

KABULI KID

EEN FILM VAN

BARMAK AKRAM



WILD BUNCH

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KABULI KID – Barmak Akram

PROJECT SUMMARY

Een productie van	Fidélité Films
Co-producent	4 A 4 Productions, Auteurs Associés, Afghan Films
Taal	Farsi/Frans
Lengte	97 minuten
Genre	Drama
Land van herkomst	Frankrijk/Afghanistan
Filmmaker	Barmak Akram
Hoofdrollen	Hadji Gul, Valéry Schatz
Releasedatum	27 augustus 2009
Festivals	65 MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE D'ARTE DI VENEZIA 2008 - 23 INTERNATIONAL FILM CRITICS WEEK TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2008 – OFFICIAL SELECTION 35th FILMFESTIVAL GHENT – COMPETITION – SPECIAL MENTION FOR ACTOR HADJI GUL
Website	www.enfantdekaboul-lefilm.com
Kijkwijzer	Alle leeftijden

SYNOPSIS

In Kabul, een stad die langzaam probeert te herstellen van 25 jaar oorlog, pikt taxichauffeur Khaled een vrouw gekleed in een blauwe boerka samen met haar baby op. Als de taxi op zijn bestemming aankomt, stapt de vrouw uit en een nieuwe passagier stapt in. Deze vindt de baby op de achterbank. Khaled rent de moeder achterna, maar ze is verdwenen en hij blijft achter met een jongetje van zes maanden.

Wie is de moeder? Hoe kan hij haar terugvinden? Hij vraagt het aan vrienden en onbekenden op straat, keert terug naar de plaats waar hij haar oppikte. Tevergeefs. Het lot heeft hem een jongetje gegeven voor wie hij zich meer en meer verantwoordelijk acht. Wat volgt is een bewogen, chaotische en dikwijls komische zoektocht in een stad die zelf probeert te overleven.

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CAST

Khaled	HADJI GUL
Mathieu	VALÉRY SCHATZ
Marie	AMÉLIE GLENN
Baba	CHAFI SAHEL
Vrouw van Khaled	LEENA ALAM
Baby	MESSI GUL

CREW

Regisseur	BARMAK AKRAM
Script	BARMAK AKRAM
In samenwerking met	JEAN_CLAUDE CARRIÈRE, ISABELLE BROUE, AGNÈS DE SACY
Director of Photography	LAURENT FLEUTOT
Editor	HERVÉ DE LUZE, PIERRE HABERER, ELISE FIÉVET
Sound effects	CHARLES AUTRAND, PASCAL VILLARD
Original Music	BARMAK AKRAM, MATHIEU CHÉDID
Costumes	AYOUB OMAR
Producers	OLIVIER DELBOSC, MARC MISSONNIER
Co-producers	MANI MORTAZAVI, DAVID MATHIEU-MAHIAS, PHILIPPE GAUTIER, ENG LATIF AHMADI

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR

25 years of war have thrown more than 50,000 children - orphans or with poverty-stricken families - onto the streets of Kabul. So many children confronted daily with hunger, disease, violence, drugs, prostitution and slavery. Gatherers of paper and tin cans, sellers of eggs and toilet paper, water carriers, cart pullers, shoe shines, these children - often without parents or schooling - grow up on the streets.

This is the subject of my film - the street kids of contemporary Kabul. Taxi driver Khaled discovers a baby boy abandoned by a veiled woman in the back of his cab. How will he find the woman again? How will he rid himself of this packet of trouble? And what if he were to keep the tiny boy, he who has fathered only daughters?

This extremely simple story of an abandoned baby gives the script its impetus and provides the film with an efficient framework: as Khaled searches for somewhere to place the child, we discover Kabul in his wake, as in a picaresque story. Immersed in a rich, pregnant reality, we find ourselves straight away in the company of people whose daily life, so full of adventures, could provide ideal material for a thousand screenplays.

Making my protagonist a taxi driver allowed me, as it were, to make a report on the damage wrought by war. The characters are drawn very precisely - the fruit of long and close observation during the filming of my documentaries. We never see the woman's face. Throughout the film, each character has his or her own interpretation of what would make a mother abandon her child. The work of these street kids, proud of supporting their families by providing their daily bread, gave me the idea of the sequences with the toilet paper seller and the car washer who extorts money from Khaled. The different male characters represent different facets of our hero.

