

# A YOUTH

A film by Giorgio Bosisio

## Credits

Director & Producer: Giorgio Bosisio  
Producer: Afolabi Kuti, Charlotte Carroll  
Executive Producer: Emma Beanland, Charlotte Carroll  
Cinematographer: Giorgio Bosisio  
Editor: Andrew Joseph Cross, Giorgio Bosisio  
Composer: Giacomo Carlone  
Sound Recordist: Iasonas Theofanou  
Interpreter: Arash Mansouri  
Re-recording Mixer: Joe Cochrane  
Grade: Alex Grigoras

## Featuring

Peyman Fael  
Taherh Elahi  
Ali Rezai  
Abbas Karimi  
Masoud Koushani  
Naqib Rassoli  
Mohammad Reza Sharifi  
Javad Akbari  
Iman Elahi  
Hamid Elahi  
Abbas Heydari  
Daniel Samani  
Farzad Hakimi  
Arash Sajedifard

## Production Credits

Broeadmachine  
CC. Carroll  
Emma Beanland

## Tech Details

Production Year: 2020  
Completion date: March 2020  
Production Country: UK, Greece, Italy  
Running Time: 39m:59s  
Shooting Format: Digital  
Display Format/Aspect Ratio: 1.85

Exhibition formats: DCP  
Sound: 5.1 Dolby Digital  
Camera: Panasonic LUMIX G DC-GH5  
Languages: Dari and Farsi  
Subtitled: English

### Log line

An aspiring teenage rapper from Afghanistan, finds himself stuck in Athens with a group of friends. Through music and poetry he tries to make sense of the world around him.

### Long Synopsis

Peyman and his friends are a group of Afghan teenagers on the cusp of adulthood, who find themselves stuck in Athens. In limbo but armed with a new-found freedom, they kill time by aimlessly strolling around the city, sharing jokes, rap battles, stories of the past and dreams of the future. As Peyman waits for news that could shake his false state of harmony, he looks for answers amongst his friends and family, trying to make sense of the world around him through his music and poetry.

### Director Statement

Coming from a fiction background, the decision to make a documentary was probably one the most difficult, and at the same time, most important and transformative one I could have made. The challenge it posed me, both as a person and as a filmmaker, was one of demanding a more unconditional and direct relationship with my subjects.

From the middle of 2015, the moment identified as the start of the refugee crisis in Europe, I began to feel increasingly isolated within my media bubble. There was a growing sense of being deceived and manipulated by media outputs. Our fast and constant news streams filled up with outrageous yet forgetful headlines, a mode of receiving information that has deteriorated our capacity to connect to global events.

An increasing anxiety and confusion over what was happening in Europe and at its borders brought me to reflect on the comfort zone within which I was making films. A personal and artistic need to look for a more conscious and unmediated relationship with what happened both in front of the camera and around me led me towards the making of this film. This brought with it an exposure and vulnerability that I came to recognise as key to my practice.

The film journey began when I travelled to Greece as a volunteer in 2016. Having planned to return in 2017, I left London once again to spend five months in Greece continuing what I had begun the year before.

It's while I was facilitating a stop-motion animation workshop for a mix of Greek and Afghan teenagers that I met Peyman. Peyman was then living with his mother at Hotel City Plaza, one of Athens's "refugee squats". City Plaza offered them a possibility to live outside the official camps that at the time were overcrowded and constituted of only tents. City Plaza was a project put together by the refugee and migrant communities, together with Greek political groups and the international solidarity community, to offer safe and dignifying accommodation, quality food, language classes, and medical services to the most vulnerable asylum seekers.

City Plaza was initially going to play an important role in the film, but by the time we found the budget for the main part of the shoot, Peyman and his mother had left for other accommodation provided by the UN housing scheme. Nevertheless, I believe City Plaza was crucial in my encounter with Peyman and for the film itself. At the core of City Plaza there was a need to dismantle the top-down structure of the traditional humanitarian system, moving towards a horizontal organisation that shared the burden of dealing with the issues. This is what brought all these different people and stories together, beyond NGOs code of conducts, creating real bonds and communities, that very often developed beyond their temporary status.

