

Dawandeh

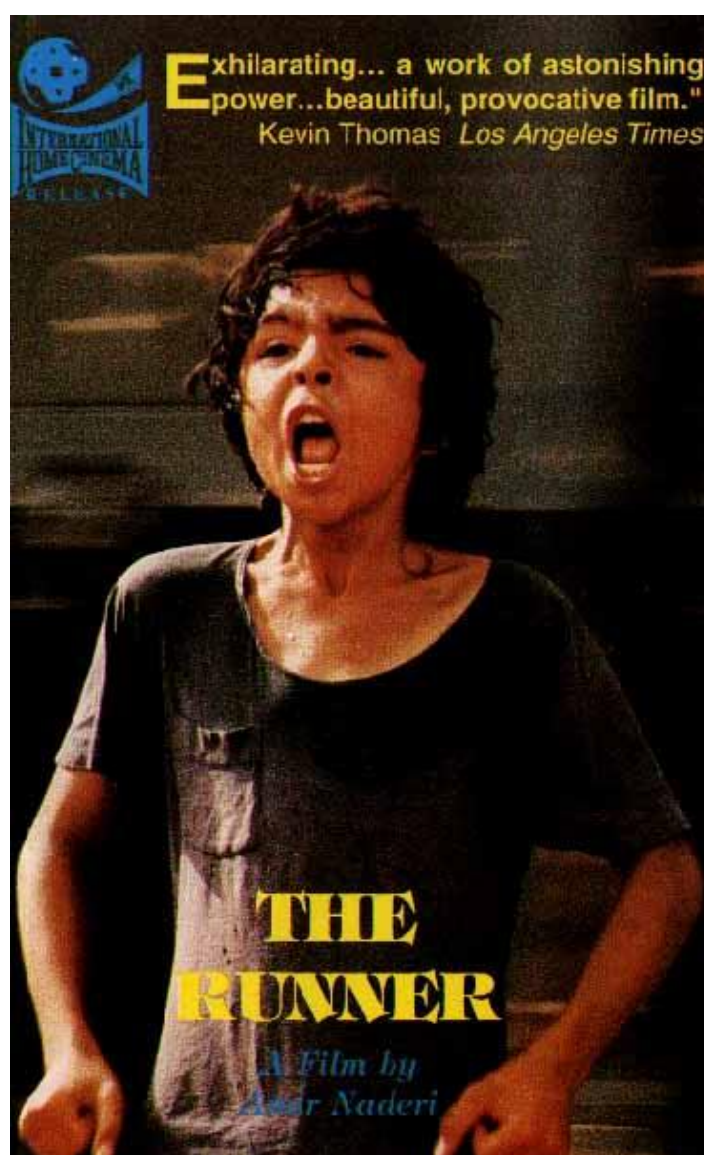
("The Runner")

Iran : 1984 : dir. Amir Naderi : Tehran Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults / Studio of the Voice and Portrait of the Islamic Revolution of Iran : 94 min
prod: : scr: Amir Naderi & Behruz Gharibpur : dir.ph.: Firuz Malekzadeh

[Majid Nirumand](#)

Musa Torkizadeh; A. Gholamzadeh; Reza Ramezani; Abbas Nazeri; Shirzan Bechkal

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	≠	M	☼	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
2371a	3.5	6	3	1,304	-	-	-	-	-	No	Pre 1990



*The Persian boy. Hobbies include: shouting curses at passing ships.
Source: CVMC website*



What the film does vividly convey is the joy and value of simple ice in a desert country. Amiro contemplates the last of his portable wealth as it quickly dwindles before his eyes.
Source: The Moving Picture Boy

"Exhilarating... a work of astonishing power... beautiful, provocative film"

- Kevin Thomas, **Los Angeles Times**

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"A 13-year old orphan makes his living on the streets of a gulf port while learning to outdistance his peers. Unsparing but repetitious account of childhood poverty."

