

A man is shown from the chest up, submerged in water. He has a somber expression, looking slightly downward. The water is dark and filled with many small, light-colored bubbles or particles, creating a textured, ethereal background. The lighting is soft, highlighting the man's face and the texture of the water.

This Is Not Me

Between memory and disappearance

A film by **Kamshad Kooshan**

Ali Nassirian . Kamshad Kooshan . Hossein Pakdel . Bahareh Rahnama . Michael Kooshan
Behnaz Abbasi . Farhid Seri . Hamid Reza Akbari

Written and Directed by Kamshad Kooshan . Script Consultant: Kristin Lazarian . Screenplay by: Kamshad Kooshan
Production Designer: Malek Jahan Khazai Director's Artistic Consultant: Dariush Mehrjui, Farhad Aesh. M.R Delpak
Co- Producer: Mir Vali Madani. Associate Producer: Saced Armand Director of Photography: Behrooz Taheri.
Edited by: Hassan Hassandoust Sound: Ashkan Tolouian. Sound Design: Mohammad Reza Delpak Music by: Amin Honarmand

THE FILM

Logline

Diagnosed with leukemia at 57 and told the fight will take years, a Tehran factory CEO walks away from chemotherapy — and from the man he has spent a lifetime pretending to be. In his late mother's abandoned orchard, with an unorthodox healer, a long-denied piano and his young son, he sets out to heal the life before the illness. Based on a true story.

Synopsis

As protests and political tensions intensify across Iran, Behzad — an Iranian-American executive who had returned to Iran to live — is diagnosed with terminal cancer. Rejecting treatment, and finding no solace in the U.S., he returns once more to Tehran, determined to face death on his own terms.

Guided by a dissident physician who links illness to emotional repression, he confronts his estranged relationship with his son, unresolved trauma, and the choices that shaped his life — discovering unexpected possibilities for healing and reconciliation.

In his late mother's orchard in the hills outside Tehran — overgrown, locked, full of fruit — Behzad begins a different treatment: breath, gratitude, forgiveness, soil under the fingernails. He restores the garden, learns the piano his mother once denied him, cooks for strangers in the city's poorest streets, and opens a tiny breakfast table for mountain hikers with his son Arash.

Scene by scene, the invented self comes apart. The question of whether the illness retreats slowly gives way to a larger one — whether the man it attacked ever really existed. Snow falls on the orchard, and then the trees blossom. Based on a true story.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

Director's Statement

This Is Not Me emerges from a deeply personal and long-standing engagement with both Iran and the United States.

As an Iranian-American filmmaker, I began my career in the United States before returning to Iran in 2001 to continue my work. Over the years, as conditions became more restrictive and several of my projects were halted due to censorship, I chose to remain.

This film is shaped by that decision — and by the tension of living between two systems, two identities, and two ways of understanding authority, control, and survival.

The story of Behzad came from a need to explore how these forces manifest within the individual. His refusal of medical treatment is not only a personal decision, but a reflection of a deeper resistance — against structures that seek to define and control both the body and the self.

I was particularly interested in the relationship between repression and illness: how unprocessed anger, silence, and constraint can accumulate over time, shaping both psychological and physical realities. In the film, the body becomes a site where personal history and political conditions intersect.

The setting of the walled garden was central to this exploration — a space of isolation and protection, but also of confrontation. Within it, Behzad is forced to face not only his mortality, but his past and his complicity.

Set against the backdrop of ongoing protests, the film does not attempt to represent events directly, but rather to reflect how they are experienced internally. It is about what happens to a person living within prolonged tension — how survival, identity, and responsibility become intertwined.

This Is Not Me is ultimately a film about choice: the choice to return, to remain, to resist, and to confront what lies beneath both personal and collective experience. And through acting, writing, and drawing on real elements of my own life — my son, the garden, and more — I have tried to revisit the moments of life's journey.

— Kamshad Kooshan, writer / director

WHAT THE FILM IS ABOUT

Themes

The invented self

The title's confession. Behzad's illness strips away a persona assembled from his mother's fears and other people's expectations — and asks what remains.

Healing as homecoming

Not a miracle cure but a return: to the orchard, to the mother tongue, to the birthplace — the film treats geography as medicine.

