

HOPE LIES AT 24 FRAMES PER SECOND

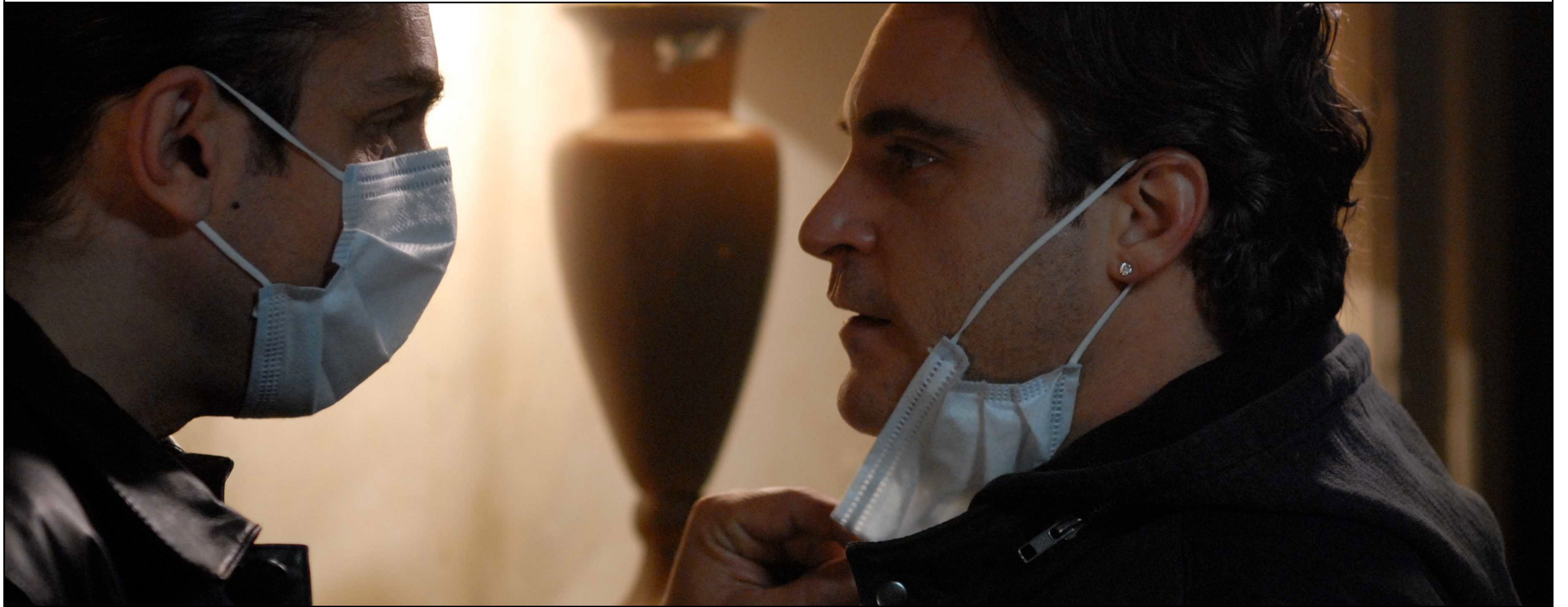
Once Upon A Time In Anatolia



A Hope Lies Monograph

INTRODUCING

The Hope Lies Monograph

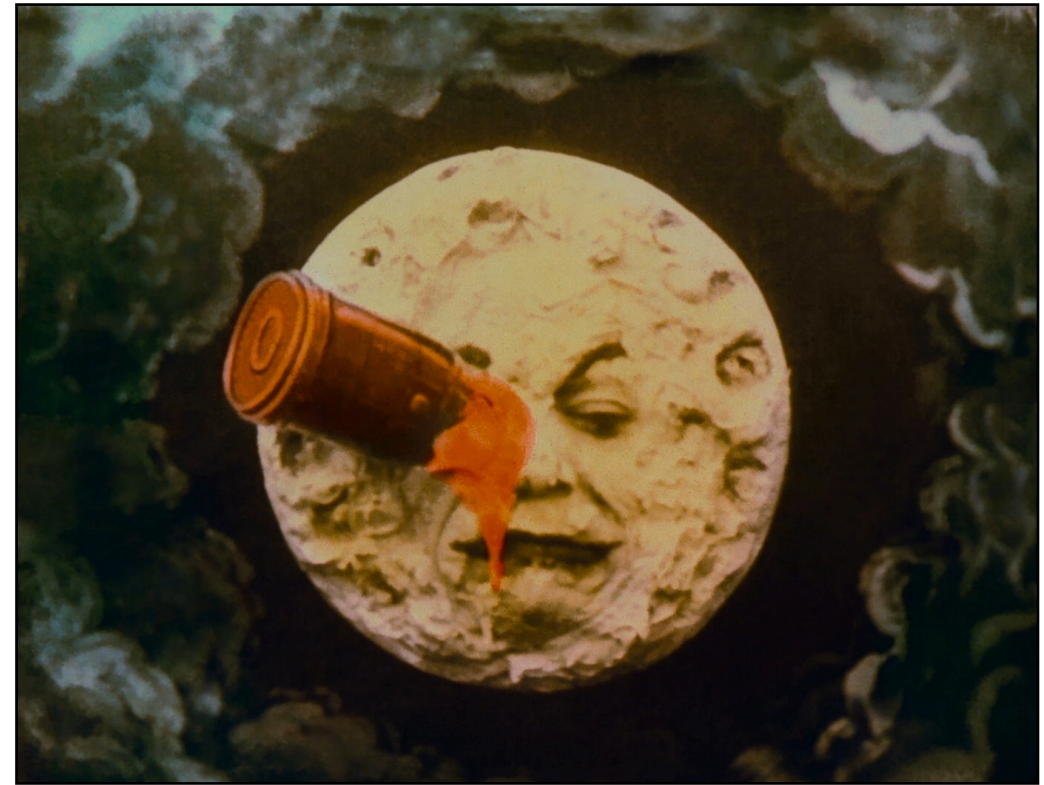


Welcome to the very first Hope Lies Monograph. Hope Lies at 24 Frames Per Second is an independently run film website based in the UK. Over the course of the last two years Hope Lies has built itself up from simple blog to being one of the most respected film websites in the UK (and, we're told, the 16th most influential in Europe...).

Cinema fascinates us. Every facet, from the latest Aki Kaurismäki feature to the most over the top blockbuster that Hollywood has to offer, gives us something to mull over, debate or be passionate about. Our long held tagline on the website has been *"From A Bout de Souffle to Zabriskie Point, Hope Lies at 24 Frames Per Second attempts to cover every corner of the cinema spectrum"* and that stand remains as strong as ever: we have a passion for the cinema that knows no bounds, and we hope that these Monographs reflect that.

Technology also fascinates us, which is why we've decided to experiment a little with this Monograph that you hold in your hands. We are utterly convinced that the future of reading delivery is digital: it's convenient, it's good for the environment and ultimately it provides a very satisfying reader experience. We say this as fans of what publications like Film Comment, Cinema Scope and Empire Magazine have been doing with their digital alternatives to their traditional publications, and if we can replicate/mimic one iota of the great work being done by those institutions then we'll be happy. As with any experiment there will no doubt be issues at first, but we thank you in advance for helping us to resolve any that may crop up.

Our aim with the website has always been to remain as influence-free as possible, so we're looking to instill similar innovative methods of delivery here too: we want to keep this free, but we don't want to be overly reliant on advertising (We appreciate just as much as anyone how mass advertising can ruin a clean user experience). Feel free to get in touch if you would like to be involved with that aspect of the Monographs.



This Monograph is designed to be read in landscape orientation. That's when it looks its best. If you'd like to read it sans film stills and whatnot then simply turn it to portrait scale.

Each Monograph, as the title suggests, takes a look at one film. There's no defining reason for why a film might be subjected to coverage, but it's probably a given that a timely theatrical release will lead to featuring. With that in mind we do have a mammoth special edition in the works in which we'll be taking a look at the complete oeuvre of a specific filmmaker to mark an anniversary, but more on that later.