Bloomsbury Foreign Film Guide review:

"At an Iranian gulf port, Amiro (Nirumand), a 13-year old waif, scrapes a living by selling empty bottles washed in from the ships, as well as iced water to the port workers. Gradually, he collects enough money to set up a shoeshine stand at a café. Amiro's ambitions lead him to enrol in a literary class and perhaps a better future. Naderi's autobiographical account of his own deprived childhood give an extraordinary impression of a country devastated by war and in economic crisis, the superb photography revealing a small boy against an inhospitable desolate landscape. In its unsentimental view of child labour, the almost plotless film is a worthy and more optimistic companion to "SALAAM,

BOMBAY!" There is an invigorating montage as the boy learns the alphabet, metaphorically finding his voice for the first time. But although the film contains specific symbols, such as the climactic race towards a block of melting ice, its message is allowed to emerge naturally out of the sharply and often comically observed environment."

The Time Out Film Guide review:

"An astonishing piece of film-making in which Naderi's harsh account of modern poverty supports passages of extravagant but unsentimental lyricism. Amiro (Nirumand) is an illiterate ten-year old orphan living in a rusting tanker hulk, beached in a Persian Gulf shantytown. Life is a struggle, and garbage-picking and peddling water just about pay for a watermelon diet. Bigger boys try to steal his empty bottles, a man snatches the block of ice he needs to cool the water he sells. Amiro learns to fight back. He's a runner, and he wants to run with the best of them. Young Nirumand gives a performance to make Rossellini weep, and the soundtrack is a joy."

Sight and Sound - July 1996 - review:

"A young vagabond living a small Gulf port scrapes by, scavenging for bottles and garbage. But he realises that he needs an education if he's ever to escape his constricting little world. Reminiscent of Roberto Rossellini's **"GERMANY, YEAR ZERO"**, which was also centred on a scavenging boy, this is an affecting, beautifully shot rites-of-passage drama. Dialogue is kept to a minimum, with Naderi relying instead on striking visuals to show both the many obstacles his young hero faces, and his irrepressible optimism. (MFB no.655) "

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Nirumand:

"Amir Naderi's exhausting, exhilarating **"DAWANDEH"** celebrates a boy's life on the waterfront of a Persian Gulf port¹. Survival money is earned by water-selling, shoe-shining, carrying blocks of ice, or retrieving bottles from the sea. In stifling heat, the kids' favourite pastime is running, manically, after vehicles (even trains), or against each other, or simply solo. At least it expresses their desperation. One young boy, Amiro, finds relief in yelling at ships out at sea. Finally he decides he can only get out of his rut through education, and throws himself into it with characteristic fury, bellowing out the alphabet against the crashing waves of the sea-shore. And still, amid extraordinary images of ice and fire, Majid Nirumand runs.

He kept on running in Naderi's **"AAB, BAAD, KHAK"**, a drama of drought set in the parched land of the Iranian-Afghan border. But the Iranian authorities, who had already castigated **"DAWANDEH"** as a slur on their country, and had failed to get Naderi to apologise for it, now banned the showing of both films. Naderi was granted political asylum in the USA, and Majid and his elder brother Mansur Nirumand fled into Pakistan."

CVMC video retail/rental website review:

"Here's another impressive film from Iran about kids (In my humble opinion, Iran has put out some of the best of this genre during the past decade). Orphaned Amiro (Majid Nirumand), roughly thirteen, tries to survive on the streets by taking one menial job after another, eventually concludes an education is needed to get anywhere, but will this truly help in a world controlled by often selfish adults?

