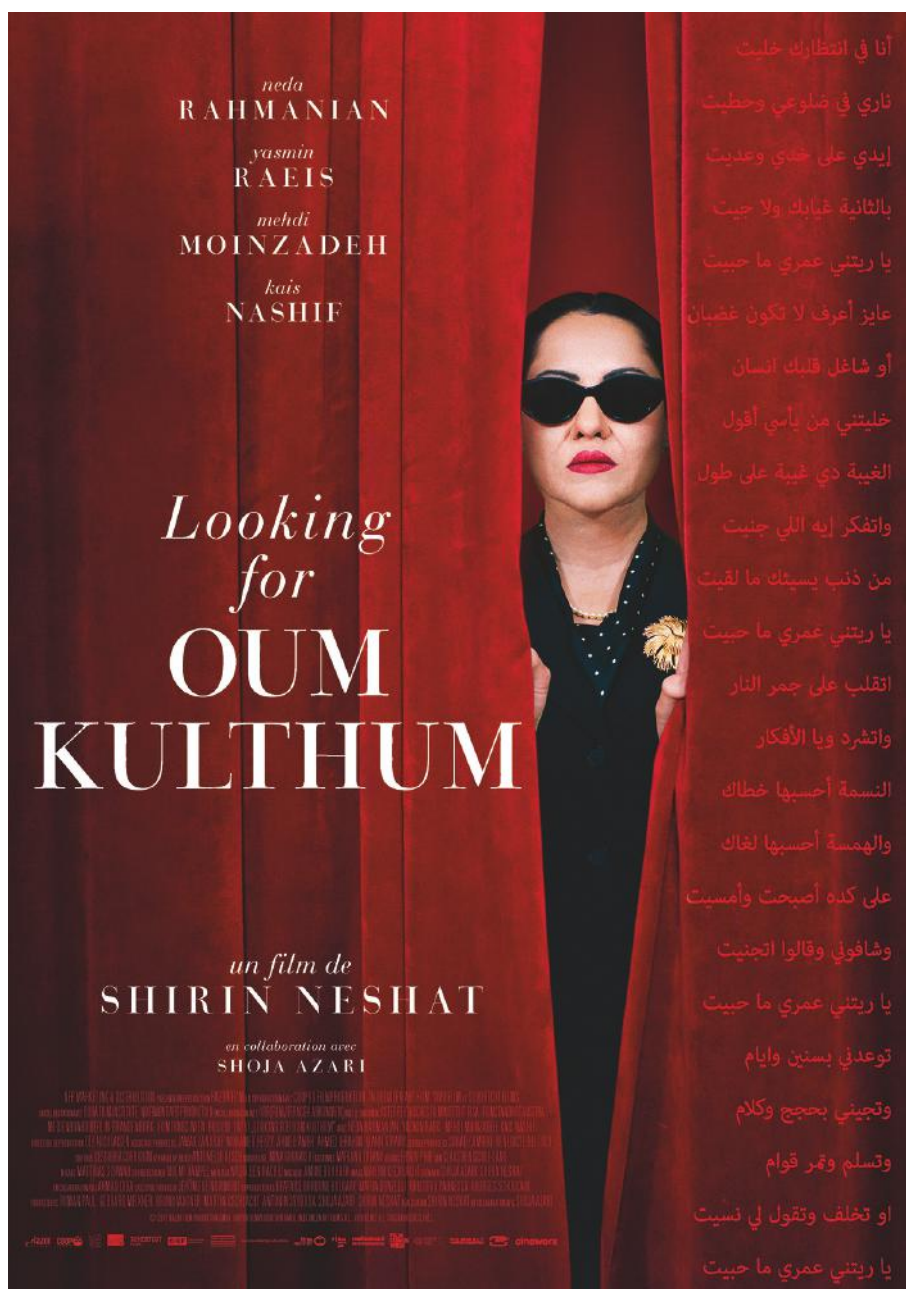


# *Looking for* **OUM KULTHUM**

Un film de Shirin Neshat



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## Synopsis

*Looking for Oum Kulthum* décrit l'ambition de Mitra, une réalisatrice iranienne, de filmer la vie et l'œuvre artistique de la légendaire chanteuse Oum Kalthoum. Comme son héroïne, Mitra doit se confronter aux obstacles et aux difficultés imposés par une société conservatrice dominée par les hommes. La gloire et la réussite acquises à l'étranger ne sont pas de grande utilité face aux difficultés qui apparaissent pendant le tournage. La disparition de son fils et la complexité à filmer l'essence du mythe d'Oum Kalthoum viennent se rajouter à ces contraintes. A travers ce récit, on mesure ainsi la force et le courage déployés par ces femmes pour atteindre leurs objectifs et réaliser leurs projets.

Cette histoire rend un magnifique hommage à l'artiste égyptienne Oum Kalthoum, l'«Astre de l'Orient», considérée quarante ans après sa mort comme étant la plus grande chanteuse du monde arabe.



## About Oum Kulthum

*Looking For Oum Kulthum* is based on the art and life of the legendary Egyptian singer Oum Kulthum (1900–1975), whose music and larger-than-life persona continues to be embedded in the hearts and imaginations of millions of Middle Easterners.

Forty two years after her death, Oum Kulthum continues to be the undisputed greatest artist of the 20th century in the Arab World. Known for her extraordinary vocal ability and style, and a dedicated Egyptian patriot, her position transcended from an artist into national hero in the later years of her life. Her funeral was attended by four million people, reported as the second largest funeral in Egypt's history, after President Nasser's.