In closing, we would like to thank you for downloading and giving this inaugural monograph a shot. Any feedback will be really appreciated.

* Please note, this is a modified version of our first Monograph, extended in form to suit the iTunes medium.



MONOGRAPH

Once Upon A Time In Anatolia Review



As Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Once Upon A Time In Anatolia* slowly flickers into focus, both visually and audibly, the world of the steppe too springs in to life. A sea of muffle and blur greets the viewer, as disorientating as it is immediately compulsive a situation to be bearing witness to. Three men drink and eat. One leaves the scenario. We cut to black and a series of simple, slowly paced credits. When the screen next bursts in to life we are greeted by the aftermath of the events that followed the moments just witnessed. Lit by a combination of car headlamps, electrical lightning and candles we see a manhunt take place, albeit for a body that has already passed. The crime has already been committed and solved in the time that it took for the credits to unfold. And moreover, all of this has taken place off-screen and out of sight of the audience.

Once Upon A Time In Anatolia (Ceylan, 2011)

Noteworthy

1. Once Upon A Time In Anatolia won the Grand Prix at the 2011 Film Festival.
2. The film was Turkey's official submission to the Best Foreign Language Film category of the 84th Academy Awards.
3. It didn't receive a nomination.
4. Ceylan's earlier film Uzak comes up for discussion in Geoff Dyer's recent Zona, his book on Tarkovsky's Stalker.



Firat Tanis as Kenan, the suspect at the heart of Once Upon A Time In Anatolia.

In the same way that the figures on screen are attending to a situation passed so to is the viewer, albeit from one even further temporally removed from the vantage point of the films protagonists. This very particular method of introduction to the film is not just an appropriate introduction to the plot of Ceylan's feature, but also serves as an

ideal explanation as to how he will be portraying the unfolding situation. Even by the closing moments of the film we still only have the vaguest idea of the crime that's been committed. We know very little about the protagonists too. Nothing is explicitly stated, nor does anyone occupy the roles that we might expect of them given

their job titles (Ceylan's is a world in which occupation takes precedence over forename). Muhammet Uzuner's Doctor, the closest thing that the film has to a central protagonist has past filled with mysterious, what we do know of which is half-pieced together via office wall-adorning still photographs, anecdotes and gossip. Ceylan relies heavily upon viewer intuition to place together the pieces themselves, leading to a number of interpretative standings by the time the final reel has come to an end.

The film's title is as much a statement as a premise. Grand and ambitious, beautiful and bold, this is world stage filmmaking. Epic in scope, yet slight in its own immediate curiosity, *Once Upon A Time In Anatolia* places the magnificent, yet utilises the urgent with which to present its findings. The mundane counters the serious, with the faithful journey audibly punctuated by discourse on the difference between cheese and yoghurt, and the importance of prostate examination. Popular culture also makes an unlikely appearance, with a "moment" shattering appearance of Francis Lai's Theme From Love Story in the form of one of the groups mobile phone ringtones. A good humour runs through the work, in a manner not dissimilar to the streams that run through the Anatolian steppe. This humour and character driven incidentation is countered by the aggressive nature of the steppe itself. A vast, unforgiving landscape, it's the very nature of the place that gives *Once Upon A Time In Anatolia* its chief characteristic.

The beautiful digital photography is perhaps the single greatest element of Ceylan's film. Shot by the director's regular DoP, Gökhan Tiryaki, the wide-open matte recalls CinemaScope in the manner in which it affords the breadth and scale of the steppe the necessary room for exhibition. It's the closest yet that digital cinematography

has come to replicating the very particular look of 'Scope. Stark vistas are cut alongside heavy close-ups, each one outlining the worn marks of the faces at work. Weathered faces tell as much of the story as the dialogue itself, as does the atmosphere of the locale.