Forgiveness

A grave visited with flowers, a brother embraced over a buried toy: the film's quietest scenes carry its heaviest lifting.

Father and son

Arash does not watch his father die; he watches him learn to play, cook, plant and laugh — an inheritance worth more than the orchard.

Between two worlds

From Tehran to San Francisco and back, the film maps a generation of Iranians who left, returned, and had to decide which self was real.

THE FILMMAKER

Kamshad Kooshan

Writer · Director · Producer · Lead Actor

Kamshad Kooshan is an Iranian-American writer, director, producer, and actor whose work explores the intersection of personal identity, social realities, and the psychological impact of repression and displacement. After beginning his filmmaking career in the United States, he returned to Iran in 2001 to continue creating films despite increasingly restrictive cultural conditions and censorship.

Over the years, several of his projects faced significant obstacles within Iran's regulatory environment. Nevertheless, he continued to pursue stories that examine the complexities of human relationships within broader social and political contexts.



Kooshan's first feature film, starring Shohreh Aghdashloo, received a limited theatrical release in the United States — a release regarded as one of the key factors in introducing Aghdashloo to Hollywood, leading to her role opposite Ben Kingsley in *House of Sand and Fog* and, ultimately, to her Academy Award nomination. His second feature, *This Is Not Me*, reflects his longstanding interest in the relationship between emotional repression, physical illness, and the search for meaning and connection in times of personal and societal crisis.

Drawing from his experiences living and working between two cultures, Kooshan creates intimate, character-driven cinema that bridges the personal and the political through deeply human stories.

THE PEOPLE

Characters

Behzad Sarafraz (57) — Kamshad Kooshan

A factory CEO who built a life out of other people's expectations. The diagnosis dismantles the armored man; in the ruins, a gentler and truer one gets to work.

Shiva (45)

Behzad's estranged wife — sharp-tongued, exhausted by a marriage neither of them chose to fight for. Her skepticism thaws as the man she stopped believing in starts to change.

Arash (11) — Michael Kooshan

Their son — played by the director's real son. Curious, funny, tender: digging by the orchard stream he unearths, literally, the buried pieces of his father's childhood.

Dr. Farzaneh

An elderly holistic physician gathering medicinal herbs in the next garden; part healer, part trickster-sage. He teaches Behzad that no meeting is an accident.

Dr. Ali

Behzad's oldest friend and a conventional physician, who loves him enough to fight him — loudly — over the treatment he refuses.

Farhid

The piano teacher who tells a 57-year-old beginner it is not too late — and then puts him on a recital stage.

TOP BILLING

Cast

Ali Nassirian · Kamshad Kooshan · Hossein Pakdel · Bahareh Rahnama · Michael Kooshan · Behnaz Abbasi

THE CREW

Credits

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY	Kamshad Kooshan
SCREENPLAY	Kamshad Kooshan
SCRIPT CONSULTANT	Kristin Lazarian
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	Malek Jahan Khazai
DIRECTOR'S ARTISTIC CONSULTANTS	Dariush Mehrjui · Farhad Aesh · M.R. Delpak
CO-PRODUCER	Mir Vali Madani
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER	Saeed Armand
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Behrooz Taheri
EDITED BY	Hassan Hassandoust
SOUND	Ashkan Tolouian
SOUND DESIGN	Mohammad Reza Delpak
MUSIC BY	Amin Honarmand
PRODUCED BY	Kamshad Kooshan

TECHNICAL

Film Facts

TITLE	This Is Not Me
PERSIAN TITLE	‘The Man Who Played Himself’
TAGLINE	Between memory and disappearance
WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY	Kamshad Kooshan
GENRE	Drama — based on a true story
COUNTRY	USA, Iran
LANGUAGES	English & Persian, with English subtitles
YEAR	2026
RUNTIME	88 minutes
CAST	See Cast & Credits, p. 7

GET IN TOUCH

Press & Industry Contact

Kamshad Kooshan — writer / director

newlightinc1@gmail.com

Hi-resolution stills, the poster, and screening materials are available on request. Festival programmers may request a screener link at the address above.