

Comedies Continue to Dominate Iran Box Office



TEHRAN -- The Iranian box office saw a lively shake-up last week as theaters became the stage for a head-to-head showdown between a controversial comedy and a surprisingly strong animated feature.

Meanwhile, veteran actor-director Mehran Ahmadi made a powerful return with his new comedy Mr. Leech, pulling in 5 billion tomans (approx. \$90,000) in just three days.

Leading the charts, Hafez Alimardani's Crooked Cocoon took the top spot with 1.6 billion tomans in weekly sales — despite limited screenings following reported bans in several cities. The film's combination of social satire and controversy seems to have fueled audience curiosity rather than dampened it.

But the real surprise came from the animated feature “Yooz”, which clawed its way to 6.2 billion tomans during the same week, boosted by school group screenings and family attendance during the fall season. The Iranian animation market, typically overshadowed by live-action comedies, is showing signs of resilience thanks to the film's wide appeal.

Coming in third, Ahmadi's Mr. Leech marks his first directing effort since Sag Band (2022), one of Iran's all-time top five grossers. Mr. Leech's strong opening suggests that audience appetite for locally made comedies remains robust, even as ticket sales for more serious dramas cool off.

Falling behind after a strong start, Karim Amini's Constantinople, starring Pezhman Jamshidi, continued its downward trend, dropping from 10 billion tomans in its opening week to just 4.5 billion in week five. Though the film's decline can't be fully attributed to the off-screen controversies surrounding its lead, industry insiders say the headlines haven't helped.

At No. 5, Siavash Asadi's social drama In the Form of Love added 2.7 billion tomans, a respectable figure for the genre, which has seen waning interest in recent months.

Meanwhile, the comedy The Man With Glasses, still holding strong months after release, grossed 2.5 billion tomans, landing in sixth place.

Further down the chart, social drama Bache Mardom and war-themed Majnoon both earned about 1.9 billion tomans, while art-house favorite Highway Deer, directed by Abolfazl Saffari, rounded out the top ten with 1.1 billion tomans.

The latest numbers highlight a clear trend: Iranian audiences continue to favor comedies and accessible family entertainment over heavier dramatic fare. With Mr. Leech off to a strong start and Yooz proving the commercial viability of animation, the coming weeks may see the local box office tilt further toward lighthearted escapism — laughter, it seems, remains Iran's most bankable genre.

5,000-Year-Old Konar Sandal's Bronze Age Secrets Await Discovery



TEHRAN -- Nestled in the fertile plains of southeastern Iran, along the banks of the Halil Rud, lies Konar Sandal, one of the most significant Bronze Age archaeological sites in the country.

Often described as the heart of the ancient Jiroft civilization, this sprawling urban settlement offers a rare glimpse into the early development of cities on the Iranian Plateau.

Excavations at Konar Sandal began in 2001, revealing monumental architecture, intricately carved chlorite vessels, and an array of clay seals and artifacts that testify to a sophisticated society with organized trade, craft specialization, and administrative systems.

The site's earliest layers date to the early third millennium BCE, with evidence suggesting continuous occupation and urban development over several centuries.

The artifacts uncovered paint a picture of a thriving, artistically rich culture. Chlorite objects, many now housed in museums in Jiroft, Kerman, and Tehran, demonstrate a mastery of stone carving, while evidence of copper smelting, metallurgy, and ceramics reflects a technologically advanced society.

Konar Sandal's architectural re-

mains—including large structures and complex urban layouts—point to an organized, hierarchical city with clear economic and social structures.

Konar Sandal is part of a broader Halil Rud cultural landscape, home to thousands of archaeological mounds that trace the arc of human occupation from prehistory through the Islamic period. Each layer of soil holds clues to the daily lives, beliefs, and innovations of the people who lived here thousands of years ago.

After a 17-year hiatus, excavations at Konar Sandal briefly resumed in 2023 under the direction of Dr. Mansour Seyyed Sajjadi, revealing new sections of monumental architecture and a trove of seal impressions that illuminate the city's administrative and economic networks. Researchers were poised to continue piecing together the puzzle of one of Iran's earliest cities—until progress was abruptly halted.

Due to a lack of funding, the site's excavation has once again been suspended, leaving Konar Sandal frozen in time. Its ancient streets, workshops, and marketplaces await further exploration, but for now, the story of this 5,000-year-old city remains incomplete.

UNESCO Adds Bayazid Bastami, Allameh Tabatabaei to Honor List

TEHRAN – UNESCO has added two influential Iranian scholars — mystic Bayazid Bastami and philosopher Allameh Tabatabaei — to its official list of anniversaries to be celebrated worldwide during 2026–2027, the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO announced on Sunday.

The decision was approved during the 43rd session of UNESCO's General Conference in Samarkand. Bastami, known as one of the earliest masters of Islamic mysticism, will be commemorated on the 1,150th anniversary of his passing, with support from Armenia, Tajikistan, and Turkey.

The centenary of Allameh Tabatabaei's scholarly life, recognized for his major philosophical work Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism, will be marked with the backing of Azerbaijan, Iraq, and Pakistan.

According to the Iranian National Commission, cultural and academic events will be held in Iran and abroad to honor both figures, highlighting their roles in shaping global thought



on spirituality, philosophy, and intercultural dialogue.

Bastami (born circa 803 CE in Bastam, Semnan Province) is regarded as one of the founders of Persian Sufism. His teachings emphasized love, knowledge, and harmony with nature — values that UNESCO said align with its principles of lifelong learning and peace.

