



Presents

# PARALLEL TALES

**A film by Asghar Farhadi**  
139 mins, France, 2026  
Language: French with English subtitles

## Distribution

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With **Isabelle Huppert, Virginie Efira, Vincent Cassel, Pierre Niney, Adam Bessa, India Hair**  
with the participation of **Catherine Deneuve**

**In search of inspiration for her new novel, Sylvie spies on her neighbors across the street. When she hires young Adam to help her with her daily routine, she has no idea that he will turn her life and her work upside down, until the fiction she had imagined surpasses the reality of them all.**

## INTERVIEW WITH ASGHAR FARHADI

By Jean-Dominique Nuttend and Yann Tobin

### **How did you get the idea of loosely adapting an episode of Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Dekalog*?**

Asghar Farhadi: Even before I shot *A Hero* (2021), Anonymous Content approached me to suggest that I create a series inspired by the *Dekalog*. I quickly declined, as I was not interested in developing something in that format. However, during a video call with Krzysztof Piesiewicz, Kieslowski's screenwriter, I felt an immediate connection to him. Later, the production company reached out to me again and asked if I would consider adapting one of the episodes into a feature. That was more interesting. Also, for a while then, I had been contemplating the idea of making a film about sound. So I looked into the episodes of *Dekalog* to see if any of these would allow me to explore that subject. Episode 6 (which became *A Short Film About Love*) is about a voyeur, someone who watches others through a telescope. His fantasy is entirely connected to the image, and it led me to wonder what the sound was like on the other side – the sound of the person being spied on... That's how I got the idea to turn these people being watched into creators of sounds, sound designers. Together with my co-screenwriter, Saeed Farhadi, who also happens to be my brother, I started developing a screenplay centered on the triad of image-sound-writing; really a story about creativity and imagination.

### **You even used music from *Dekalog*...**

Asghar Farhadi: The identity and texture of Kieslowski's cinema is closely connected to his collaboration with Piesiewicz for the screenplay, and Zbigniew Preisner for the music. Music plays a central role in his work, for example in *Blue* or *The Double Life of Veronique*. When I was contemplating what I wanted to do, that music came to me quite naturally. I basically split myself in two – I staged the imaginary sequences in the style of Kieslowski, because my protagonist, Sylvie, invents a story that resembles her world, and I directed the “real-life” sequences in my own style.

### **More broadly, what shaped your love for cinema? And how did Western filmmaking influence your work?**

Asghar Farhadi: I started making films very early on. I filmed my first short when I was 13, then I kept on shooting a short film every year, until I went to college to study theater. Throughout those years, I constantly nurtured my relationship with cinema. I did this largely by reading magazines and books, but

also by seeking out VHS tapes to watch the films I was reading about. My film education started with Iranian cinema, and back then, while I was a teenager, Iranian filmmakers were comparable to the great masters. At the time, I was shaped much more by European cinema than American cinema. Kieślowski was widely known in Iran, and books were published about his work. Andrzej Wajda and Theo Angelopoulos were also quite well known in Iran. Now that I think of it, my entire generation in Iran (not just artists or filmmakers) was shaped by great filmmakers such as Sergei Parajanov, Yasujiro Ozu, Akira Kurosawa, Satyajit Ray, along with Italian cinema. Our love for cinema was developed largely outside Hollywood. Unfortunately, that richness has disappeared, and today there is no equivalent to Mario Monicelli or Robert Bresson. I no longer find that grasp on reality, that truly singular vision of distinctive, highly personal cinema. At that time, cinema valued contemplation; there was an ability to pause and observe. So much of today's cinema is one of haste, urgency, and agitation, which are contrary to its very essence.

***Parallel Tales* features some of the most prominent French actors working today. Did you already have certain actors in mind when you started adapting the story for France, or was the casting decided after you finished writing the screenplay?**

Asgar Farhadi: It was a bit of both. When I came to France, I started watching contemporary French films. My goal wasn't necessarily to cast well-known French actors, but, in each case, the actors we chose seemed to best fit the roles, regardless of their fame. Isabelle Huppert was the first person I considered for the role of Sylvie. Her performance in Michael Haneke's *The Piano Teacher* left a strong impression on me, and I've followed her work ever since. For Adam's part, there were several options. I watched a few films starring Adam Bessa, notably *Harka* (Lofty Nathan, 2022), about the Arab Spring, and he really made an impression on me. I quickly realized he was the right choice for the part.

