



Courageous filmmakers: Ibrahim Nash'at and Tamana Ayazi outside the Phoenix

Bravery of film makers exposing life under the Taliban

By Ruth Anders

Early in October I met two very courageous young film makers at the Phoenix Cinema, both of whom have directed films about life under the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Egyptian Ibrahim Nash'at has directed the critically acclaimed documentary *Hollywoodgate*, a shocking exposé of how the Taliban re-took control shortly after the departure of Western forces from Afghanistan in 2021.

Ibrahim was permitted exclusive but dangerous access to the Taliban leadership as they entered the abandoned Hollywoodgate defence complex a day after US and Allied troops withdrew from Kabul.

What they found in the former US military base, partially destroyed, was what the most technologically advanced military nations in history left behind. Over the next year, from the inside, the film follows the Taliban's transformation from fundamentalist militia to murderous military regime.

As *Hollywoodgate* is tipped for an Oscar, Ibrahim was promoting the film in America and could not be at the Phoenix for its special screening event on 24 October, part of the London Breeze Film Festival. But he visited the cinema earlier in the month to appreciate its history and to record a special introduction.

His place at the post-show Q&A was taken by Tamana Ayazi whom I also met. Tamana

is an Emmy-winning director and producer, National Geographic explorer and human rights advocate born and raised in Balkh, Afghanistan. In 2021 she began assisting Amnesty International in documenting its year-long report titled *Death in Slow Motion: Women and Girls Under Taliban Rule*.

Tamana's debut feature-length documentary, *In Her Hands*, premiered at the 2022 Toronto International Film Festival and won the Audience Award at the 2022 Camden International Film Festival. She received the Cinema for Peace Dove Award for Women's Empowerment, along with three News and Emmy nominations in 2023, and one win. Her work is available on Netflix.

Both the young directors told me: "Our films were made at great personal risk. When we are working, we can accommodate nothing else, the commitment to our projects devours us."

Hollywoodgate was part funded by The Whickers (part of the Whicker's World Foundation). Their artistic director Jane Ray, who lives in East Finchley, worked with Alan Whicker throughout the 1990s, and interviewed Tamana Ayazi after the film.

Free concert

The next in the regular series of free concerts at East Finchley Methodist Church takes place on Sunday 10 November at 7.30pm.

It features violinist Clare Thompson, cellist Josh Salter and pianist Sarah Down playing a programme of works by Rachmaninov, Rebecca Clarke, Joaquín Turina and Bohuslav Martinů. Admission is free with a collection in aid of Bipolar UK. The venue is fully accessible.

Comedy in the Kinks Room

A new monthly comedy club is running at the Clissold Arms in Fortis Green, N2, combining live performers with pre-recorded material to create a hybrid show that is also available online later.

Stand-up comedians play to a live audience in the pub's famous room that pays tribute to the legendary 1960s group The Kinks, who lived nearby.

The comedy club is produced by Pocket Pictures Ltd, an East Finchley-based video and promotions company. They stream the live show a week after the event, on a platform called Lounges TV.

The next date for Comedy at the Clissold is Thursday 14 November, followed by a Sunday event on Sunday 8 December. Ticket prices are £10 online or £12 at the door with special 'bring your other 'alf' tickets, which is buy one and get one half price. Find out more and book at www.pocketpicturesltd.com



Comic timing: Clissold Arms performers, from left, Olly Miller, Dillon Harris, Lucas Jeffcoate and host JustP.

Budget costumes for festival film

By Ruth Anders

The Phoenix Cinema will shortly be hosting the 2024 UK Jewish Film Festival and one of its offerings, *Friday Night Flop*, is a short feelgood film about family starring Tracy-Ann Oberman and her real-life daughter Anoushka Cowan.

Maya (Cowan) is a recluse who refuses to engage with the world. Oberman plays her frantically worried mother Ellen, whose attempts to fix her daughter only alienate her further. When Ellen discovers Maya is gambling, all hope seems lost, but the hand she has just been dealt will change everything.

After two years of assisting on the costume side of a variety of short films and videos, East Finchley resident and undergraduate Evie Csaky was thrilled to be invited to act as head of costume for the film. Evie told *The Archer* that she has been able to take short spells out from studying Art History and French at Bristol University to build this sideline career in film and TV costuming.



Skills on a shoestring: Evie Csaky

She added: "We did this movie on a shoestring as the budget was tiny. I borrowed clothes from my parents and used a Lime bike to race round the actors' homes checking out their wardrobes for what we might use. It was only a three-day shoot, and we all got on very well. This was a very personal project for all involved."

Evie is still deciding her professional plans for the future, but she has certainly got off to a great start. This warm-hearted and funny film will be premiered at the Phoenix on Monday 11 November at 8pm. Find out more at <https://ukjewishfilmfestival2024.eventive.org/films>



Warm-hearted: Tracy-Ann Oberman stars in *Friday Night Flop*

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