

Angel on the Right (Fararishtay kifti rost)

Tajikistan | 2002 | 91 minutes

Credits

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| Director | Jamshed Umonov |
| Screenplay | Jamshed Usmonov |
| Photography | Pascal Lagriffoul |
| Music | Michael Galasso |

Cast

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| Halima | Uktamoi Miyasarova |
| Hamro | Maruf Pulodzoda |
| Yatim | Kova Tilavpur |
| Mayor | Mardonkul Kulbobov |

In Brief

Ten years after leaving Tajikistan, the Moscow-based gangster Hamro is tricked into returning to his home village, where he must confront old foes, debts, his tradition bound mother and a son that he didn't know he had. After seducing a beautiful nurse and finding legitimate work, Hamro has a chance to make good.

According to Islamic folk legend, an angel on a man's left shoulder records his bad deeds and the one on his right records the good, and these will be weighed on Judgment Day. Which Angel will Hamro listen to?

Filming in his own village, and using his close relatives in key acting roles, the director constructs a revealing portrait of an impoverished community, still recovering from the effects of civil war. Many of the pleasures here are in the details and rituals of everyday life: the vigorous handshakes when doing business, the techniques of the local estate agent, the way somebody books the time of their passage into the next life. (Tom Dawson BBC)

The Cinema of Tajikistan

This year, Tajikfilm plans to make Tajikistan's first full-length feature film in 17 years, according to Jamshed Rakhmatov, chief editor at the studio. The events of the early 1990s and the breakup of the Soviet Union had a negative effect on Tajik cinema, Rakhmatov said. But, despite the lack of financing and obsolete equipment Tajikfilm held out.

Rakhmatov said that various possibilities are now being considered for the future film, and the studio has looked at several scripts, including historical works on military leaders Spitamen and Timurlalik. Work on this kind of historical picture costs a great deal, which is beyond the means of the small studio. Rough calculations show that about € 700,000 will be needed. Based on this Rakhmatov said, work is now being done to attract investors.

"During the last 17 years, limited state financing made it impossible to make full-length feature films for the cinema. During this period all films had been made only for video, he said. The market for films in Tajikistan is now almost completely satisfied by foreign studios – mostly Indian, Russian and Hollywood productions. Tajik films are rarely shown in theaters, but 1970s features are currently being screened on local television channels.

"[1970-80] are considered to be the 'golden age' for Tajikfilm," said producer Umar Karimov. "In those days [government] financing made it possible to make some six full-length feature films each year, along with 40-50 documentaries." "[Today], the technical base for the film studio does not allow us to do such a volume of work," said Rakhmatov. "This is because of the obsolete equipment and because some of the craftsmen, directors, cameramen, screenwriters, and others have gone to other countries."

In the opinion of director Gulandom Mukhabatova, "for a complete rebirth of Tajik cinema, what is needed is to pay the proper attention to training young [artists]. The personnel we have today in the Tajik film studio are fully capable of making good films, but without training, there may be serious problems."

There is a written agreement between Tajikistan and a number of the CIS countries for cooperation in the fields of culture and science. This document makes it possible to send Tajik students for training in the cinematographic schools of these countries.

Karimov said the All-Russian State Institute of Filmmaking would be suitable for new students in many ways, particularly since there is no language barrier. Moreover, the artists that made Tajikfilm famous, graduated from that school.

At the start of this century, several films by Tajik directors that were made in other countries received various international awards. In Europe there was new interest in the Tajik cinema after the young director Bakhtier Khudoinazarov's films *Luna Papa* and *Shik* won international cinema prizes. The video *Ovora* by Daler Rakhmatov and Gulandom Mukhabatova, shot in Tajikistan, won eight international prizes, including the Santa Ana International Film Festival (receiving the debut film prize), and at the Golden Minbar "For Humanism in the Art of Cinema" prize among Muslim countries.

After the economic situation in the country started to improve, artists started talking about reinvigorating the Tajik film industry. In 2005, the government passed a resolution on the development of cinema over the next five years. It was this resolution that set the stage for the further development of Tajikfilm.