I had Vincent Cassel in mind for a long time. I was impressed by his performance in *La Haine*, and I was hoping to work with him someday.

The decision to cast Pierre Niney came later. I didn't have him in mind for the role initially, but after watching his films, especially *The Count of Monte Cristo*, I was convinced. We had to take into account the fact that Vincent and Pierre play brothers in the film, and ensure that the relationship felt believable on screen.

As for Virginie Efira, I met her at the Cannes Film Festival, when I briefly ran into her. Her voice, its warmth and distinct presence, is what prompted me to cast her. I think that an actor's voice, the voice of a human being, has more weight than their physical appearance. The idea of dual roles was undoubtedly appealing to the three actors: Virginie Efira, Vincent Cassel, and Pierre Niney. The challenge was to portray two characters that are different, but not entirely so. There needed to be a fluid transition from one to the other, while keeping them clearly recognizable as two different characters.

The two characters played by Vincent Cassel do not have the same eye color. With Virginie, the physical distinction is clearer: her fictional character is darker, she's a brunette and wears black; whereas her real-life character is more luminous, lighter, always wearing a white scarf. But I wanted the differences to not feel exaggerated. I asked Virginie to watch *That Obscure Object of Desire* to help her capture a certain languor and fluidity in the movements of her fictional character... The creation of these dual characters was achieved through the performances of the actors and the work of the costume and makeup teams.

**Virginie Efira's voice brings us back to the question of sound, which is key in the film...**

Asgar Farhadi: The people Sylvie spies on for her book are sound effect technicians, and she imagines that they work on fiction films, as one would naturally assume. But then I realized that the sound in nature documentaries (which feature the most authentic images) is almost entirely re-created in a studio. The idea that the most real and natural sound is artificial was a concept that became central to the film. The film is a reflection on reality: fabricated reality, the effect of reality through sound, and the way in which real characters (who themselves belong to a fictional work) contrast with fictional characters within that very fiction. Ultimately, I've been fascinated with sound for much longer than I thought, since I wrote my undergraduate thesis on silence and hesitation in Harold Pinter's plays. The idea I developed is that silence is not the absence of sound. Pinter's plays are very talkative, but they contain everything we hide when we speak, including anxiety. Silence is embedded within language itself.

**More generally, how do you approach sound in your films, and specifically the question of voices, and the intonations of actors speaking in a language that is not yours?**

Asgar Farhadi: As I've matured in my career as a filmmaker, I've learned to give more importance to sound than to the image. Very often, more meaning is carried through sound (the tone of a line, a piece of dialogue, an ambient sound, or a sound effect) than through visual composition or movement. I'm closely involved in each stage of the sound work, including sound editing and mixing. And, starting at the writing stage, I provide a lot of directions about sound. There is probably a cultural dimension to this

approach. In its storytelling, Iranian cinema has always placed great importance to what happens off-screen, particularly with sound. When it comes to voices, if you do not speak a language natively, you become more sensitive to its melodic and purely phonic qualities. It's always a collaborative process... I work with Massoumeh Lahidji, and she is very sensitive; she understands my films and my way of thinking. What happens on set is exactly what's happening right now. You're talking to me, but in fact you are also speaking with her.

**Sets play a crucial part in this film, which takes place in Paris, yet without any establishing shots of the city or any specific neighborhood. How did you design them?**

Asgar Farhadi: First, I should point out that Emmanuelle Duplay, the production designer, has done amazing work. As with *The Past*, I wanted to avoid postcard views of Paris; instead, I wanted to see the city like a local. Depending on where I'm staying, I often walk down the Boulevard Saint-Martin. I've always found it visually unique with its two levels and its railing, and that's where I wanted to shoot. When you watch the film, it feels like there are only two apartments and the boulevard is between them, but in reality, we shot in six different locations.

**How did you and the cinematographer, Guillaume Deffontaines (whom you were working with for the first time), develop the visual style of the film?**

Asgar Farhadi: Our collaboration was quite close and continuous. The worlds of fiction and reality needed to be distinct, but in a subtle way that the viewer could sense. For the fictional world, we used anamorphic lenses and specific creative techniques. For example, we covered the lens with a stocking to soften the image. We also shot a flashback sequence using a Bolex camera to give it a slightly dreamlike, old-fashioned feel. All the sequences set in the real world were shot handheld, while the fictional sequences were often shot with a Steadicam. As for the lighting, the scenes set in the real world are shot like my other films in a quasi-documentary style, whereas in the fictional scenes, the lighting is more elaborate, more visible, while still trying to avoid making the differences too obvious. The sets used in the two worlds are also slightly different, but you have to look closely to notice it.