Allameh Tabatabaei (1903–1981) is known for bridging Islamic and Western philosophy and for his influential interpretation of the Qur'an, Tafsir al-Mizan. His collaborations with French philosopher Henry Corbin helped introduce Islamic philosophy to Western academic circles.

UNESCO's 2026–2027 list also includes joint nominations supported by

Iran and its neighbors, including Rabe'a Balkhi (Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Iran), Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (Iraq, supported by Iran, Japan, and others), and Baki, a 16th-century Turkish poet (supported by North Macedonia and Iran).

The choice reflects a deep continuity in Iran's intellectual tradition — one that has, for centuries, moved between mysticism and philosophy, revelation and reason. Bastami's ecstatic spirituality, centered on self-annihilation in divine love, shaped Persian Sufism and influenced poets like Attar, Rumi, and Hafez. His emphasis on compassion, lifelong learning, and harmony with nature feels startlingly modern, resonating with UNESCO's own principles of peace and sustainable development.

By contrast, Allameh Tabatabaei's thought represents a quieter, rigorous pursuit: the integration of faith and logic in a rapidly modernizing world. Living in 20th-century Qom, he refused the easy dichotomy between Islam and modern philosophy.

Balochi Carpets: Geometry Woven in Tradition

TEHRAN -- Emerging from the arid expanses of Sistan and Baluchestan, the Balochi carpet is a living archive of culture, history, and identity.

Its bold geometric motifs, grounded in warm, earthy hues, offer a visual narrative of a people intimately connected to their land, their traditions, and the rhythms of daily life. Durable and exquisitely crafted, these hand-woven pieces occupy a revered place among collectors and connoisseurs of Persian carpets.

Balochi carpets are at once functional and symbolic, embodying centuries of artisanal expertise. Each knot, each weave, is a testament to the creativity and resilience of the region's inhabitants.

Traditionally crafted from sheep or goat wool—and occasionally camel hair—these carpets combine strength with intricate precision, their small- and medium-scale patterns reflecting



the textures of village life, the undulating deserts, and the spiritual world of the Baloch people.

Their warm palette—reds, deep browns, muted blues, and soft neutrals—is derived historically from natural dyes, often sourced locally. Every color carries meaning; every repeated motif tells a story. Hexagons, diamonds, and stylized botanical, animal, and human forms create a visual language that bridges the practical and the symbolic, mapping a cultural landscape into geometric form.

Despite the pressures of industrialization and the rising costs of materials, Balochi carpets continue to endure as repositories of collective memory. Contemporary artists and designers are increasingly drawing on these motifs, translating them into modern interiors, fashion, and even graphic design—ensuring that the heritage of Baloch weaving remains relevant to new audiences while maintaining its authenticity.

As Hojat Nourzaei, a visual arts scholar and carpet designer, notes, the

beauty of the Balochi carpet lies in its precise craftsmanship and the richness of its motifs. The carpets' dark outlines, bold geometric forms, and complementary borders evoke both a sense of structure and poetic fluidity. They embody the lived experiences of a community spanning Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, where cross-cultural influences enrich the vocabulary of the weave.

Education, exhibitions, and the promotion of cultural heritage are crucial to safeguarding the Balochi carpet against the tide of industrialization. Each thread, each pattern, is a fragment of history, a vessel of identity, and a testament to the enduring beauty of artisanal labor.

To engage with a Balochi carpet is to step into the vibrant, resilient world of Sistan and Baluchestan—a landscape where tradition and creativity converge in striking geometry and saturated, enduring color.

Iranshahr on Canvas: Illustration Week 2025 Opens in Tehran

TEHRAN -- The sixth edition of Illustration Week in Iran opened at the House of Artists, with this year's theme, “Artists' Narratives of the Iranian Land,” placing a spotlight on the everyday life, architecture, marketplaces, and social rituals that shape Iranian identity.

The opening ceremony also saw the presentation of the Neshan Aban awards to this year's standout illustrators.

This edition offered a comprehensive survey of contemporary illustration practices, from hand-drawn and digital works on paper and canvas to three-dimensional formats. In the newly introduced Neo-Media section, audiences encountered experimental forms, including NFTs, concept art, comics, and commercial illustrations, reflecting the evolving landscape of visual storytelling in Iran.

The Neshan Aban, Iran's most prestigious illustration award, recognized four figures this year: Bahman Dadkhah (Grand Master), Atiyeh Markazi (Familiar Name), Farideh Shahbazi (Peer Illustrator), and Nooshin Sadeghian (Emerging Illustrator). Sadeghian also received the Bratislava Grand Illustration Award 2025.

During the ceremony, Kianoush Gharibpour, the award's secretary, traced the evolution of Illustration Week from its inception to the present.

The exhibition, titled “Iranshahr,” runs from October 31-November 11 across the House of Artists' galleries, daily from 1 PM to 8 PM (closed Saturdays). Complementary programming includes panel discussions, artist talks, and critical re-

views, offering deeper engagement with the practices on display.

Organized by the Iranian Association of Illustrators, this year's edition underscores the ongoing vitality and international relevance of Iranian illustration while highlighting artists' intimate dialogues with their homeland.



Picture of the Day



Harvesting of barberries has begun in Afshar village, South Khorasan's “barberry capital” and home to the world's largest barberry orchards, attracting tourists each autumn.

Photo by IRNA