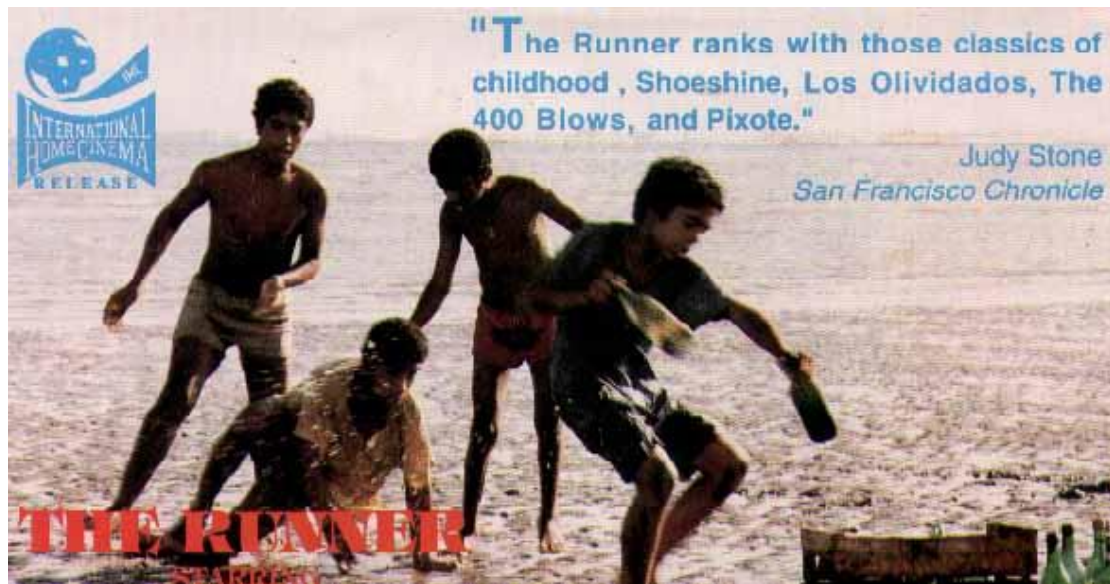
Not as brutal as some of the other Street-Kid flicks, but a fantastic psychological portrait of a boy trying to survive in a world that doesn't give a damn. A number of fascinating visual sequences are also found. Highly recommended!

Rated NR: adult themes [sic]; mild violence
Language: Farsi (with English subtitles)
Categories: Boy Films, Little to Preteen, Adolescent, Coming-of-Age, Drama."

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

¹ "Celebrates" seems hardly the word



Well, it's perhaps not on a par with the titles mentioned above, but it does make a powerful and true statement about poverty, and the tenacity of street kids clinging to survival in a dog-eat-dog world. Source: CVMC website

Rites of passage my arse. A bleak and unremitting portrait of bare subsistence in a bleak and unremitting land, this film makes Soviet cinema look almost frivolous and gay. Only one of the six sources quoted above mentions that the film is based on director Naderi's own boyhood, which obviously lends the story greater veracity, although it seems to be shot in the present day.

One long sequence follows Amiro buying a precious block of ice in town and porting it all the way home through merciless heat and a long gauntlet of youths ready to relieve him of it. He spends his evenings playing barefoot soccer on the beach, and his nights entirely alone in a rusting derelict ship. Although the camera stays with him, and there is little in the way of plot or dialogue, I felt the viewer didn't really come close to the central character, or any understanding of his inner life. The film has the assumed detachment of a documentary, but without the same taut structure, and in the final analysis it is anything but an enjoyable watch. "HALFAOUINE" was probably less honest, but certainly more entertaining, because of its stronger narrative. However, films from Iran being so thin on the ground ("BADKONAK-E SEFID", or "The White Balloon", was another) it has a rarity interest, and certainly makes no attempt to disguise the social privations or proffer glib solutions. Naderi earlier made "ENTEZAR" (Waiting, 1974). Seen in original language with Dutch subtitles.

See also "[AAB, BAAD, KHAK](#)" (85), "[BASHU](#)" (86), and subject index under [ARAB WORLD](#), [AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TITLES](#), [BANNED FILMS / CENSORSHIP](#), [ORPHANS / ADOPTION](#) and [STREET KIDS](#).