



## BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

# Where Is the Friend's House (Khaneh-je doost kojast?)

### Where Is the Friend's House (Khaneh-je doost kojast?)

Director: Abbas Kiarostami

Production Company: Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults

Executive Producers: Djahankiz Mirchakari, Asghar Chahourdi, Bahrouz Mouaeniane

Producer: Ali Reza Zarin

Production Supervisors: Ali Asghar Mirzai, Naamet Allah Yamini

Production Manager: Sadika Sarfrazian

Production Assistant: Naser Zeraati

Assistant Director: Kiomorth Poor Ahmed

Screenplay: Abbas Kiarostami

Story/Adaptation: Changiz Sayyad

Director of Photography: Farhad Saba

Camera Operator: Madjid Ferzana

Editor: Naamet Allah Alizadah

Costume Designer: Hassan Zahidi

Titles: Abdoullah Ali Nourad, Fard Moukadem

Sound/Music: Amine Allah Hessine

Light/Colour: Irg Mahra Bakhach

Cast:

Babek Ahmed Poor (*Ahmed*)

Ahmed Ahmed Poor (*Mohamed Reda*)

Kheda Barech Defai (*teacher*)

Iran Outari (*mother*)

Ait Ansari (*father*)

Sadika Taouhidi (*Persian neighbour*)

Biman Mouafi (*Ali, a neighbour*)

Ali Djamali (*grandfather's friend*)

Aziz Babai (*waiter*)

Nader Ghoulami (*property owner*)

Akbar Mouradi (*old man from Azerbaijan*)

Teba Slimani (*husband*)

Mohamed Reda Berouana (*man mistaken as Ali*)

Farahanka Brothers (*young boy*)

Maria Chdjari (*girl who stutters*)

Hamdallah Askarpour (*old man*)

Kadiret Kaouiyen Poor (*religious old man*)

Hager Faraz Poor (*apple seller*)

Mohamed Hocine Rouhi (*carpenter*)

Rafia Difai (*grandfather*)

Agakhan Karadach Khani (*street vendor*)

Iran 1989

84 mins

Digital

Introduced by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-Large  
(Wed 19 June only)

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**SIGHT  
AND  
SOUND**

**SPOILER WARNING** The following notes give away the film's ending.

Kiarostami's classic centres on a young boy determined to return a schoolmate's notebook he took home by mistake, but unsure of his exact address in a neighbouring village and frequently distracted in his quest by domineering adults.

An exhilarating blend of low-key realism and lightly stylised parable – the boy's repeated journeys resonate with subtle symbolism – the film is funny, insightful and finally deeply moving.

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*Where Is the Friend's House?* takes its title from a poem by Sohrab Sepehri. (Modernist Persian poetry has been an inspiration for Kiarostami.) In Sepehri's poem a traveller in a strange land is instructed to ask from a child, 'Where is the House of the Friend?' In Kiarostami's film the world is depicted through the eyes of a child, a schoolboy determined to find the house of a friend whose notebook he has picked up by mistake and feels he must return, since their teacher is strict about homework and requires students to do it in their notebooks, and the friend has been threatened with expulsion if he again fails to comply. As he sets out on a quest for the friend's house, a traveller in the strange land that is the world around him, the boy is made the film's centre of consciousness without any of the condescension, the feeling we know better as adults, that usually accompanies our sympathy for children. We share the path and the perspective of this boy facing the odd requirements of the adult world, not challenging them – he endeavours with sweet earnestness to help his friend comply – but throwing them into question in a search for the friend's house that turns into a journey of exploration of the world, its mysteries and its possibilities. The boy often returns to places where he has been before, but as the philosopher said, you can't step in the same river twice, and the same places are each time revealed in a different aspect. This is a film about wonder: the wonder of seeing things with fresh eyes, the wonder from which philosophy is born. It's a wonderful film.

In contrast to the sleek and fast editing style prevalent in movies today, with shots like soft clay being moulded at will, Kiarostami cuts sparingly, like a carver respecting the character of the stone. A cut should have a reason, he says in *10 on Ten*, and rather than editing for the sake of variety he will let a shot go on until there is a point in replacing it. He cuts, one feels, only when he must; his cuts have the elegance of economy and carry the weight of necessity. The boy's perspective in *Where Is the Friend's House?* is established not so much by cutting to what he sees – there aren't many point-of-view shots, which makes them all the more striking when they come – as by the camera's steady empathy with his way of seeing.