**The character of Adam is a very gentle character with everyone. But there's also something vampiric about him — he seems to take something from everyone he encounters. Does this align with your idea of an artist?**

Asgar Farhadi: In my opinion, that's the perfect definition of talent. First, there's an emotional aspect, based on observation. And then there's the other aspect which you call "vampiric," feeding off of everything around him. It is a thirst to learn, to discover, which comes at a cost and can sometimes harm those who are the focus of this curiosity, but it is also essential for creativity. Art doesn't come from nowhere. Art comes from what you take in, what stays with you, and how you reshape this raw material into something new. I think talent is the combination of sensitivity and a certain madness that needs to be sated.

### **Rain and storms are also central to the story...**

Weather in the film functions as a metaphor, much like the images of a woman's hair can suggest a certain atmosphere, a certain mood... They reflect an inner state of turmoil and agitation. More than the sight of the rain, it is the sound of rain that better conveys a sense of inner confinement.

### **Did the theme of people spying on others come to you specifically for this film, or have you ever explored it in other contexts?**

Asgar Farhadi: A central question runs throughout the film; what we are shown, can it be accepted as reality, does what appear to be completely real, contain a solid truth... and how much is constructed around it? I'm also interested in the dynamic between what is real and what is imaginary. As we see in the film, fiction draws from real life, but it also influences reality.

-excerpts from an interview conducted in Paris on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026 and translated from Persian by Massoumeh Lahidji for Positif No. 783 (May 2026)

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## FILMOGRAPHY - ASGHAR FARHADI

2026 PARALLEL TALES

Cannes 2026 - Main Competition

2021 A HERO

Cannes 2021 - Grand Prix

Golden Globes 2022 - Nominated for Best Motion Picture - Non-English Language

2018 EVERYBODY KNOWS

Cannes 2018 – Main Competition - Opening Film

2016 THE SALESMAN

Cannes 2016 - Best Screenplay Award / Best Actor Award

Academy Awards 2017 - Best International Feature Film

2013 THE PAST

Cannes 2013 - Best Actress Award / Ecumenical Jury Prize

Golden Globes 2024 - Nominated for Best Motion Picture - Non-English Language

César Awards 2014 - 5 nominations, including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actress

2011 A SEPARATION

Berlin Film Festival 2011 - Golden Bear for Best Film / Silver Bear for Best Actress for the ensemble cast / Silver Bear for Best Actor for the ensemble cast

Academy Awards 2012 - Best International Feature Film

César Awards 2012 - Best Foreign Film

2009 ABOUT ELLY

Berlin Film Festival 2009 - Silver Bear for Best Director

2006 FIREWORKS WEDNESDAY

2004 BEAUTIFUL CITY

2003 DANCING IN THE DUST

## Cast:

Sylvie	Isabelle Huppert
Nita / Anna	Virginie Efira
Pierre / Nicolas	Vincent Cassel
Christophe / Théo	Pierre Niney
Adam	Adam Bessa
Céline	India Hair
Laurence	Catherine Deneuve

## Credits:

Director	Asghar Farhadi
Producer	Alexandre Mallet-Guy, Asghar Farhadi, David Levine
Screenplay	Asghar Farhadi and Saeed Farhadi
Freely based on	<i>Dekalog 6</i> written by Krzysztof Piesiewicz and Krzysztof Kieślowski
Adaptation	Massoumeh Lahidji
Director of Photography	Guillaume Deffontaines
Editor	Hayedeh Safiyari
Production Designer	Emmanuelle Duplay
Costume Designer	Khadija Zeggaï
First Assistant Director	Joseph Rapp
Original Music	Zbigniew Preisner
Sound Designer	Pierre Mertens
Sound Editing	Paul Heymans, Mathieu Michaux
Sound Mix	Thomas Gauder
Co-producer	André Logie, Gaëtan David, Andrea Occhipinti, Stefano Massenzi
Executive Producers	Yousra Filali, Carole Baraton, Yohann Comte, Pierre Mazars, Lila Yacoub, Maciej Musial, Krzysztof Piesiewicz, Chadwick Prichard
Production	Memento Production, Anonymous Content
In co-production with	Panache Productions, La Compagnie

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Memento

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and Orange, Proximus, RTBF (Télévision Belge), Doha  
Film Institute, TRT Sinema

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