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A MOMENT OF INNOCENCE

Directed by Mohsen Makhmalbaf

Cast: Moharam Zinalzadeh, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Mirhadi Tayebi, Ali Bakhshi.

Iran, 1996.
In Farsi with English subtitles.

78 mins. Color.

Rental: Apply.

New Release

A key masterpiece of modern Iranian cinema, this funny, fascinating, and intensely personal work centers on a pivotal event in the life of Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Iran's most revered director (*Gabbeh*, *The Silence*). As a zealous 17-year-old Islamic militant, Makhmalbaf stabbed a policeman, an act for which he was tortured and imprisoned. Twenty years later, the aggrieved and unemployed ex-policeman showed up at one of the director's casting calls. This gave Makhmalbaf the idea for his next movie: a reconstruction of their first fateful encounter, presented as a mock-documentary on the making of that film. Young actors are selected to play Makhmalbaf and the policeman, who journey separately around snow-blanketed Tehran, reliving the past as they coach their alter egos. The tone at first is predominantly comic, with the main characters chasing the kite-tail of the elusive past, and everyone operating at cross-purposes, each wrapped up in his personal agenda, each the star of his own little "movie." As the two former antagonists approach their recreated showdown in a labyrinthine bazaar, each armed with his own camera, actor, and conflicting interpretation, the film becomes an increasingly tense and haunting meditation on time and destiny. Through the power of cinema, both men hope not only to relive the past but also to rewrite it – to return to that last moment of innocence before the fatal step was taken and, perhaps, to transform it into the basis for redemption and reconciliation.

"Makhmalbaf ingeniously meshes pure cinematic visual imagery with delicate, poetic stories. A playful, moving story of love and youthful idealism...Its ability to gaze back in time through more mature eyes gives it an emotion and poignant resonance." – Paula Nechak, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

"Arresting, lyrical...captures perfectly the naïveté of the two young protagonists who, in an instant, so deeply affected each other's lives."

– Geoffrey Macnab, *Sight and Sound*.