



The Tradition That Iranians Have Celebrated For Thousands
Of Years... Is now an animated holiday special to be shared with the whole family!!

“Babak and Friends IN A First Norooz”

**All-Star Iranian Cast, Original Song by Andy, and dual language track
(English and Persian) in a high quality animated movie!**

BURBANK, January 10, 2005 - For the first time ever, an Iranian holiday has been given the recognition it deserves in **“Babak and Friends - A First Norooz”** (Norooz, the Persian New Year). The 30-minutes animation tells the journey of a young Iranian boy named Babak and how he learns to connect with his heritage and background. Babak has been raised outside of Iran with little knowledge of Iranian customs and traditions. Already feeling alienated from his classmates, Babak only feels lonelier when his cousins, Saman and Sousanne, visit from Iran. Enlisting the help of Norooz heavyweights Amoo Norooz and Haji Firooz, Babak is able to learn more about the beautiful traditions of Iran and reconnect to an ancient and grand civilization.

Premiering on DVD, **“Babak and Friends - A First Norooz”** features both English and Persian language versions with bonus features. These include behind the scenes sneak peak into the cartoon-making process, information on cast, and more. In addition, a **“Babak and Friends - A First Norooz”** storybook is included with every purchase of the DVD with colorful images of the wonderful characters. Featuring top Iranian talents, this high-quality animation is a promising to be an instant holiday classic.



“Babak and Friends - A First Norooz” DVD and free Storybook will be available for pre-order at www.babakandfriends.com as of February 1st, 2005. The movie will be scheduled for release on March 10th 2005 for \$15.99 (SRP). A private movie Premiere will be held at the in Los Angeles on March 3rd, 2005. Andy and Aris will make a special Norooz performance. Only 200 tickets are being sold to the public for this event. More than 40 local screenings will be held through Persian student and cultural organization around the world during Norooz. Cities include San Francisco, Vancouver, Chicago, Toronto, Miami, Boston, New York, London, Stockholm, and Melbourne among others. For local listings, tickets to screenings, and the latest news check the cartoon web site at www.babakandfriends.com.

“Babak and Friends - A First Norooz” features the voice talents of Oscar Nominee Shoreh Aghdashloo, Ali Pourtash (comedic actor and creator of the popular “Nan-e Saleemeh” character) and legendary Iranian actor, Parviz Sayyad as Amoo Norooz himself! **“Babak and Friends - A First Norooz”** also features the popular Norooz song “Norooz-e Ziba-ye Man” by Iranian pop star Aris as well as an all-new, never before-released Norooz song by famed Iranian pop singer, Andy.

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About Norooz Productions: Dustin Ellis, the writer and director of Babak and Friends – A First Norooz teamed up with Producer Shabnam Rezaei, and Executive Producer Aly Jetha and Mastaneh Moghadam to form Norooz Productions.

Shabnam brings years of software design, marketing, sales and PR experience to the company. With a BS in Computer Science and a BA in German Literature from the University of Pennsylvania, and an MBA from New York University, Shabnam has spent most of her professional career in selling solutions to big financial institutions such as Merrill Lynch, Lehman Brothers, ING and Bank Austria. She has held managerial positions at EXIS Consulting and Deloitte & Touche and is an expert in Capital Markets.



She speaks five languages and has been published in numerous industry magazines. In 2004, Shabnam explored her love of culture and languages and started PersianMirror.com, an online community for Persians. Through her web design, editing and marketing experience she was able to attract over 10,000 Iranian business to the site in under 6 months. After she met Dustin on a PersianMirror interview, she decided to team up with him to launch Norooz Productions.

A seasoned business executive, Aly manages the business strategy and legal matters for Norooz Productions. With a BA in International Relations from the University of British Columbia and a law degree from the University of California at Berkeley, Boalt Hall School of Law, Aly is a member of the California Bar. Early in his career, Aly spent several years working in the United Nations community for an NGO called Global Action. He then spent 2 years as a management consultant at Bain & Company, an international strategic consulting firm. Aly went on to become the CEO of Intra Technologies, a venture backed semiconductor company, which he founded in 1998 and sold in 2003 to a strategic partner. Aly's passion for business and the future of multi-cultural families has created a unique vision and direction for Norooz Productions.

The fourth member of the company, Mastaneh Moghadam has helped in creative design, music and planning of events. The company gathered a talented team of artists and storyboard writers from major companies such as DreamWorks, Time Warner and Disney. Character designs were completed by Rodd Miller, who evoked a sense of history by depicting a straight and square beard for Amoo Noroo, reminiscent of ancient Persian kings on the walls of Persepolis. Additional artwork by Alfred Gimeno, Joe Banaszkiwicz and John Dymmer helped bring the characters to life. Woody Yocum created the “Persian Miniature” sequence, a segment of the movie that pays homage to the traditional Iranian Artform. Miniature characters come to life in a hilarious and entertaining story about the origins of Norooz. Animation for the movie was completed at Starburst Studios, the same studio that animated the Lilo & Stich sequel for Disney. A talented Iranian duo Sam Daghighian and Mehrdad Arabi, composed the musical score and arrangement for pivotal sections of the film such as the opening scene, and the Persepolis segment. Their use of



traditional Persian instruments and classic style evokes the grandeur of Persia and adds a beautiful layer of history to the cartoon.