It's in this environment, that literally ten minutes into of our first encounter Peyman sang some of his rap songs to me. Just a few days later we were recording them and shooting his first music video. Not much later, we began the process of working on a short portrait doc with the aim to promote his music to a European audience, I found myself getting closer and closer to him, his family and all his friends. Despite a huge language barrier stood between us, this exchange became something we both longed for. The camera little by little became part of our interaction, transforming the documentary into a longer-term commitment.

What began as a personal need to relate more directly with what was happening at the borders of our European fortress and consciousness, soon enough ricocheted, becoming an urge to reflect on my own borders as a person and limits as a storyteller. More than ever before, through the making of this film, I recognised the importance not only of the choice of the subject and the language chosen to unravel it, but my very direct and personal relationship with who is filmed. For me, what makes a film special and relevant is exactly this space and tension developed in between the camera lens and the subject: the 'border' between myself and 'them'. This is where our experience of making the film and of relating to each other is brought together and shared with the audience. When I watch a film, it is also to here that I look to find what is most valuable. For this and other reasons it was very important for me to be the one behind the camera.

In the filming, what really mattered to me was to be absorbed into the group, to become one of them, or as close to that as possible, and to shoot the film from the perspective of being within. I wanted the audience to experience the story from the inside; to learn to laugh with them, to perceive and celebrate their brotherhood and possibly finding connections with their own memories of adolescence.

As this was my first time shooting a live-action documentary, one of my biggest challenges was to allow myself to discover what was really going on, rather than setting my mind on what I was going to get; trying not to impose myself on the situation and avoid tailoring my point of view and needs onto the structure of the story.

I knew I was running a risk to begin shooting without knowing where I was headed to, but I felt beginning with this approach to be more important than the need for a clear storyline. At the same time, what seemed to attract me more and more was that empty space created by the almost existential state of waiting in which Peyman, his mother and his friends were immersed. As I started shooting, one of my main desires became exploring how a group of adolescents coming of age make sense of it. Their natural way of finding meaning, irony and hope in the present, for me, represented something universal that I hoped could make this controversial topic something that more people could relate to.

## About the production

Everything started with Peyman's raps, even more so when I had a chance to read his lyrics translated. After recording his first tracks and shooting his music video, I went out looking for labels, music platforms or journalists who could have been interested in promoting his work or producing more of it to a higher standard. This is when I made the decision to shoot a very short doc with the aim of presenting the artist and story behind the songs, hoping it could raise our chances.

After the first period of shooting on my own I edited a trailer, which convinced my old friend and colleague Afolabi Kuti to come on board as a producer. Using the trailer he approached Charlotte Carroll who also came on board as producer. Together they were able to raise finance from Executive Producer Emma Beanland and a film grant from Lush. Finding a real budget for the film is what ultimately turned this short portrait film into a journey that became A YOUTH.

The budget allowed me to come back to Athens and film for two months, but more importantly allowed us to hire an interpreter, a sound recordist and later on someone who could take over the editing. Arash Mansouri, interpreter and translator for the film, became key to get full access to the story and to allow me to really become part of the boys group; while Iasonas Theofanou, sound recordist, allowed me to focus on filming, capturing clean sound even in situations where all the boys were together.

This last aspect was really important, because in fact my main goal at first was really to get lost in Athens, following Peyman and his friends around, seeing the city through their eyes and losing track of time. What I wanted was to plunge into their conversations and rap battles, letting them guide me through their thoughts and dreams.

Later, after several months of editing on my own and starting to feel lost in the footage, Andrew Joseph Cross, took over the editing, helping me to take a step back from the many elements of the story, finding a thread that could guide the audience across a very complex world, one that I had become too immersed in, facilitating a stronger connection to Peyman and his journey.

At the end of April 2019, one year after we had finished shooting, Peyman called me to tell me that finally Austria had accepted their family reunification application and that they were just waiting for their plane tickets to reach his brothers in Salzburg. We decided to organise a concert in Athens before his departure so that we could celebrate this moment and find a good closure. However, a few days before flying to Athens Peyman called me again to tell me that the Austrian asylum service had communicated to them that his mother could come, but they no longer believed that Peyman was a minor and his application was rejected. The application had been pending for almost two years and throughout this time Peyman had in fact turned eighteen, which made him an adult in the eyes of the law. This meant he'd no longer have rights under his mother's guardianship. His mother, instead, could go to Austria because Iman, one of Peyman's brothers, was still a minor and therefore could be granted those same rights Peyman had been refused.

