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# 'Before Summer Ends' ('Avant la fin de l'ete'): Film Review | Cannes 2017

12:51 PM PDT 5/19/2017 by Jordan Mintzer



THE BOTTOM LINE

A rambling road movie that manages to find its way. [!\[\]\(529949c2c3dadbaa4e538e8c643454bc\_img.jpg\)](#)

## Filmmaker Maryam Goormaghtigh directed and shot this documentary-style road movie about three Iranian expats touring the south of France.

If Jim Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise* had been transplanted to the south of France and starred a trio of beer-guzzling Iranian immigrants, then the result would be something like *Before Summer Ends* (*Avant la fin de l'été*), which marks the feature debut of writer-director-cinematographer Maryam Goormaghtigh.

Quirky, aimless and warm-hearted all at once, this meandering road movie is somewhat of a fiction-documentary hybrid, with the three leads more or less playing themselves, and Goormaghtigh capturing their antics as they tour the French countryside before one of them moves back to Tehran. There's not much actually going on, yet a lot is said about exile, longing and the importance of friendship when one lives far away from home. In the end, this short and sweet affair, which opened the Cannes Acid sidebar, offers up a few rewards for those who tag along for the ride.



Improvised over two weeks by Goormaghtigh and her friends, *Summer* follows the three amigos – the massive Arash, the poetic Hossein and the girl-crazy Ashkan – as they head southwards from Paris for a bit of R & R before Arash returns to Iran after having studied for a year abroad. Like many such road trips, there's a lot of driving, a lot of drinking, a certain amount of dead air and a handful of interesting encounters along the way – especially when the guys cross paths with a pair of musicians (Charlotte, Michele) who seem to enjoy their company, at least for a certain time.

Artfully composing each sequence (many of them done in single takes), with dialogue that takes on a highly natural flair, Goormaghtigh gradually reveals a darker side to her characters that lies beneath their casual jokes and constant bickering. While Arash is determined to head back to Iran to face an uncertain future, Arash and Hossein prefer to remain exiled in France, either to avoid mandatory military service or else to practice the kind of lifestyle that they could never live in their homeland.

That of course includes knocking down beers, a lot of which happens in the movie, but also practicing photography (in the case of Ashkan) or else avoiding the stricter tenets of Iran's Islamic regime. Yet as much as the friends seem to enjoy the many freedoms afforded to them in France, they are, like many expats, nostalgic for certain things back home – especially all the songs in Farsi that they listen or sing along to while wandering the picturesque towns, beaches and camp grounds of the Midi.

As we learn at some point, Hossein and Ashkan are actually hoping that the two-week trip will convince Arash to remain in France, even if it takes a sort-of love interest to help persuade him. But while that plot point comes into play late in the game, *Summer* is definitely less about the destination than the journey, revealing three characters who are as lost in life as the rest of us can be at times – looking for nothing in particular, if not a form of genuine camaraderie.

Tech credits for such a micro-budgeted effort are impressive, from Goormaghtigh's excellent cinematography to the sharp sound design to a lovely score by Marc Siffert. Soundtrack includes Iranian pop ballads and, in one sequence, The Coasters' "Down in Mexico," which the oversized Arash dances to in a particular moment of bliss.

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## *Cannes 2017*

*Production companies: 4 A 4 Productions, Intermezzo Films*

*Cast: Arash, Hossein, Ashkan, Charlotte, Michele*

*Director, screenwriters: Maryam Goormaghtigh*

*Producers: Andrea Queralt, Luc Peter*

*Director of photography: Maryam Goormaghtigh*

*Editor: Gwenola Heaulme*

*Composer: Marc Siffert*

*Venue: Cannes Film Festival (Acid)*

*Sales: 4 A 4 Productions*

*In Farsi, French*

*80 minutes*