



Women Without Men



Philip French

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Scene from *Women Without Men*, Shirin Neshat's poetic film about the 1953 Iranian coup.

Women Without Men

Production year:

2009

Countries: Austria, France, Germany, Rest of the world

Cert (UK): 15

Runtime: 99 mins

Directors: Shirin Neshat, Shoja Azari

Cast: Orsi Toth, Pegah Ferydoni, Shabnam Tolouei

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Known largely for her photography and video installations, the 53-year-old Iranian artist [Shirin Neshat](#) has spent most of her life in exile. Her first feature-length film, based on a novel in the magic-realist mode, brings together four women in the summer of 1953, against the background of the British-backed, CIA-orchestrated military coup that brought down Mohammed Mossadegh's democratically elected government and ultimately led to the present situation in Iran.

They are the discontented 50-year-old wife of a rightwing general; a prostitute in flight from a brothel; a compliant woman only too eager to wear the chador and marry; and a liberal, politically concerned 30-year-old whose devout Muslim brother is trying to force her

into marriage. This last character is the focal figure. After committing suicide, she is at once a ghostly presence and an active participant in the leftwing opposition.

A Franco-German production shot in Morocco, the film cuts between a Tehran teeming with demonstrators and repressive police and shot in desaturated colour, and a lush, dreamlike, mysterious garden where the women gather. Heavy with symbolism and beautifully composed, it's in a traditional art house mode far removed from the quizzical, innovative, subtly subversive films that Iranian directors have been making under extraordinary pressures this past quarter of a century.



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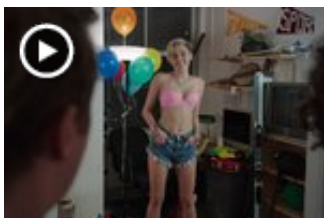
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