What was meant to be a farewell celebration turned into a very distressing moment. Once again, like at the start, I was filming alone, without an interpreter or sound recordist. I shot what became the last ten minutes of the film, which also ended up informing the rest of the film structure.

### Giorgio Bosisio's Bio

Giorgio is a restless and curious filmmaker with a special interest for intimate character-based stories, through which he explores themes of adolescence, identity, human bonds, *borders*, and queerness.

Having graduated with distinction from The London Film School in December 2013, Giorgio World Premiered his grad film *UN PENSIERO KALAŠNIKOV* at Venice Film Festival.

Based between London and Milan, Giorgio is a self-shooting director and editor, working for personal and commissioned projects across fiction, documentary, music video, and video art. He's also Creative Director for *LOST*, a new London based company exploring new ways of releasing film and music into the world.

After the completion of his latest documentary *A YOUTH*, world premiering at Aspen ShortFest 2020, he's currently developing two documentary projects and his first fiction feature. The latter produced by Bafta winning producer Afolabi Kuti, whom also co-produced *A YOUTH*.

### Afolabi Kuti's Bio

Afolabi Kuti is a BAFTA winning producer and was selected as one of Screen International 50 Future leaders in film. He began his career working in the film festival world for Sundance and BFI London. He then spent time across international film sales, distribution, publicity and film Education before dipping his toes in film production working for producers Elizabeth Karlsen & Stephen Woolley at Number 9 Films. Afolabi then joined The Salt Company as the Acquisitions Manager in February 2011 before going independent in March 2013.

Under his company Broedmachine, Afolabi is working across TV, branded entertainment and film. His recent credits include Executive producer on *I AM NOT A SERIAL KILLER* directed by Billy O'Brien starring Christopher Lloyd, Laura Fraser and Max Record and short film *HOME* directed by Daniel Mulloy starring Jack O'Connell and Holliday Grainger. Both films premiered at SXSW Film Festival, and *HOME* later won a BAFTA and was nominated for Best European Short Film at the European Academy Awards. His latest project *A YOUTH* from director Giorgio Bosisio premiered at Aspen ShortFest.

Afolabi currently has projects with Sky Studios, BBC Films, Ffilm Cymru, Ingenious and Revolution Films.

### Charlotte Carroll's Bio

Charlotte Carroll is an award winning producer, director, writer, actor and an all round creative filmmaker with a mission.

Her first film *RED CRAYON* garnered 11 awards around the globe from "Best international short" to "Best original screenplay". Her film was shown in the UN's global showcase and she now is an ambassador for the Human Rights Watch. *RED CRAYON* is a silent narrative film written in a Jordanian refugee camp, depicting the effect of war on young children. Focusing on an innocent child who narrowly escapes destruction and death in Syria, but what she leaves can never truly be left behind.

A YOUTH, produced by Charlotte and Afolabi Kuti, is a film that focuses on a young man from Afghanistan called Peyman, who is stuck in limbo, turning his only outlets of emotion into poetry and music whilst grappling a transition into everyday life in Athens.

### Full Credits

Director & Producer: Giorgio Bosisio

Producers: Afolabi Kuti, Charlotte Carroll

Executive Producers: Emma Beanland, Charlotte Carroll

Camera: Giorgio Bosisio

Editors: Andrew Joseph Cross, Giorgio Bosisio

Composer: Giacomo Carlone

Interpreter: Arash Mansouri

Sound Recordist: Iasonas Theofanou

Grade: Alex Grigoras

Sound Post Production Services: Splice Post

Re-recording Mixer: Joe Cochrane

Fx Editor: Elliott Bowell

Dialogue Editor: Jack Lewis

Splice Post Production Executive: Ramit Anchal

Splice Post Production Coordinator: Lily Morgan

Translations: Arash Mansouri, Inter-com, Syed Najibi, Marian Baraky, Minoo Tamaddon

Phone Footage: Peyman Fael, Naqib Rasooli

Title Design: Soo Soo Kim, Marc Greaves

Subtitles: Inter-com

Additional Music:

“Mystery” by Peyman Fael

“Rise” by Peyman Fael

“E’inai Hiphop” by Παράξενος