



Babak & Friends - A First Norooz

An uplifting instant classic with an all-star cast

To be communicate effectively, you must have something worthwhile to say, you must say it well, and you must say it at the right time.

The hard-working folks at Norooz Productions have met these conditions in their DVD release, *Babak and Friends—A First Norooz*. The much anticipated animated film premiered earlier this month at a sold-out, star-studded gala in Hollywood.

The film tells the story of eight-year old Babak, who faces the classic issue of finding his place in society. Babak feels alienated from both his American friends who do not share his cultural background, and his Iranian cousins who know more about Persian culture than he does. As one viewer put it, Babak's plight is "representative of every Persian living outside of Iran and battling cultural differences."

Caught between two worlds and unable to relate completely to either culture at his disposal, Babak is visited in a dream by two traditional Iranian figures, Amoo Norooz and Haji Firooz. With their magical help, the young boy is finally able to understand his Iranian heritage and connect to the ancient Persian civilization.

The 30-minute DVD contains both English and Farsi versions of the film and a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the art of creating cartoons. It also features background information on the well-known voices that bring the characters to life. Oscar nominee, Shohreh Aghdashloo, Iranian legend Parvis Sayyad, along with Catherine Bell and Ali Pourtash all lend their talent

to the project. Renowned pop singers Andy and Aris also contributed original songs.

Everyone was on hand for the Hollywood premiere, including writer/director Dustin Ellis and producers Shabnam Rezaei, Aly Jetha and Mastaneh Moghadam. After an opening introduction, the audience was treated to a wonderful rendition of "Norooz-e Zibaye Man" by Aris. The movie followed and Andy ended the evening by performing his new song "Daram Miram be Tehran," which moved the crowd to stand up and dance. The cast then mingled with viewers and signed autographs.

Old and young enjoyed the premiere and loved the film. Kids were laughing and the parents were proud and entertained at the same time. Bitia Milanian, who attended and bought 10 copies to give to relatives with children, said the film is "definitely entertaining enough for all ages." Rezaei told Namak that she's received a slew of phone calls and emails congratulating their effort. She says, "everyone is thanking us and telling us how happy and proud we have made them!"

With such a powerful message and a very high-quality product, copies of the DVD are sure to fly off the retail shelves. But popularity these days can be a double-edged sword. The producers are concerned about piracy. They hope the community will recognize their hard work and support the arts by consciously avoiding bootlegged copies. As an added incentive to purchase official DVDs, they've included a free, colorful storybook and purposely kept pricing as low as possible.

To learn more visit:
www.babakandfriends.com



Amoo Norooz and Haji Firooz help Babak learn how to fit in.

