

HOPE LIES AT 24 FRAMES PER SECOND

# This Is Not A Film

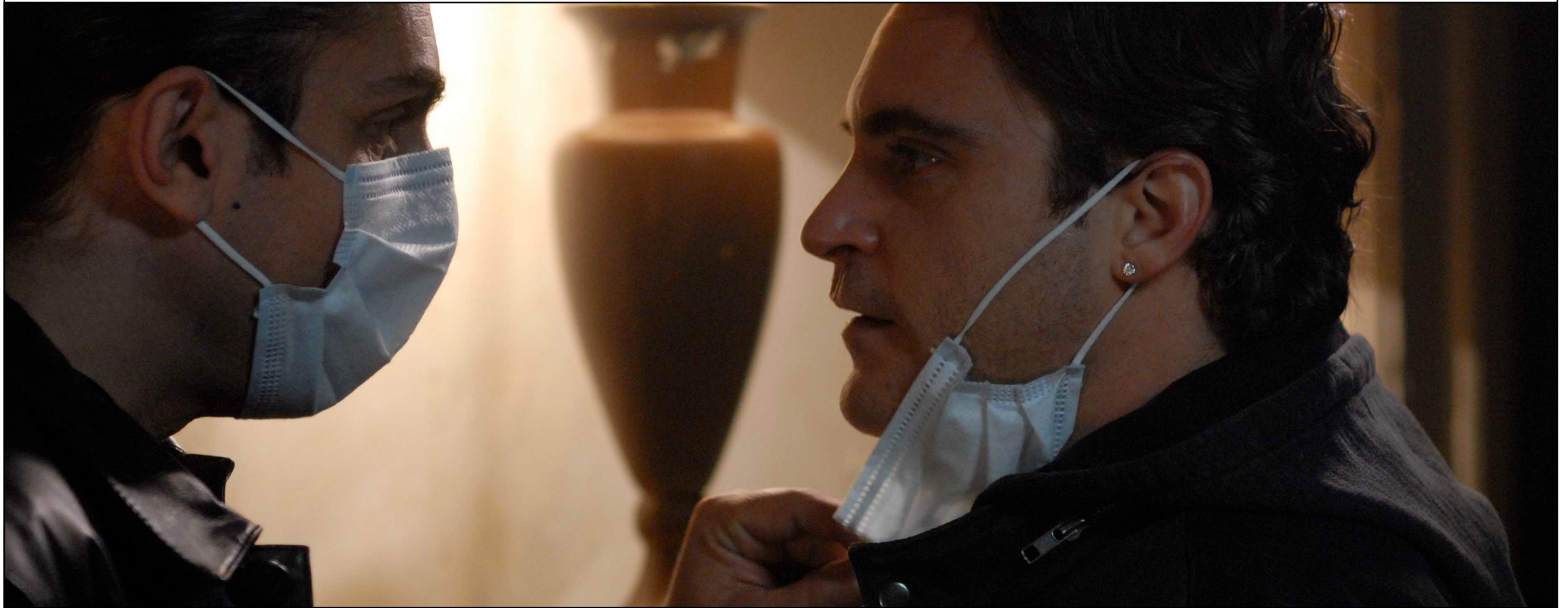


A Hope Lies Monograph



INTRODUCING

# The Hope Lies Monograph



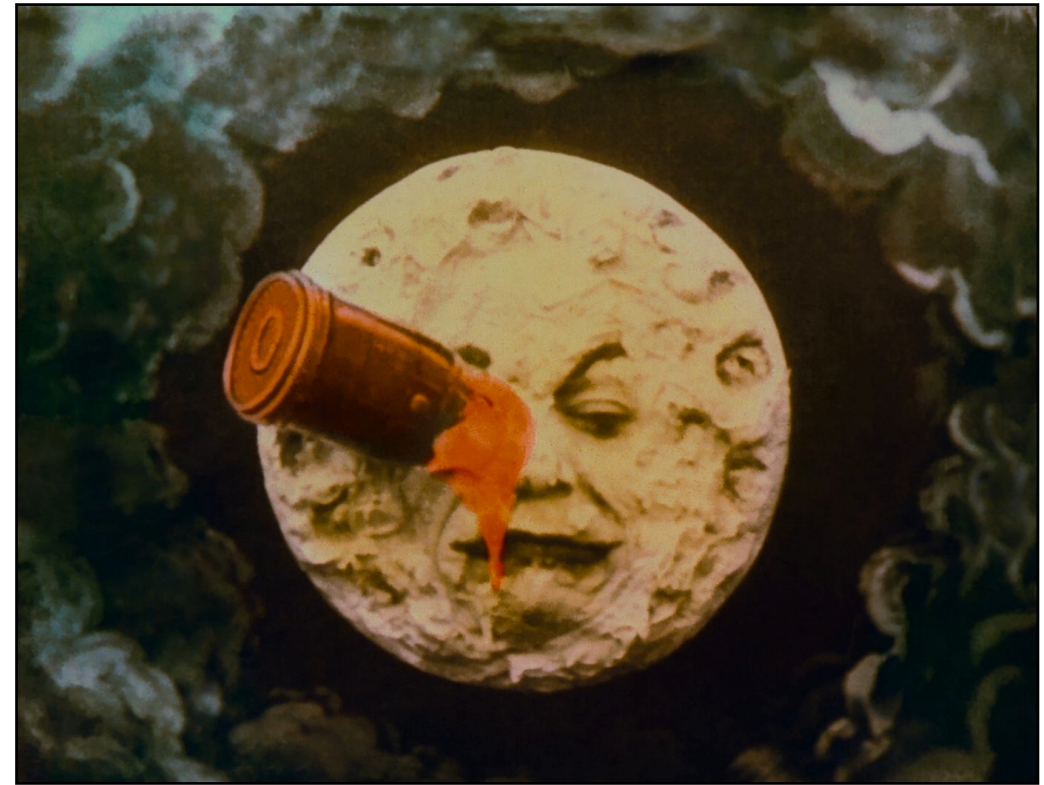
Welcome to the very first Hope Lies Monograph. Hope Lies at 24 Frames Per Second is an independently run film website based in the UK. Over the course of the last two