At two points the film departs from the boy's perspective, each time shifting to an old man. The first time, early on, we move to the boy's grandfather, a traditional disciplinarian, petty and unsympathetic to him. The second time, near the end, we shift to an old man who used to make carved doors and

## BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

### Apocalypse Now: The Final Cut

Sat 1 Jun 15:00; Sat 8 Jun 19:40; Sat 15 Jun 19:40;  
Sun 23 Jun 19:20

### The Wages of Fear

Le Salaire de la peur  
Sat 1 Jun 17:40; Tue 11 Jun 20:15; Wed 19 Jun  
14:20; Sun 30 Jun 14:40

### The General + Cops

Sat 1 Jun 18:40; Wed 12 Jun 12:10

### Cléo from 5 to 7

Cléo de 5 à 7  
Sat 1 Jun 20:50; Wed 5 Jun 18:10 (+ intro  
programmer Jelena Milosavljevic); Fri 14 Jun 20:50;  
Fri 21 Jun 12:10

### It Happened One Night

Sun 2 Jun 13:00; Mon 17 Jun 12:10; Tue 25 Jun  
20:30

### Badlands

Sun 2 Jun 20:45; Mon 10 Jun 12:20; Wed 26 Jun  
18:15 (+ intro by Ruby McGuigan, BFI Programme  
and Acquisitions)

### Sullivan's Travels

Mon 3 Jun 18:10; Mon 10 Jun 20:50; Fri 14 Jun  
14:45; Mon 24 Jun 12:10

### North by Northwest

Mon 3 Jun 20:20; Thu 6 Jun 14:30; Tue 18 Jun  
14:30

### Easy Rider

Tue 4 Jun 12:40; Fri 7 Jun 21:00; Sun 16 Jun 20:35;  
Sat 22 Jun 13:20

### The Searchers

Tue 4 Jun 20:30; Thu 20 Jun 12:10; Sat 29 Jun  
15:20

### Where Is the Friend's House?

Khaneh-je Doost  
Kojast  
Wed 5 Jun 12:45; Sat 8 Jun 15:40; Wed 19 Jun  
18:15 (+ intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-  
Large); Wed 26 Jun 21:00

### Alice in the Cities

Alice in den Städten  
Sun 9 Jun 20:20; Thu 13 Jun 12:00; Fri 28 Jun  
12:20

### Gun Crazy

Wed 12 Jun 18:20 (+ intro by Josephine Botting,  
BFI National Archive Curator); Mon 24 Jun 20:30;  
Thu 27 Jun 12:20

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windows for local houses, the sole adult willing to help the boy in his search. By this time it is dusk, and the old man's doors and windows, which he points out along the way, look beautiful as the lights inside shine through the carving. This old man is a figure of the artist. Even while employing the modern medium of film – whose light it is that shines on the screen – Kiarostami identifies himself with this old-fashioned craftsman. Although the old man doesn't succeed in taking the boy to the friend's house, he offers him, and us, a haunting experience of beauty in the twilight. And he gives him a flower to press inside the friend's notebook. The shift in perspective to the old craftsman, whom we follow inside his house as night falls and the wind blows, enables the film to omit the boy's return home, which lends a mysterious suddenness to the images of him there, in a familiar environment where everything seems to have changed.

Ellipsis, the use of omission, is central to both realism (because reality always exceeds its representation, so any representation necessarily leaves out much of reality) and modernism (because art that would own to its means and its choices must acknowledge what it leaves out), and on both fronts is central to Kiarostami's art. *Where Is the Friend's House?* stays with the boy for most of its duration, yet there are things it noticeably skips, and what it leaves out it brings into play.

Back home, the boy gazes at his mother – and here we get one of the few point-of-view shots – as she takes down in the dark night the wind-blown white sheets hanging out to dry. From this eerie image we slowly dissolve to the classroom the next morning. This is the film's only dissolve. Kiarostami's technical austerity lends greater impact to a device when he sees fit to use it – and it marks another ellipsis. The boy hasn't as yet turned up in class, though the friend is there and the teacher is going around checking each student's homework. Not until the boy arrives and returns the notebook to the friend do we learn that, after failing to find his house, the boy did his homework for him. The teacher looks over the notebook with approval. And as he flips through the pages, suddenly the flower pressed inside comes into view. We have forgotten about it, and Kiarostami, who knows when to cut a shot short, swiftly concludes the film at the point of our surprised recognition.

The flower represents beauty. A gift from the old craftsman, a reminder of his beautiful doors and windows, it is a metaphor for the boy's beautiful act of friendship – as if the craftsman who took care and pride in making things the right way stood behind the boy who has gone to such lengths to do the right thing for his friend. Ethics and aesthetics come together here – the beauty of an action, a bit of human doing, and the beauty of a work of art, a bit of human making, both of them moving us to admiration and calling for the best in us. Philosophers have pondered what an action and an object of contemplation have in common that we should find them both beautiful, and Kiarostami's pondering takes concrete form in a film that is itself beautiful.

Gilberto Perez, *Sight and Sound*, May 2005