Potential dramatic development is buried. As one character reveals "I killed him" it is brushed aside by the man who has decided to accept responsibility for the crime, slighted over by the figure of authority present and never mentioned again. Had this been a traditional mainstream dramatic work then no doubt this second act revelation would have formed the beginning of the redemptive arc for the falsely accused, but instead we never hear of this again. Part of this comes back to the idea that Ceylan's film is concerned with the players around the situation, and not those inside of said situation.

A lengthy post-script plays out by way of the recording of an official report. Reciting and in turn reinforcing the events that have recently played out, in minute detail, Ceylan and his figures ultimately fold in on themselves and the tale at hand. The film ends with a man quite literally being stripped apart, opened up and examined; yet the audience is not literally privy to it, in spite of spending over 30 minutes in the same room as the figure. The final shot brings with it the film's first shot of blood (echoing Paul Thomas Anderson's *There Will Be Blood*), and as the credits play out to the sound of an autopsy we are left in a state of confusion, admiration and cinematic enlightenment.

MONOGRAPH

The Kid With A Bike Review



Is it a simple coincidence that the Dardenne brothers latest work begins where Francois Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* closes? The film opens with the sight of a boy running. He's running in an attempt to find his bicycle, a symbol for his relationship with his father. The Dardenne's transplant "life's big problems" and encapsulate them on to an everyday object.

The Kid With A Bike (Dardenne, 2011)

Noteworthy

1. The Kid With A Bike won the Grand Prix at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival, an award it shared with Nuri Bilge Ceylan's Once Upon A Time In Anatolia.
2. The film received a nomination for Best Foreign Language Film at the Golden Globes, and was nominated for the equivalent award at the Independent Spirit Awards.
3. Thomas Doret makes his first appearance in front of the camera with The Kid With A Bike.



Thomas Doret turns in a remarkable debut in The Kid With A Bike.

At the centre of The Kid With A Bike stands a wholly compelling performance from first time actor Thomas Doret. The complex turn shifts gears several times throughout the film, with the opening acts detective story giving way to a more complex story of acceptance in the second act and a redemption arc in the third. Plighted by

violent acts of self and secondary harm, Cyril's is a heartbreaking journey. As he wanders looking for his family in the first act one cannot help but be immediately drawn in to his plight. Analogies to "lost puppies" might be a little disingenuous, but there are certainly comparisons to be made. The lost puppy becomes an obedient pooch

when Cyril finally does catch up with his father, with the boy following behind his dad with the pitch-perfect intonation of a naïve puppy, in turn reminding the audience of this very young boy's true position in life: while he might have been acting like a grown-up for much of the early portion of the film he most certainly is not. When he realises his ambition in these brief moments the unremarkable becomes nirvana. The simple act of stirring a bowl of sauce becomes the apex of his situation. Cyril is almost constantly dressed in a red shirt, which, when placed against the landscape looks amazing. Remarkably the precocious figure being portrayed never comes across as such through the performer. This isn't a Hollywood stage kid up on the big screen, there's a legitimacy within it. Cyril joins the ranks of Antoine Doinel, *L'enfance nue*'s Michel and Benoit from *Mon Oncle Antoine* as one of the great troubled children of the cinema.