years Hope Lies has built itself up from simple blog to being one of the most respected film websites in the UK (and, we're told, the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

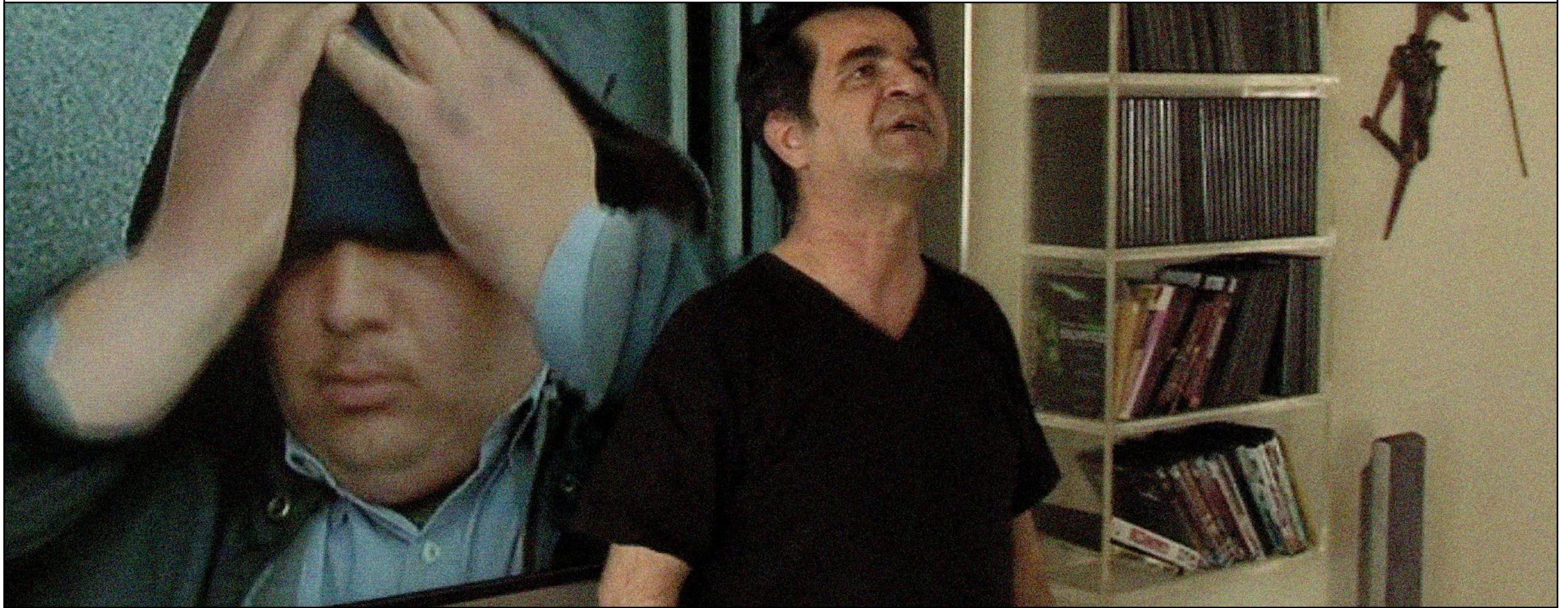
In closing, we would like to thank you for downloading and giving this inaugural monograph a shot. Any feedback will be really appreciated.





