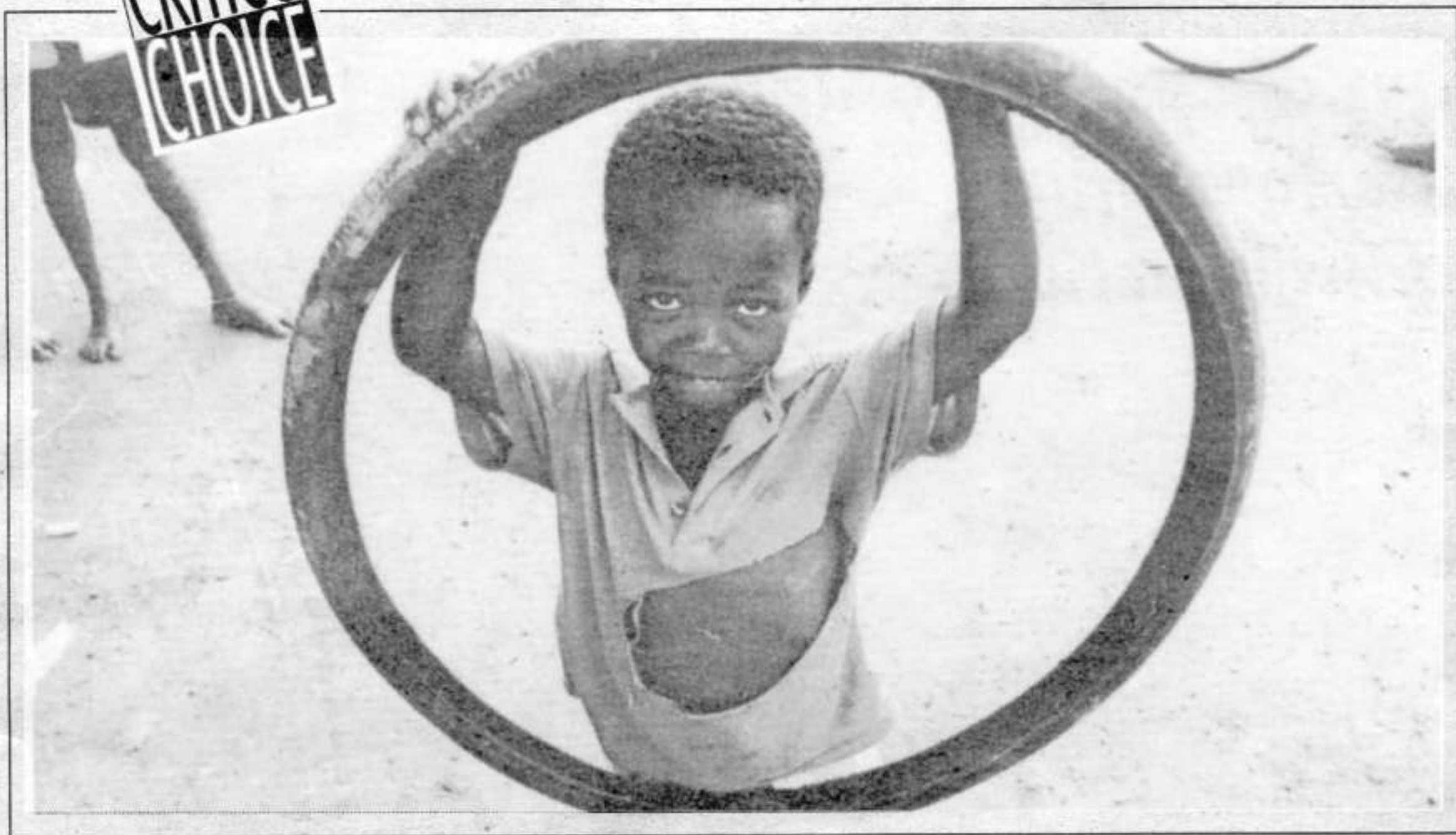


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## ABC Africa

This is the most accessible film to date by Iranian master Abbas Kiarostami, though some people have been mistakenly scared away by its subject matter: the enormous number of Ugandan children orphaned by the AIDS crisis. In fact, much of this 2001 digital-video documentary focuses on the kids singing and dancing—at times it resembles a musical—which has led some critics to fault Kiarostami for failing to address the crisis adequately. But the video is only superficially superficial, and it grows in meaning and resonance as it progresses. A brief scene in a hospital and a few interviews tell us all the disturbing facts we need to know, and the second half

moves beyond conventional documentary into Kiarostami's brand of provocative philosophical inquiry. One scene set in almost complete darkness recalls *Taste of Cherry* and *The Wind Will Carry Us*, and a sequence set in a ruined house in the rain is as lovely as anything in *Life and Nothing More*. Like virtually all of Kiarostami's mature work, this centers on the issues raised when a well-to-do filmmaker interacts with poor people and expresses his admiration for their resilience. This is Kiarostami's first film that's mainly in English; the balance is subtitled. 83 min. Music Box, Friday through Thursday, June 14 through 20.

—Jonathan Rosenbaum