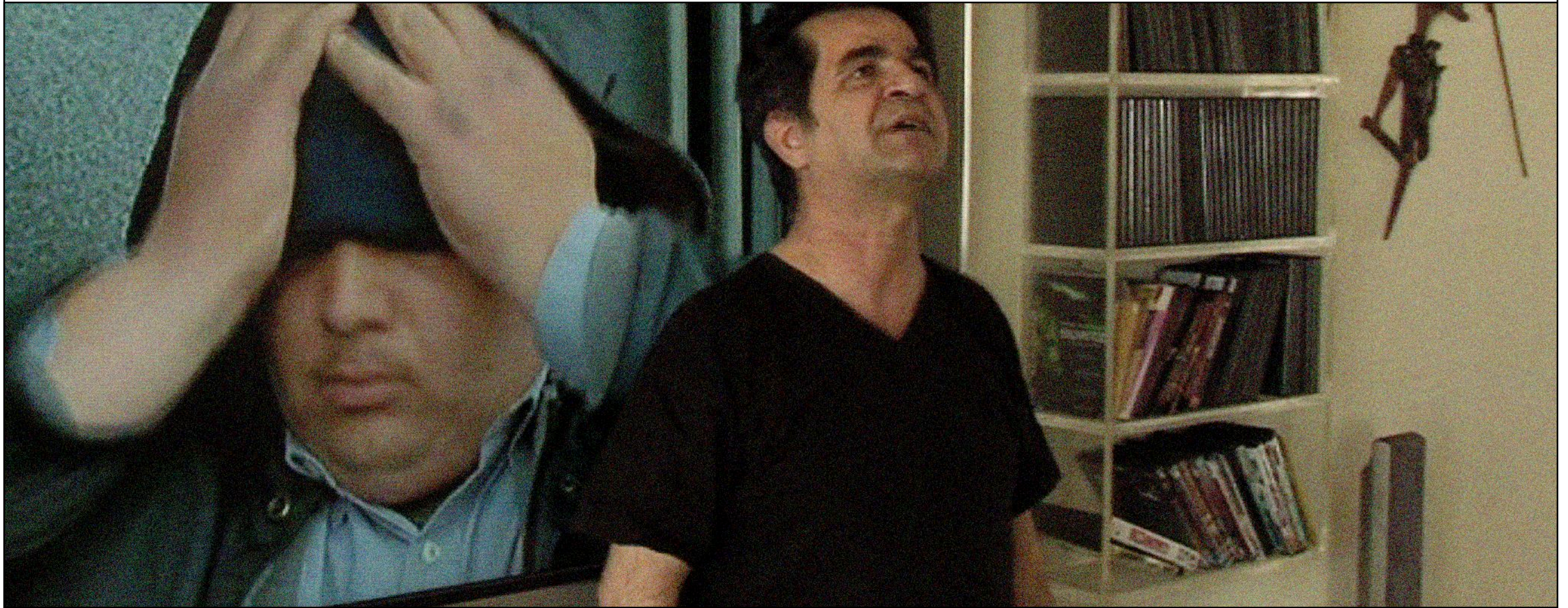
There is a reality on display in *The Kid With A Bike*, but it isn't one that ever falls in to the melodramatic, nor does it ever feel overtly sentimental. There's almost a fairytale element to the film thanks to the symbolism and costuming that is further reinforced by the location: a forest straddles the urban space that forms the film's general location. One could almost theorise that this is the Dardenne's Red Riding Hood, with Cyril the eponymous character, albeit gender flipped, the dealer the big bad wolf taking advantage of the lost soul and Cécile de France the burly woodcutter, again via gender reassignment, who steps in and saves our hero at the last minute. There's even a "Happy Ever After" style final segment, albeit one with an almost unbearable sense of dread underlining it.

It is Cécile de France's Samantha that is the great mystery at the heart of *The Kid With A Bike*. While the detective story of the film focuses upon Cyril's past, it is Samantha's that passes through the 87 minute running time with a genuine air of mystery left at the end. We know very little about her. Why does she care for a child that she barely knows? Why does she seemingly feel a responsibility to the boy? What is it that is in her past that pushes her to do this? On a similar note we find out absolutely nothing about Cyril's mother. De France is on fine form, although even her assured performance pales next to that of Thomas Doret's, which is made all the more remarkable when one notes that the actor was just thirteen years old at the time of production and a debutante performer.

From a stylistic perspective the film is a great success. Regular Dardenne cinematographer Alain Marcoen shoots with a graceful eye that never overwhelms the scenario and allows it room to speak for itself. We've mentioned the almost iconic nature of Cyril's costume design above, and it's perfectly complemented by the visual staging of the film: the tiny figure clad in red against the wider world makes for the perfect representation of the film's core themes. He's instantly recognisable in every frame of the film. Occasional bursts of classical music ala Bresson punctuate the narrative. Each "burst" lasts little more than 10 seconds, yet serves as a point in which to guide the audience in a specific way (the use of music at all is a major consideration for the Dardenne's).