About the Director: With an American father and Iranian mother, Dustin grew up learning about two different cultures. One of his favorite childhood memories is watching cartoons, and holiday specials such as a Charlie Brown Christmas. Through the years, Dustin followed his passion of cartoons with a career in animation. He started at Warner Brothers with Brad Bird, director of “The Incredibles”. Later, he had the chance to work with Universal, Nickelodeon and Dreamworks on projects such as “The Rugrats Movie”, the “Iron Giant” and “Osmosis Jones”. To come full circle, Dustin decided to finally create a holiday special for the Iranian community, focusing on Norooz, the Persian New Year. He began work on the story in early 2004 and carefully assembled the most skilled professionals from the industry. Midway through production, Dustin formed Norooz Productions to work on **“Babak and Friends - A First Norooz”**, aptly named because it was, indeed, a first of a kind!



Cast Bio's

SHOHREH AGHDASHLOO – Voice of Farah (Babak's aunt)

Born in Tehran to an intellectual family, Aghdashloo was drawn to the theatre at an early age, and by her twenties was performing in various cutting-edge performance groups, like the acclaimed Drama Workshop of Tehran. Aghdashloo was soon cast by Abbas Kiarostami and Ali Hatami -- two towering figures of the nascent Iranian New Wave - to play starring roles in their formally adventurous, socially progressive productions, including 1977's "Gozaresh" and "Sutedelan." But in the late '70s, with the Ayatollah Khomeini reintroducing an era of strict rule based on religious doctrine, Aghdashloo's work as a performer was either censored or forbidden. Eager to escape the turmoil of the Iranian Revolution, Aghdashloo left Iran for London, where she earned a degree in international relations. Discouraged by the dearth of non-stereotyped roles for Middle Eastern women in Hollywood, Aghdashloo created meaningful work for herself. She focused her attention on stage work, creating a traveling theater troupe with her husband that performed plays in Farsi for Iranian audiences. Her film work includes roles in "America So Beautiful" and "Maryam," both about the struggle of Iranian immigrants in the U.S. Her work caught the attention of director Vadim Perelman, who was looking to cast the supporting role of Nadi in the House of Sand and Fog. Having read the book upon its release, Aghdashloo had long envisioned ways that she could play Nadi, a strong but subservient Iranian-American wife and mother caught between her husband's wishes and her own conscience. Opposite a cast of established performers, Aghdashloo's subtle, simmering performance brought her kudos from the **Independent Spirit Awards**, the **New York Film Critics** and the **Los Angeles Film Critics Association**, all of which named her **2003's Best Supporting Actress**. The Academy followed suit, nominating Shohreh as an Oscar contender for Best Supporting Actress against such Renée Zellweger and Holly Hunter. Aghdashloo can next be seen guest starring this season on Fox's award-winning television drama, "**24**," opposite award winning actor, Kiefer Sutherland. She is also set to star in both the Screen Gems feature Exorcism of Emily Rose, opposite Laura Linney and Tom Wilkinson as well as the motion picture adaptation of the best selling book, Reading Lolita in Tehran.



PARVIZ SAYYAD – Voice of Amoo Norooz

Born in Lahijan in 1939, Parviz Sayyad is considered one of Iran's top talents. A young Parviz cultivated his passion for acting by joining the theatre. From there, when the National Television of Iran was formed in 1960, Sayyad started producing tele-theater shows. Becoming one of the main leaders of Iranian Television, Sayyad along with Apick Youssefian, who later with her daughter Mary Apick played in many of Sayyad's films, created Amir Arsalan.

Following the success of Amir Arsalan, Sayyad joined Parviz Kardan in another popular TV series called Sarkar Ostovar, where the infamous Samad was born. Innocent, funny, street-smart and the village idiot, all rolled into one, the Samad was a character that audiences fell in love with overnight. This popularity paved the way for Sayyad's directorial debut in Samad and the Flying Carpet. Sayyad continued his work in television and was part of other Iranian classics such as Octopus, and Daie Jon Napoleon (My Uncle Napoleon) as the deceptive Assadallah Mirza. With Samad becoming a household name, Sayyad was able to produce more than seven Samad films. Over the next eight years, the adventures of Samad were produced in a series of funny and memorable movies, which included Samad goes to School, and Samad becomes an Artist.

Sayyad's next film The Mission (1983) gained entry into The Berlin Film Festival, The London Film Festival, and won The Jury Grand Prize at Locarno. Today, Parviz Sayyad remains one of the top figures of the Iranian film and theatre industry. His own theatre group called the Traveling Theatrical Troupe serves Iranian audiences around the world with fresh and poignant productions. He has also written a book, and continues to attend lectures and events to entertain his fans. In addition, he produced and stars in his own TV Show broadcast every Sunday on Iranian Satellite TV to millions of people worldwide. Parviz Sayyad's talent in creating topics that speak to the audience through humor, controversy, drama, and raw emotion remains appreciated by people around the world. With Babak and Friends – A First Norooz, Sayyad makes a great come back as the voice of Amoo Norooz. Millions of fans around the world will welcome him back into their home this Norooz.

Babak and Friends – A First Norooz

Haji Firooz ushers in the New Year as Amoo sulks about the state of affairs.



Babak explains to his friend that he doesn't celebrate any holidays.



Babak's mother, Layla, tells him about his cousins who are coming to visit from Iran.



Babak's dad, Farzin, hears some exciting news right before Norooz.



Sousanne shows Babak how to celebrate on Chahar Shanbeh Soori.



The entire cast of characters: Farzin, Layla, Babak, Amoo Norooz, Haji Firooz, Mansour, Saman, Sousanne and Layla.

