

HIT THE ROAD

Iran (2021) 93 minutes

Director: Panah Panahi (and Writer)

Cast: Pantea Panahiha (Mother)
Hassan Madjooni (Father)
Amin Simiar (Adult Son)
Rayan Sarlak (Young Son)



Screening 11th December 2024 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

Hit the Road is a different type of 'road-movie', it is about an Iranian family leaving Iran by driving to the Turkish border. The reason for the trip - to smuggle the adult son from the country - is not defined, but the political and social imperatives behind the journey are evident. None of the characters are named, which of itself may be significant. There is both considerable humour and sadness beautifully portrayed by the four central actors: mother, father and two sons, one grown-up and the other, young and loveably cheeky.

Reviews



Panah Panahi, son of the banned director Jafar (*The White Balloon*, 1995, *Crimson Gold*, 2003), studied cinema, worked on several of his father's later projects and here makes his own stunning debut feature. We're never explicitly told where they're going or even why, though the older brother's marriage arrangements are vaguely cited. When his parents realise their youngest has smuggled a cell phone along to play music, it seems harmless – until the mother cuts up the SIM card and hides the handset. To achieve something of such stature with a first film bodes well for Panah Panahi's long, rewarding, unrestricted career.

British Film Institute

The masterful *Hit the Road*, the writer/director's elegiac debut, traces a family on a mysterious road-trip from near Tehran and starts with a question asked by the story's unnamed Mother. "We're dead," cheerily responds her younger son. We aren't acquainted with his irresistibly witty ways yet, a disposition that often injects the picture with moments of comic relief that runs parallel to the movie's melancholy. Panahi is so precise behind the camera that his inspired compositions of the family inside the car - somehow, both spacious and claustrophobic - don't necessarily challenge the little one's other-worldly remark, very much on purpose. But Panahi is also quick to steer you back into reality. No one is dead amongst the family of four. The quartet is making a dash for the Turkish border to smuggle the older son out of the country for reasons smartly left mostly unexplained, a decision that propels the alluring aura of secrecy.

Roger Ebert

With a touch on the pedal so light you don't even feel the whoosh, Panah Panahi, son of Iranian auteur Jafar Panahi, goes instantaneously from zero to 60 with this, his debut feature. Doubly surprising, he does it repeatedly within the film, from scene to scene - and within scenes, from moment to moment - accelerating and decelerating so abruptly, switching moods like gears, like radio stations, that by the end we should be rattling around inside, car-sick, dying to get out. Instead, its 93 minutes whip by so airily. It's possible not to realise how much you've learned to love the family whose road-trip you've shared in, until the credits roll and you immediately start to miss them.

Jessica Kiang, Variety

Film Facts

- Best Film London Film Festival 2021
- SIGNIS Award Mar del Plata Film Festival 2021
- Golden Gate Award San Francisco Film Festival 2022

swindonfilm.org.uk