MONOGRAPH

This Is Not A Film Review

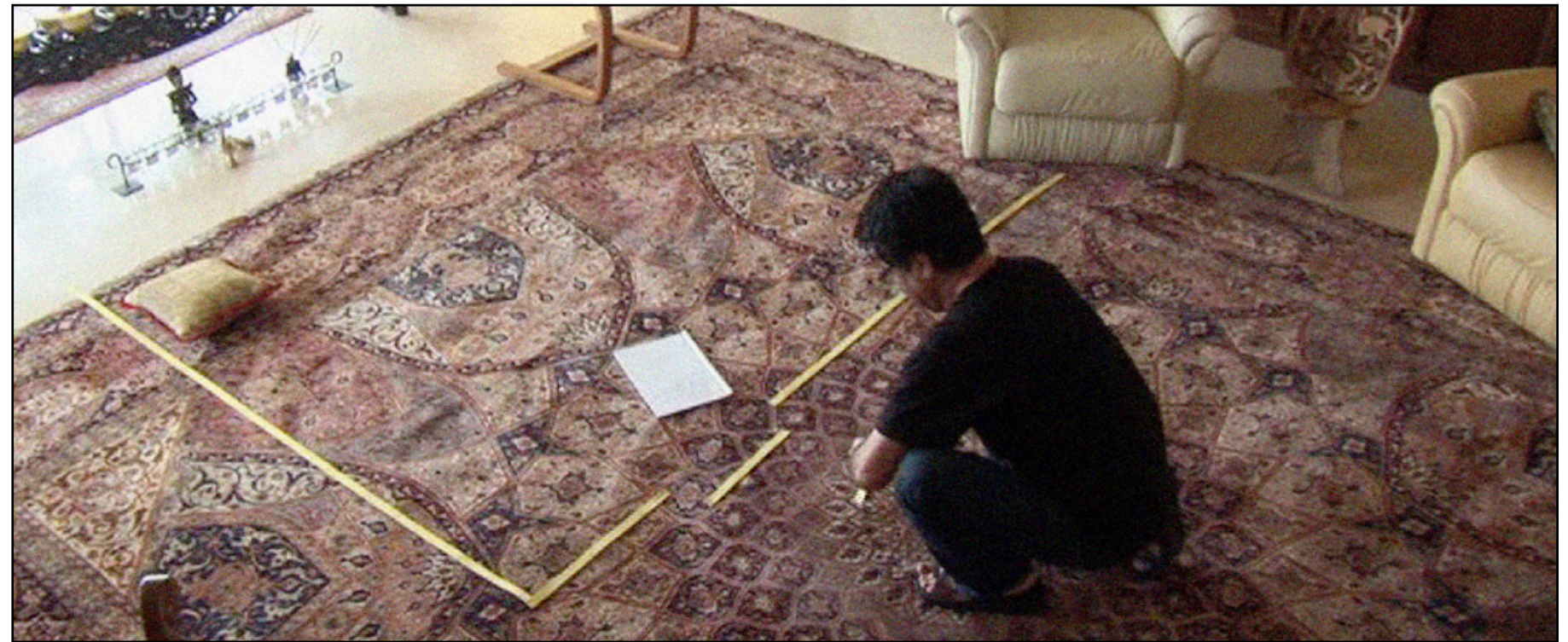


In July 2009 the Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi was arrested and later convicted of “assembly and colluding with the intention to commit crimes against the country’s national security and propaganda against the Islamic Republic”. As punishment he was jailed for 6 years and banned from making films for 20.

This Is Not A Film (Panahi, 2011)

Noteworthy

1. This Is Not A Film was made over a ten day period in Panahi's home. The director is currently under house arrest.
2. The finished film is said to have been smuggled out of Iran on a USB stick hidden inside of a cake.
3. Following a special screening at the Cannes Film Festival Panahi was awarded the Carrosse d'Or.
4. As it didn't play in Iranian cinemas (for obvious reasons) This Is Not A Film was not eligible for the Academy Awards.
5. Co-director Mojtaba Mirtahmasb has since been arrested following his involvement in the production of This Is Not A Film. Mirtahmasb was taken in to custody alongside five other filmmakers for reasons unconfirmed.



