



RESTORED

The Runner (Dawandeh)

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Director: Amir Naderi

Production Company: Institute for the Intellectual

Development of Children and Young People

Executive Producer: Fathola Dalili

Technicians: Ali Asghar Mirzai, Mohammad Mafi,

Hassan Karimi, Michael Nedai, Johangir Azad,

Ahmed Anwar

Assistant Director: Mohammad Hassanzadeh

Screenplay: Amir Naderi, Behruz Gharibpur

Photography: Firouz Malekzadeh

Camera Operators: Bijan Arfanian, Ali Bageri

Editor: Bahram Beyzai

Production Designer: Gholam Reza Ramezani

Location Design: Amir Naderi,

Mohammad Hassanzadeh

Titles: Abdullah Alimurad, Ali Asgharzadeh,

Mohammad Reza Bakhtiari

Sound: Nezam-e-Din Kia'i

Sound Re-recording: Mohammad Haghighi

Sound Sync: Eraj Chahzadi

Cast:

Majid Niroumand (*Amiro*)

Musa Torkizadeh (*Musa*)

A. Gholamzadeh (*uncle Gholam*)

Reza Ramezani (*Ramezan*)

Shirzan Bechkal

Ali Pasdarzadeh

Mehrdad Kabiri

Heydar Nazari

Abed Ostowar

Mohammed Nawazi

Farshid Farshizadeh

Abbas Nazeri

Fred Heilander

Abbas Hashemian

Mohammad Ali Amini

Mohsen Shahmohamadi

Faghihpur

Ardechiri

Behruz Maghsudlu

Iran 1984

94 mins

Digital (restoration)

Restored in 2K from the original negative by Cineric.

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SIGHT AND SOUND

A young orphan lives on the shores of the Persian Gulf, a place of dazzling light and oil refineries. When he's not running chasing trains, the boy has learned to survive in a hostile society by collecting empty bottles at the harbour, shining shoes and selling iced water on the streets.

Amir Naderi's lyrical autobiographical portrait of childhood is a work of staggering power, reminiscent of De Sica's *Shoeshine* and Truffaut's *The 400 Blows*.

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A contemporary review

The Runner tells a story of destitution and determination remarkable by any standards, and doubly remarkable for being the autobiographical account of the maker's own childhood. Almost of equal interest to the story of Amiro's rise from garbage picker to shoe-shine boy might have been that from shoe-shine boy to filmmaker. *The Runner* partakes of the single-mindedness of its protagonist. The race is to the fleet of foot both literally and figuratively, and in a world in which everything has its price – Amiro must pay for the burnt-out light bulb he gets from Uncle Gholam, pay for the inner tube without which he cannot join the gang of bottlescavenging boys, and pay for ice he will sell again as cold water – Amiro learns, of necessity, to outrun both adversaries and friends.

The race, Amir Naderi suggests, is born of desperation but carries its own reward. It is in fact its sense of desperation that prevents *The Runner* becoming a hymn to individualistic enterprise. Amiro has no alternative. He watches a man drag his dying wife from the garbage dump after presumably a lifetime on the tip, and sees the mutilation that can result from working the shark-infested waters. Indulging not at all in neo-realism's tendency towards pathos, Naderi allows himself little in the way of poignancy either. We have to be alert to catch the significance of the purchase of the light bulb, Amiro's latest addition to a string of burnt-out bulbs festooning the derelict cabin in which he lives, an attempt to duplicate the illuminations strung round the harbourside cafe to which he is so magnetically drawn.

Amiro is also part 'wild child', part of an under-class denied a means of articulating its plight. His jubilant recital of the alphabet to the pounding waves powerfully catches the sense of someone 'finding a voice' for the first time. But it is Amiro's inability to articulate, or perhaps differentiate, his feelings – certainly few confidences are shared, and for the most part his existence is a solitary one – that proves a major stumbling block for the film. Naderi everywhere registers, rather than elucidates, Amiro's responses. The passionate cry which ends the film, and with which Amiro has greeted the flight of 'his' plane, his victory in the race, or his delight at the harbour lights, remains frustratingly ambiguous. The film's strength, however, lies in its matter-of-fact and non-voyeuristic picture of world, so that we see the wasteland around the port as he sees it and take it similarly for granted.

Verina Glaessner, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, August 1988

Programme notes and credits compiled by Sight and Sound and the BFI Documentation Unit

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