

## ABOUT TAGHI AMIRANI

Taghi Amirani was born in Iran in 1960 and moved to England for school in 1975, four years before the revolution that ended the Shah's rule and created the Islamic Republic. He studied physics at Nottingham University where in 1984 instead of doing a final year lab project he made *Shades of Black*, a documentary about black holes. Inspired by Carl Sagan's *Cosmos* and stealing from a BBC documentary about Stephen Hawking, his student film got him a physics degree with honors and a coveted place at film school at Bristol University. On graduating in 1986 he made *Mechanics of Love*, a low-budget B&W silent comedy about romance in a parking lot. A homage to Buster Keaton via Woody Allen, the film landed Amirani his first job in TV as a researcher on design and technology documentaries for schoolteachers.

In 1989 he produced and directed *Earth Calling Basingstoke*, his first TV documentary made for the British Channel 4 flagship science series *Equinox*. Inspired by the fictional character Felix Happer, played by Burt Lancaster in Bill Forsyth's *Local Hero*, "Basingstoke" tells the heart-warming and quirky stories of British amateur astronomers. The *Guardian* said "It's Taghi Amirani's first film and a beauty of its quiet kind. He is a born miniaturist and they are a valuable, rare, and endangered species."

Amirani has gradually shifted his focus away from the eccentricities of the British to politics and Western foreign policy in the Middle East. In 2001 he went to Afghanistan for the BBC to film the plight of Afghan refugees as the US and British bombs began to fall weeks after 9/11. *The Dispossessed* was shot in a Taliban-controlled refugee camp over nine eventful days. The *Daily Telegraph* said: "The *Dispossessed* charts the fall of the Taliban from a unique perspective... A remarkable record of how fast moving events affect ordinary lives. A quietly humane film... powerful and dignified."

In 2002 in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq Amirani made a short polemic for Channel 4 News called *War on Iraq: Just Say No*. In 2004 Amirani made his first film back home in Iran. Gaining exclusive access to *Shargh*, Iran's leading reformist newspaper, *Red Lines and Deadlines* was made for the PBS series *Wide Angle*. It was updated in 2005 during the presidential elections that introduced Mahmoud Ahamadinjad to the world. The *WSJ* said: "Red Line and Deadlines, directed by Iranian filmmaker Taghi Amirani, provides an unprecedented look into the Orwellian world of Iranian journalism."

Amirani has been a jury member at the International Emmys, Royal Television Society, One World Media Awards and Sheffield International Documentary Festival where he's also a member of the Advisory Committee.

*COUP 53* is his debut feature documentary.