Panahi sets out his stall, making a film set of his living room

In response to this, and alongside fellow filmmaker Mojtaba Mirtahmasb, Panahi set about making a piece of anti-film, a work that would explore his situation and his position within the current cinematic landscape. The resulting work, *This Is Not A Film*, is a genuine feat of cinema, and one which forces the viewer to confront their

own notions of what cinema is, and the importance of art within the political landscape.

The manner in which he presents Panahi presents his plight borders on the fairytale. The tragedy of the artist locked away from the world has obvious echoes of any number of tales Grimm, as does the film that Panahi was working on at the

time he was served with his conviction (There is no irony lost in the fact that the film that he was working on that provoked the ire of the Iranian government was set in one location, sections of which Panahi himself acts out here, and the similarities between his own makeshift “film set” and a crime scene – see below), and the outside world is portrayed in an interesting fashion: Set to a backdrop of an Iran under (re)construction and on the verge of a New Year (symbolic implications of the latter obviously great) fireworks fill the air, recalling the more negative connotations of sporadic “bangs” and loud noises. The Japanese Tsunami unravels on his television set while the general atmosphere of the outside world from his vantage point on the seventh story of an apartment block is positively apocalyptic (leading one to rather perversely toy with the idea of whether or not Panahi is better off inside!).

Alas, and unlike the stories that may be brought to mind by *This Is Not A Film* the reality of the situation is clear as day: Panahi is the victim of a corrupt political ruse (the accusations of collusion and propaganda made against him don’t hold up from a legal perspective, as is explained by Panahi’s lawyer in the “film” itself). That the world we live in so politically befuddling at this exact moment in time makes *This Is Not A Film* appropriate viewing, even if the shameful, logic devoid situation faced by Panahi and co. means that personal political woes quite clearly pale in comparison.

The role of the filmmaker is the great puzzle at the heart of *This Is Not A Film*. Panahi and Mojtaba Mirtahmasb muse over the question of who it is that is ultimately the director of a film. The role of the director is mulled over, while the two at separate points declare both the actor, and location to be the true auteur. What is made quite clear throughout the film, on a superficial level at least, is that Panahi is not the director, quite simply because he is not al-

