



Persia's Pantry

آشپزخانه ایرانی

The story of an asylum seeker standing
on his own two feet

www.persiaspantry.com.au

PRODUCER DANIEL NJEGICH **DIRECTOR** DANIEL PITCHER **EXECUTIVE PRODUCER** ASHLEIGH NICOLAU **CINEMATOGRAPHY** DANIEL NJEGICH & DANIEL PITCHER
EDITING DANIEL NJEGICH & DANIEL PITCHER **COMPOSER** OLIVIA DAVIES **SOUND DESIGN** TALEN HERZIG **ANIMATION** RED BIRD CREATIVE



REVELATION
PERTH INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL



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SYNOPSIS

Persia's Pantry follows the incredible life journey of Arad Niksefat, a man forced to flee from his own country, only to face a much harsher and demoralising life as an asylum seeker in Australia.

Arad Niksefat's life is a step short of unbelievable. At the age of 35 he was forced to flee his native country, Iran, where he was a decorated and well-respected pathologist, working alongside the government agency SEPAH.

Unfortunately, his struggles were only just the beginning as Arad sought Asylum in Australia. Leaving Indonesia at night, he travelled by boat with 58 other asylum seekers, towards Christmas Island.

After 16 months in detention centres, Arad was released in 2014 to live in Melbourne, but things did not go easy for him. Under a strict 7pm curfew, and a Bridging Visa (BVE), Arad was left to fend for himself. No one told him how to interact with society. He wasn't allowed to work. Did not know how to make money. Had no idea about local and Australian laws, and every 2 weeks he was to meet with a case manager. "We were treated like animals."

In 2016 Arad, moved to Perth and started his own catering company, Persia's Pantry. Due to his current Safe Haven Enterprise Visa, (SHEV) he needs to live and work in predominately regional areas of Perth, but Arad travels his business throughout Perth, where he has loyal customers whom love his products and services. Arad's recipes are derived from recipes his Mother passed onto him, however he has put his own spin, making them, "healthy food".

"I am standing on my own two feet."



BIOGRAPHIES

Daniel Pitcher was once a humble bricklayer but found himself taking a new adventure in 2012.

Originally entering Murdoch University to major in English and Creative Writing, Pitcher stumbled into film after a friend urged him to take a first-year screen unit for fun.

This saw him become heavily involved in the film industry working on such projects as Pale Blue Eyes, The War That Changed Us, Sol Bunker and, Pulse, just to name a few.

In 2015, Pitcher looked to his own project, one that became very personal to him and those whom he worked alongside him. Broken Wings was his first film as a director, and one of the biggest learning curves he had undertaken as a young filmmaker.

Unfortunately, his health saw fit to ruin his chances of being able to make a life in film. Currently, Pitcher works as the Media Technician at John Curtin College of the Arts, working with the students, and passing on his knowledge.

In the future, Pitcher will be continuing on his studies to become a teacher, so he can further progress in whatever way he can with film in his life.

Daniel Njegich has worked tirelessly to cement himself as one of Perth's leading young photographers, forever seeking to explore the defining elements of his subjects; Daniel has developed a unique ability for story telling through his craft.

Following Njegich's first solo exhibition, 'Victims of Politics' in 2014 he has embarked on a number of passion projects, combining his love of culture and photography to tell truly remarkable stories from behind the lens.

In the last few years, Njegich has started to work with film. It is through his passion for photojournalism and now, film, that he has developed a love for documentaries.

It's Njegich's commitment and connection to the people he captures that make his images truly memorable and this project is set to be no different.

Njegich is a high school teacher at John Curtin College of the Arts in the Gifted & Talented Media program where he teaches Film, Photography & Design.

Njegich also recently won the 2018 SunStudios Emerging Photographer Award, which is one of the biggest photography awards in Australia.

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DIRECTOR STATEMENT

As the director my aim for Arad and the documentary is to show the raw nature of his journey, and the personal reluctance he has had with sharing it openly to a larger community. Arad has been approached previously by larger production companies who have shown interest in sharing his story and interviewing him, however he has always turned them down. For Arad to allow us the chance to interview him, and create a documentary around his story, expresses to me how intimate and personal this is for him and this is what I want to keep. Keeping all our interviews and interactions minimalistic in crew size will assure that his comfort levels are kept personal and allows for a growing bond between us. Getting him to open up and reveal the moments which do haunt him is something I want to explore but only if he is ready to.

Stylistically, our approach has been to immerse the audience into his Iranian heritage through the use of brilliant colours in our B-roll footage, and interview locations/set design; this has helped to emphasise his powerful journey. We don't want the audience to dragged down by his story, and then further with dark colour tones.

One of the biggest discussions, Daniel, and myself have had in regard to shooting this documentary is how to show his story. As always, the first thing that comes to mind is re-enacting certain moments, however we both agreed that, not only would this be financially and logistically unviable, it would draw our audience out of the personal interaction we want them to have with Arad. Using clippings, and mementos of his journey, footage of Arad interacting with customers and selling his food, are what we will use to help reinforce this connect. We want our audience members to leave feeling honoured and blessed to have heard Arad's story, rather than sad and disheartened with his treatment.

PRODUCER STATEMENT

When I first heard about Arad's story, I was overwhelmed. I heard about his story from a school colleague and always knew this was potentially something special. Early in November, I spent over an hour on the phone with Arad as he told me about his life, the next day I met him in Fremantle to take some pictures of him and his delicacies. This is a pertinent story to tell and has a very important message to deliver to the Australian population and the Australian Government.

Myself and Daniel Pitcher will gain a wealth of knowledge from creating a piece such as this as well as a lifelong friend in Arad. Hopefully with the help of the Revelation Film festival an audience wider than just Australia which would open up doors for us to continue to make stories that resonate with us. This documentary can also be used in my school setting with my ATAR courses learning about documentaries.

It's my duty as the producer to fight for stories like **PERSIA'S PANTRY** and ensure they find their way to a wider audience. When you discover a story with such bold energy and an inspired voice, the excitement and fragility is undeniably intense. I am confident **PERSIA'S PANTRY** will be a wonderful experience for audiences of all stripes, inspiring hope

This is a film based in reality and like real life it waivers between the highs and lows that we all experience. Confronting, thought provoking, heart breaking – a great story for now, for an audience from 16 years of age onwards – uplifting and tragic, funny and moving.

It's a story for you.





CREW

Director

Daniel Pitcher

Producer

Daniel Njegich

Executive Producer

Ashleigh Nicolau

Director of Photography

Daniel Njegich & Daniel Pitcher

Editing

Daniel Pitcher & Daniel Njegich

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Composer

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Camera Operators

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Red Bird Creative
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Manuel Scussel
Adam Chin
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Lachlan Seddon

Photography

Daniel Njegich





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Special Thanks



AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



RED BIRD
Creative

Website

lighthouse





BTS Images by Jake Blackburn