The city is a very powerful presence: the chaos of traffic around the station, the demolished alleyways (demolished, as we learn, as a result of US bombing), shops of every sort. To be in Kabul is to be in the midst of a vast pandemonium where each must find a way of surviving, where colourful

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characters can be found on every street corner, and where the possibility of true neo-realism is always in reach. Khaled acts as our guide and truly introduces us to the city and its secret passages. Jean-Claude Carrière and I spent 10 days honing the structure and the layout of situations, repositioning them in the various locations with the aim of establishing an efficient narrative, a 'documentary' accuracy leading to a very realistic discovery of the city, its organization, its disorganization and its inhabitants.

The people of Afghanistan laugh in even the worst of situations. Humour allows them distance. Without being an outright comedy, my film has a pretty comic tone. Not exactly a comedy, but a film that casts a coolly amused, benevolent and always very humane eye over its subjects.

I'd like to mention Chaplin's THE KID here. The comparison doesn't stop with the subject matter: the two films really have something in common in the way they view their material: funny scenes, as when Khaled accosts the bearded commando with the plastic sandals who guards the police station; absurd scenes, such as the one at the radio station when five women pretend to be the baby's mother. All in all, these are the tragi-comic adventures of a sort of anti-hero. We follow the action, we understand and sympathize with Khaled's dilemma, and at the same time discover with a real pleasure the various institutions we visit: the orphanage or the French NGO whose director considers taking care of the child in order to seduce his colleague.

At the beginning of the film, the direction is very rhythmic, very agitated, to shake the audience and awaken them to the dangers of a city in which tanks are everywhere; then realist, more low key, once we get to the house in the suburbs. Energy prevails. Hand-held camera creates a real dynamism. Using a telephoto lens allowed me to shoot certain scenes from a distance in order to make the crew disappear from the shoot. The use of natural light gives the film a documentary realism, while the oil lamps with their sometimes violently contrasting light imparts a chiaroscuro style to the image.

Abbas Kiarostami told me, "A film is a question. It's up to the audience to find the answer." Why has she abandoned her child? At the end we find the woman again, but she remains veiled, and does not speak. We see only the tears falling, from eyes veiled by her tchadri, onto the cheek of her child. Thus, by the choice I made with Jean-Claude Carrière, the main female character is faceless, and Khaled's wife nameless. In Afghanistan, a woman's identity is relative: she's always someone's wife. Khaled's wife is afraid that he will leave her or take a second wife. She dreams of adopting the baby, and breastfeeds him in secret. The film addresses the place of women in Afghan society. As in China, giving birth to a daughter is a matter of shame. There's also the suffering imposed by society on Khaled, who has fathered only daughters.

In the face of everything that happens, Khaled is transformed from the beginning to the end of the film, between vanity and compassion. Fate places a young life in his hands, a young life which at first he wishes to get rid of but for which he feels increasingly responsible.

The film recounts a linear narrative that unfolds over 36 hours. An eventful, chaotic and often comic journey, in a city 1,800 metres above sea level, beneath the dazzling summer sun.

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REGISSEUR - BARMAK AKRAM

Director, visual artist and musician, Barmak Akram was born in 1966 in Kabul, Afghanistan. He arrived in France as a refugee in 1981, where he grew an interest for visual art and cinema. He graduated from the FEMIS, the School of Fine Arts and the School of Decorative Arts. He has shown a definite talent in various fields of creation.

As a music composer and interpreter, he explores the instruments of his culture as well as traditional Persian poetry, with a natural and skillful sense of the words and of their rhythm. As a songwriter he recently collaborated with French artist M (Mathieu Chédid) and Susheela Raman.

He made several documentary films, in particular about Afghan culture, but also more personal ones, the so-called "videotos" (abbreviation for automatic video, a term invented by the artist to define his experimental films created by chance and autobiographical references), which leads us in a world of abstract beauty.

He also produces paper works such as handmade cut-outs made out of magazines. These "phytomorphisms", performed with the characteristic slowness of the process itself, crumble the banal images of daily life and the stereotypes of beauty.

FILMOGRAPHIE

- 2008 Kabuli Kid
- 2005 Prospective Cinéma, projection au Centre Pompidou pour l'ouverture de l'exposition Dada
- 2004 Voyage dans les archives de la télévision afghane, documentaire pour l'INA
Les clowns à Kaboul, documentaire
Khans à Cannes, portrait d'Atiq Rahimi à Cannes
- 2001 Zaher Shah, le roi afghan à Rome, reportage pour l'émission 7 à 8, TF1
5 vidéo-clips pour le DVD de M alias Mathieu Chédid
- 1999 Du côté de chez soi, documentaire pour l'émission Théma Home Sweet Home, ARTE
- 1995 Lettres Premières, adaptation des Lettres Persanes de Montesquieu
- 1994 Les Caprices de Marianne, documentaire
- 1993 Et la guerre continue, documentaire sur les camps de réfugiés afghans au Pakistan