

# *Taxi Tehran*

(2015)

COMPONENT 2  
SECTION A: GLOBAL FILM (GROUP 2)



# AREAS FOR STUDY

- ◆ **Film Form** – questions require micro analysis (need to know key scenes in detail) but can be linked to macro issues e.g. representation, messages, themes and values, auteur or even spectatorship)
- ◆ **Meaning and Response**
- ◆ **Contexts**

# Socio-political commentary



**“A great film, a funny film and – predominantly – a defiant film.”**  
*Little White Lies*  
★★★★  
**“Subtle, humorous and humane”**  
*Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian*

**Golden Bear**  
Berlin International  
Film Festival 2015

**“Charming, witty, politically lacerating”**  
*Kate Muir, The Times*

**“A film of quiet but profound outrage.”**  
*Scott Foundas, Variety*  
★★★★  
**“Enchanting, so funny and entertaining...exhilarating”**  
*David Sexton, The Standard*

**A FILM BY JAFAR PANAHI**  
**TAXI**  
**TEHRAN**

**IN CINEMAS OCTOBER 30**

new wave films [www.newwavefilms.co.uk](http://www.newwavefilms.co.uk)

The poster features a photograph of a taxi driver and passenger in a car at the top. Below the main title, there is a cartoon illustration of a yellow taxi with several people standing around it, including a woman in a headscarf, a man in a suit, and a child. The background is a mix of yellow and green.

# Cultural context

- ◆ Panahi's use of form and style links to the Iranian **neorealist film movement**
- ◆ Taxi, and his other films take a **humanitarian approach** while also encoding a **social critique**
- ◆ The **aesthetic** has been described as a balance of depicting the problems of human characters (particularly women) while also conveying **political and social messages** – a form of 'realist, but emotive ideology'
- ◆ **Auteur production** (written, directed, produced and 'starring' Panahi)

Panahi making no attempt to disguise himself as an internationally acclaimed filmmaker



# Socio-political context 1

- ◆ Panahi banned from making films in Iran
- ◆ **Critically successful**
- ◆ **Self reflexive filmmaking (see Bill Nichols and reflexive documentary making)** – the role of Hana and discussions on creating a short film for a school project (at one point she is filming a couple being filmed)
- ◆ **Documentary-drama (fiction)** only in that the stories are probably scripted and told by unprofessional actors
- ◆ **Mediated ideology** close to narrative closure – story told by a real Human Rights lawyer

# Optimism from a human rights Lawyer despite bleak narrative outcomes



# Socio-political context 2

- ◆ Genuine example of **'guerrilla filmmaking'** – a lack of end titles reflects Panahi's need to protect anyone involved in the project
- ◆ Filming from **dash mounted camera** (it can also pan) – Panahi as taxi driver, set in Tehran
- ◆ As well as 'documenting' it is also a portrait of a city – Panahi **questions notions of documentary realism** - his niece Hana is under instructions to “avoid sordid reality” from her teacher
- ◆ Panahi uses technology to **“look beyond ideological parameters”** – a film that will not be distributed in Iran but that can be accessed online



# Hana and self reflexive filmmaking



# Clips

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=If0KreZkurg> - recognition

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P10UJLTtWjE> - optimism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFNkvH1WDUE> - flowers  
extended

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZ0PQIuXo6E> - avoid sordid  
realism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qnXkpjx5TaU> - Hana filming  
extended

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eM2tblIkL4g> - trailer

# Discreet filming – documentary realism



# Film Form and Aesthetics 1

- ◆ Lots of wide angle shots (a portrait of a city) although lots of backstreets and not stereotypical grand 'tourist' locations
- ◆ Blurring of the boundaries of scripted drama and documentary realism – questioning verisimilitude and 'Kino-Eye' (see *Man with a Movie Camera*)
- ◆ Claustrophobic feel as a result of single dashboard camera – the mise-en-scene itself creates tension (metaphor for filming restrictions)
- ◆ Surprisingly flexible camera offering POV, CU and pan

# Classic Panahi reaction shot



# Film Form and Aesthetics 2

- ◆ Dress code is often in binary opposition – many women wear traditional hijabs while notions of almost decadence and difference are encoded by Panahi's flat cap and jacket
- ◆ Editing is linear with many long takes and use of shot/reverse/shot, particularly reaction shots
- ◆ Real time is apparent although subverted through editing
- ◆ Low level diegetic sounds from the street adds realism
- ◆ The dashboard camera itself is potentially as discourse on surveillance culture

# A discourse on gendered inheritance



# Micro analysis 1: 'Optimism'

- ◆ A close of the Lawyer's finger pointing at the camera encodes self reflexivity but also humour
- ◆ A long take reveals a monologue on political surveillance
- ◆ Panahi reaction shots driving see also Hana in the frame as a pedestrian (at this moment the car is stationary in traffic)
- ◆ Shot/reverse/shot is used to establish character relationships while a wipe suggests an edit
- ◆ Hana in close up points her camera – self reflexivity



Panahi's films foreground female gender representation (not sure about the goldfish)



# Micro analysis 2

- ◆ A lack of non diegetic sounds reinforces documentary realist tradition
- ◆ Dress code identifies traditional Muslim religious ideology
- ◆ Diegetic dialogue from Panahi established his older, wiser, 'Uncle credentials' as a teacher
- ◆ The 'distributable movie' narrative is very important – the fact that Hana is repeating her teacher's instructions ensures a dominant preferred meaning questioning doctrine and ideology – her reaction shot also questions the listed doctrine