wanted to tell an impossible love story between parents and their child; one that cannot have a happy ending as long as the gap between these two cultures remains so wide. I want to put the audience side by side with Nisha and her emotions throughout the film. After a long casting process, we finally found the perfect actress for the part in Maria Mozhdah. It was an amazing discovery, and she was a joy to work with alongside the more experienced actors in the other parts.

About the Film

What Will People Say is the second feature film by director and scriptwriter Iram Haq. Her first feature *I Am Yours* had its world premiere at Toronto International Film Festival and won several awards at international film festivals.



Director Q&A

Let's start with the film's title. Where does it come from?

The saying 'What will people say' (log kya kahenge) is an expression all Pakistani and Indians can relate to. In Hindi and Urdu, it's an expression that's used frequently in families and environments where tradition and honor are highly valued. And this focus on what other people's opinions are is something I want to get rid of; actually pull out the roots once and for all.

But on a more personal level, what does this saying actually mean to you?

Behind all of this there's a personal wish to live an honest life; to be faithful to myself. To do the things I want to do and not to live for others. It's just not in my nature to conform to others. Which is why I find it interesting to take a closer look at what conforming to other people's – or an entire system's – wishes and needs actually does to people. There's a kind of freedom in telling girls that are being socially controlled, that it's hard while it's going on, but that they should never let themselves be cowed by someone else's wants and needs.

What type of conversations do you hope the film will create?

I hope the film will open for a deeper understanding for the dilemma parents and children find themselves in, especially when they come from such different worlds like Nisha and her father. I'm not interested in provoking anyone, but I have a strong need to tell something true.

What inspired you to create the emotional story behind this film?

The movie is inspired by several events from my own life. Like Nisha in the film, I mostly had Norwegian friends and it felt really unfair being a young girl and not being allowed to do what the others were doing. I was kidnapped by my own parents and had to live with my relatives in Pakistan when I was 14 years old. That being said, I've added a lot of fictional elements to the film.

How has your creative process changed from the time you initially conceived the idea for the film?

I've waited to become mature enough to be able to convey this story in a nuanced way, to avoid it being a story about terrible parents and that poor girl. To put oneself into their situation is naturally harder for me than it is to relate to my own generation, but I had to try to put myself into their mindset; look at it from both sides. I also spoke with psychologists that work with the child protective services and other multi-cultural girls.

What are some of the key elements you tend to gravitate to when writing your scripts?

Narratives that interest me will always come first. And social control, family relations and especially the dynamics within the family is something I've been interested in for quite a while. I like exploring close human relationships and how we interact with each other.

The shoot was split between Norway and India. What was it like working in India?

Working in Rajasthan in India was a magical experience. My father and ancestors are from there. I do know the language and that helped a good bit. I felt like I found myself there. I was in India five times and got to show pictures and share some memories with my father while he was still alive. That meant a lot to me.

What was it like working with a wide range of actors, in terms of age, professional experience, and cultural backgrounds?

I loved having a whole Indian team working together with Danes, Germans and Swedes. The actors have been amazing the whole time; I love all of them. You do get very close to each other in an intense creative process such as making a movie. Maria Mozhdah who plays the leading role is a really amazing girl. There is something simply extraordinary about her. We had such an amazing chemistry on set that at times I even forgot she was only 17.

Biographies

IRAM HAQ

Iram Haq (b. 1976) is an actress, writer and director. She made and starred in her directorial debut, the short film *Little Miss Eye flap*, which screened at the Sundance Film Festival in 2009. Her feature film debut *I Am Yours* premiered at Toronto International Film Festival in 2013 and was selected as Norway's official Oscar entry. The film has gone on to win a number of prizes at festivals around the world.



MARIA MOZHDAH (NISHA)

Maria Mozhdah was born in Pakistan in 1999, but grew up in Norway. When she was 10-years-old she was cast as one of the leads in a popular TV series for children in Norway. That was her only experience with acting before being cast as Nisha in *What Will People Say*.



ADIL HUSSAIN (MIRZA)

Adil Hussain (b. 1963) is an Indian stage, television and film acting veteran. Hussain has featured in an array of Indian and international films, including *Life Of Pi* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.



Credits

Cast:

Nisha - Maria Mozhdah
Mirza - Adil Hussain
Amir - Rohit Saraf
Mother - Ekavali Khanna
Asif - Ali Arfan
Aunt - Sheeba Chaddha
Uncle - Lalit Parimoo
Salima - Jannat Zubair Rehmani
Daniel - Isak Lie Harr
Emily - Nokokure Dah

Crew:

Director and screenwriter: Iram Haq
Producer: Maria Ekerhovd
Co-producers: Karsten Stöter, Lizette Jonjic, Madeleine Ekman
Cinematographer: Nadim Carlsen
Editors: Janus Billeskov Jansen, Anne Østerud
Production Designers: Ann Kristin Talleraas, Vintee Bansal
Sound: Tormod Ringnes
Music: Martin Pedersen, Lorenz Dange

Supported by

Norsk filminstitutt
Eurimages
Nordisk film & TV fond
Deutscher Filmförderfonds
Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung
Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg
Filmförderungsanstalt
Nordmedia Film- und Mediengesellschaft Niedersachsen/Bremen
Svenska filminstitutet
Film i Väst
ZDF/Das Kleine Fernsehspiel

In Association With
Sikhya Entertainment
Snowglobe
The Post Republic
Cinegate
Celluloid Tracks
Cinema Defacto

A Kino Lorber Release