



**CIRCUMSTANCE ★★★**

Two Iranian girls keep their love a secret (1:46). Not rated. At the Sunshine and Munroe Film Center. In Farsi with English subtitles.

A kind of spiritual cousin to "Brokeback Mountain," director Maryam Keshavarz's drama — filmed in secret in Lebanon, and a winner at this year's Sundance Film Fest — is mournful yet full of life. Atafeh (Nikohl Boosheri) and Shireen (Sarah Kazemy) are teens coming of age in a changing Iran. But the love they feel for each other has to be tamped down lest they shame Atafeh's family, who not only believe they know the girls' secret but have life plans for Atafeh that she must not upend. Though some things feel familiar — Atafeh is wealthy, while Shireen is an orphan — Keshavarz's vision is clear and heartfelt, and everyone has an urgency in their eyes.

**NEW YORK POST**

# Lesbian teenagers romp in 'Circumstance'

By V.A. MUSETTO

IRAN'S religious fundamentalists can't be pleased with "Circumstance," a bold denunciation of their country's intolerance, especially toward women. It features sexy lesbian encounters, bare skin, alcoholic drinks and male-female dancing — all of which are forbidden by Iran's morality police.

Shot in Lebanon using a cast of Iranians from around the world, the film is directed by the talented Maryam Keshavarz, who grew up in Iran before moving to Brooklyn with her family in 1967. She studied film at NYU; this is her first feature after making a series of experimental shorts.

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**MOVIE REVIEW**

**CIRCUMSTANCE**

★★★ 1/2

Iran all the way.

*In Farsi, with English subtitles. Running time: 105 minutes. Rated R (sexuality, language, drug use). At the Munroe Film Center and the Sunshine.*

The story, based in part on Keshavarz's real-life experiences, revolves around a well-to-do, liberal family struggling to cope with the intolerant regime.

The family's son, Mehran, has just returned from drug rehab. He's troubled to discover that his beautiful 16-year-old sister, Atafeh, hangs out at Tehran's underground clubs, where men and women mingle freely.

He's even more distressed to

learn that Atafeh is involved in a passionate relationship with another teen girl, Shireen.

His anger is such that he sets up surveillance cameras at home to spy on the two women. They, meanwhile, dream of running off to a more tolerant Dubai.

There are superb performances by Iranian-Canadian Nikohl Boosheri as Atafeh, the more rebellious of the two women, and French-born Sarah Kazemy as the less-privileged Shireen. Reza Sixo Safai, who grew up in California, is strong as Mehran, whose drug addiction is replaced by religious fervor.

Brian Rigney Hubbard's cinematography, especially twisty shots from above, gives "Circumstance" visual punch. With the Middle East now dominating headlines, the film could not be more timely.



Nikohl Boosheri (left) and Sarah Kazemy are wonderful as teen lovers in Tehran who dream of running off together to a more liberal Dubai.