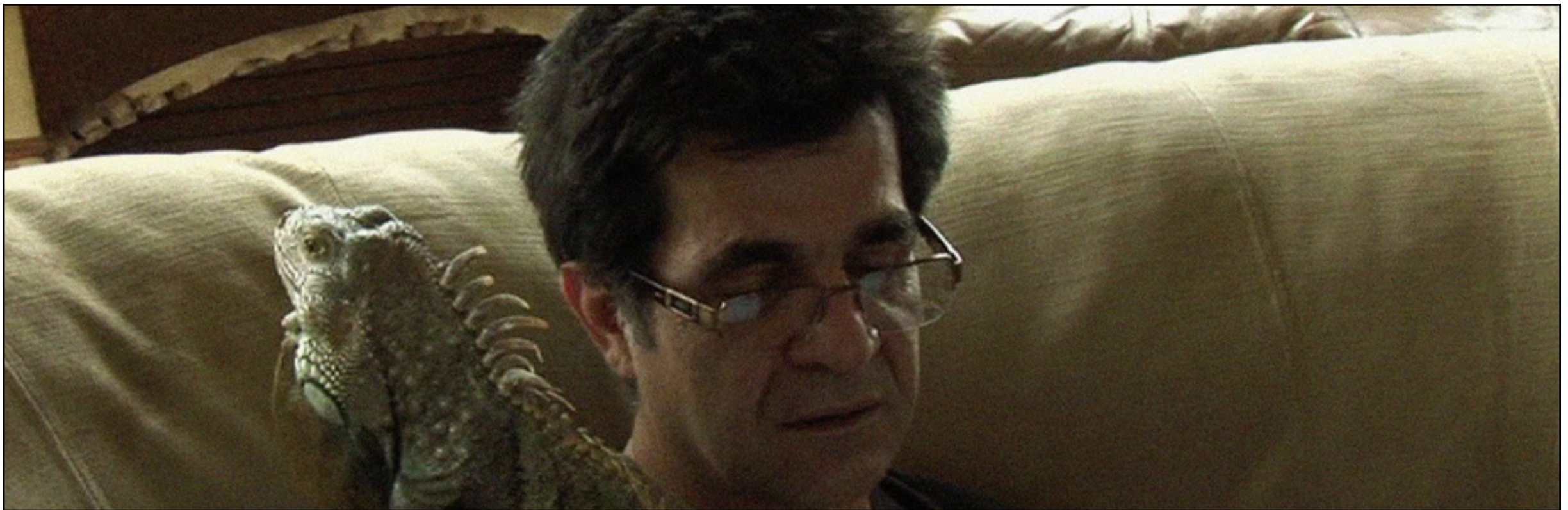
lowed to be. In an attempt to knowingly skirt the issues facing those involved with the film’s production *This Is Not A Film* is quite simply described as “an effort by...” in the “film’s” closing credits. But here’s the thing: this is very much a construction in the same way that any film is. Presented as a “day in the life of...” yet actually shot over ten days, *This Is Not A Film* is as much of a constructed work as any of the director’s previous works. There’s even a manufactured narrative present (on the “day” in question Panahi’s wife and family are out, leaving the filmmaker in an especially isolated position).

A segment of Panahi’s “film” revolves around the director quite literally exploring his own oeuvre via a DVD remote control and a copy of his Golden Leopard winning film *The Mirror*. As Mina Mohammad Khani declares “Stop the bus I’m not acting anymore” halfway through that picture, breaking down the fourth wall and stepping out of the picture completely, one might assume that Panahi has found the answer to his question of the ultimate authority on a project: The actor. This would certainly ring true with *This Is Not A Film*, as Panahi is “relegated” to a figure of performance as opposed to one of behind the scenes manipulation, and a man whose natural instinct to call “cut” is met by custodial-sentence-citing objection from his companion. That same companion rather poetically decrees that the “film” that he and Panahi are shooting is to be a “behind the scenes of Iranian filmmakers not making films”.

Ultimately *This Is Not A Film* is a work about hope and imagination, with the former offsetting the woeful harshness of the situation. For every moment exemplified by strain (a moment in which Panahi dramatically declares that “It matters that the cameras stay

ON!" being the obvious example) there are hints at an underlying hopefulness. The film itself closes on such a sequence (although one would struggle to say the same about the film's final image), in that there is a certain charm in the sadness, as a man named Portiv, a student of film research-turned-temporary apartment block trash man makes an appearance. As Panahi interviews the man he clearly begins to get carried away, and gives in to the filmmaker inside of him. He can't resist, suggesting that, hyperbolically speaking, nothing can stop the filmmaker. Other "Characters" such as Micky the dog and Igi the iguana also make for other heartening diversions. In fact, Igi makes for a pretty profound metaphor for Panahi's situation as an artist in forced exile: in the same way that his daughter's pet iguana adapts to living in a house, clambering over furniture and climbing a bookcase instead of its natural habitat, Panahi too adapts to his surroundings and the stipulations held against him.

Accusations of audience complicity in this fresh "crime" from Panahi make for a sobering afterthought, and one that might very well see personal understandings and interpretations implode wide open. While the implications of Panahi's defiance remain to be seen, the power of his defiance remains out there to be seen and consumed by his audience. Miraculous, essential, urgent cinema.



MONOGRAPH

Credits

For Marge

Hope
Lies at 24 Frames Per Second

www.hopelies.com

Editor In Chief - Adam Batty (adam@hopelies.com)

Twitter - @adamhopelies

*All text is copyright Hope Lies At 24 Frames Per Second
Any images remain the property of their respective owners.*