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 pervertedly 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 films 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).

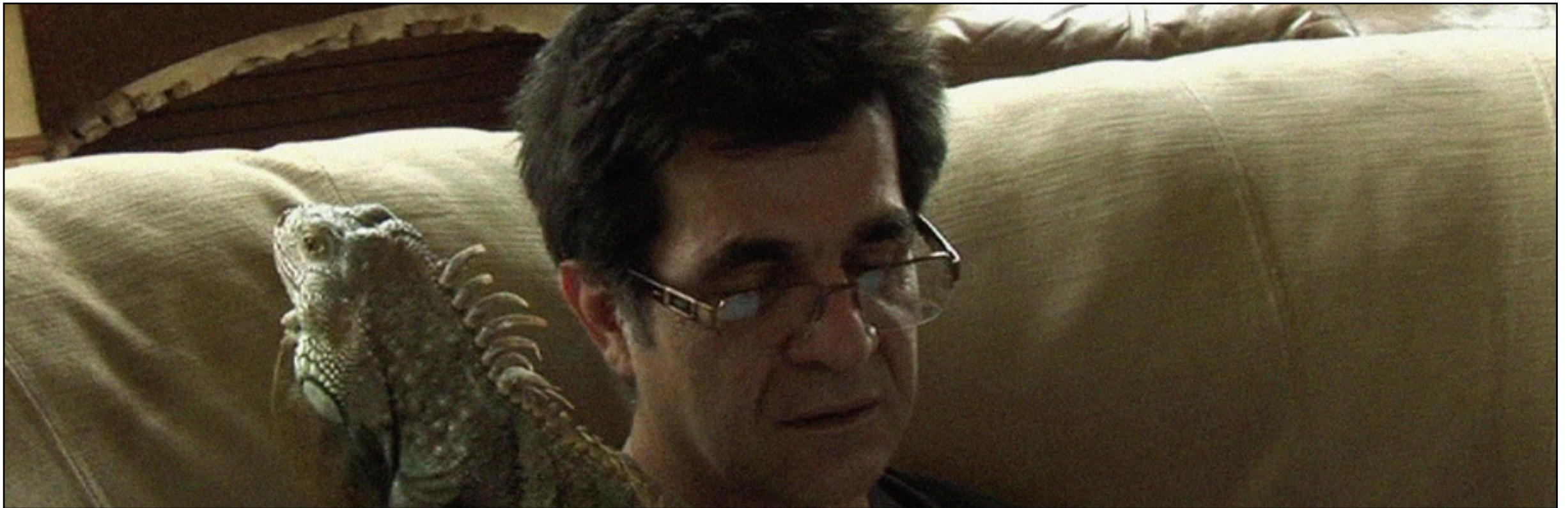
A segment of Panahi’s “film” revolves around the director quite literally exploring his own oeuvre via a DVD remote control and a copy of his Golden Leopard winning film *The Mirror*. As Mina Mohammad Khani declares “Stop the bus I’m not acting anymore” halfway through that picture, breaking down the 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.





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# Credits

Hope  
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