## Director's note

For the past twenty years, as a visual artist and a filmmaker, I have explored diverse concepts and narratives in relation to Muslim women. In 2009, I directed my first feature film *Women Without Men*, based on a magical realist novel written by the Iranian female author, Shahrnush Parsipur.

Continuing with my obsession with female strength and artistic expression in the Muslim world, since 2010, I have been developing my next feature film project based on the director's note art and life of the legendary Egyptian singer Oum Kulthum (1900–1975), whose music and larger-than-life persona has and continues to be embedded in the hearts and imaginations of millions of Middle Easterners. I feel strongly that similarly to *Women Without Men*, this film could pursue the trajectory of an iconic woman while offering a non-academic look into the history of modern Egypt, its evolution from monarchy and British colonialism, to the 1952 revolution and the disastrous 1967 war with Israel.

My journey into this project began with research and the collection of images and literature written about Oum Kulthum and Egyptian history. I finally decided not to make a historical biopic but to tell a personal story, sharing my own perspectives and challenges as an Iranian woman director attempting to make a film about an iconic Egyptian singer.

The current script therefore closely reflects my own obsessions, challenges, process, and unexpected self-discovery that by looking into the destiny of an iconic Middle Eastern female artist, I'm looking at my own experience, and that of other Middle Eastern women who choose to pursue a talent or a professional career. At the core of this film, through the simultaneous exploration of three main female characters, Oum Kulthum, Mitra (the Iranian filmmaker,) and Ghada (the Egyptian actress, who plays the role of Oum Kulthum,) the narrative reveals how regardless of generations and cultural settings, most Middle Eastern women, living in male dominated societies, face a similar predicament: the sacrifice of a traditional family and an unspoken sense of alienation in the absence of a conventional life style, despite the glory of achieving fame and success.

## Director's biography

Shirin Neshat is an Iranian born artist/filmmaker living in New York. Shirin has among many other awards won an Art Biennale award in 1999 for the video art works *Turbulent* and *Rapture* and a Silver Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival in 2009 for her first feature film *Women Without Men*.

Neshat started her career in photography and gained attention with the *Unveiling* (1993) and *Women of Allah* (1993–97) photo series before going on to video art and feature film. Her art works have been exhibited in the most important museums around the world. She was awarded the Dorothy and

Lilian Gish Prize in 2006 and in 2010 Huffington Post named her Artist of the Decade. Neshat also received the Crystal Award in 2014 at the Davos World Economic Forum.

In 2013, she was a member of the Berlinale jury. That same year she directed *Illusions & Mirrors*, a short film commissioned by Dior in collaboration with director of photography Darius Khondji and starring Natalie Portman. Two years later she was photographed by Annie Leibovitz for a series of portraits of the world's most inspiring women for the Pirelli Calendar.

Shirin Neshat is currently directing her first opera, AIDA, at the 2017 Salzburg Festival.



## FILMOGRAPHY

2017 Looking for Oum Kulthum

2009 Women Without Men

## INSTALLATIONS

2016 Sarah

2016 Roja

2013 Illusions & Mirror

2009 Games of Desire

2008 Farokh Legha

2008 Munis

2008 Faezeh

2005 Zarin

2004 Issar

2004 The Last Word

2003 Mahdokht

2002 Tooba

2001 Possessed

2001 Pulse

2001 Passage

2000 Fervor

1999 Soliloquy

1999 Rapture

1998 Turbulent

1997 The Shadow Under the Web

1996 Anchorage

## Biography Neda Rahmanian

Neda Rahmanian is a German film and theatre actress of Iranian origin. She graduated from the Rostock University of Music and Theatre in 2003. Neda made her professional debut with the role of Julia in *Romeo and Julia*, for which she was honored with Karl-Heinz- Walther Prize.

Various stage engagements were to follow, among others in the Osnabrück Theatre (2003–2005), the State Theatre of Wiesbaden (2006–2008), the Schauspielhaus Bochum (2009–2010) and the Hamburger Kammerspiele (2016). She has appeared in successful tv series such as *Tatort*. Since 2016 she can be seen in the leading role in the ARD- series *Der Kroatien Krimi*.

## Biography Yasmin Raeis

Yasmin Raeis is an Egyptian actress, born in 1985. She started her acting career in a television series called *3ard khas*.

After participating in several movies including *XLarge*, *A Whole One* and *The Benefit*, she drew attention to herself in the lead role of director Mohamed Khan's Movie *Factory Girl* and went on to win several awards including the Best Actress Award at the Dubai International Film Festival.





## Cast and crew

### MAIN CAST

Mitra	Neda Rahmanian
Ghada	Yasmin Raeis
Amir	Mehdi Moinzadeh
Ahmed	Kais Nashif

### MAIN CREW

Director	Shirin Neshat
In collaboration with	Shoja Azari
Writers	Shirin Neshat, Shoja Azari
Director of Photography	Martin Gschlacht
Production designer	Erwin Prib
Art Directors	Attila Planegger, Halima Zniber
Costume designer	Mariano Tufano
Editor	Nadia Ben Rachid
Composer	Amine Bouhafa
Production Company	Razor Film
In co-production with	Coop99 Filmproduktion, In Between Art Film, Vivo Film, Schortcut Films
In association with	Doha Film Institute, Noirmont Art Production
In collaboration with	ORF
With the support of	Austrian Film Institute Fisa - Film Industry Support Austria, Medienboard, Berlin-Brandenburg, Vienna Film Fund, Regione Lazio