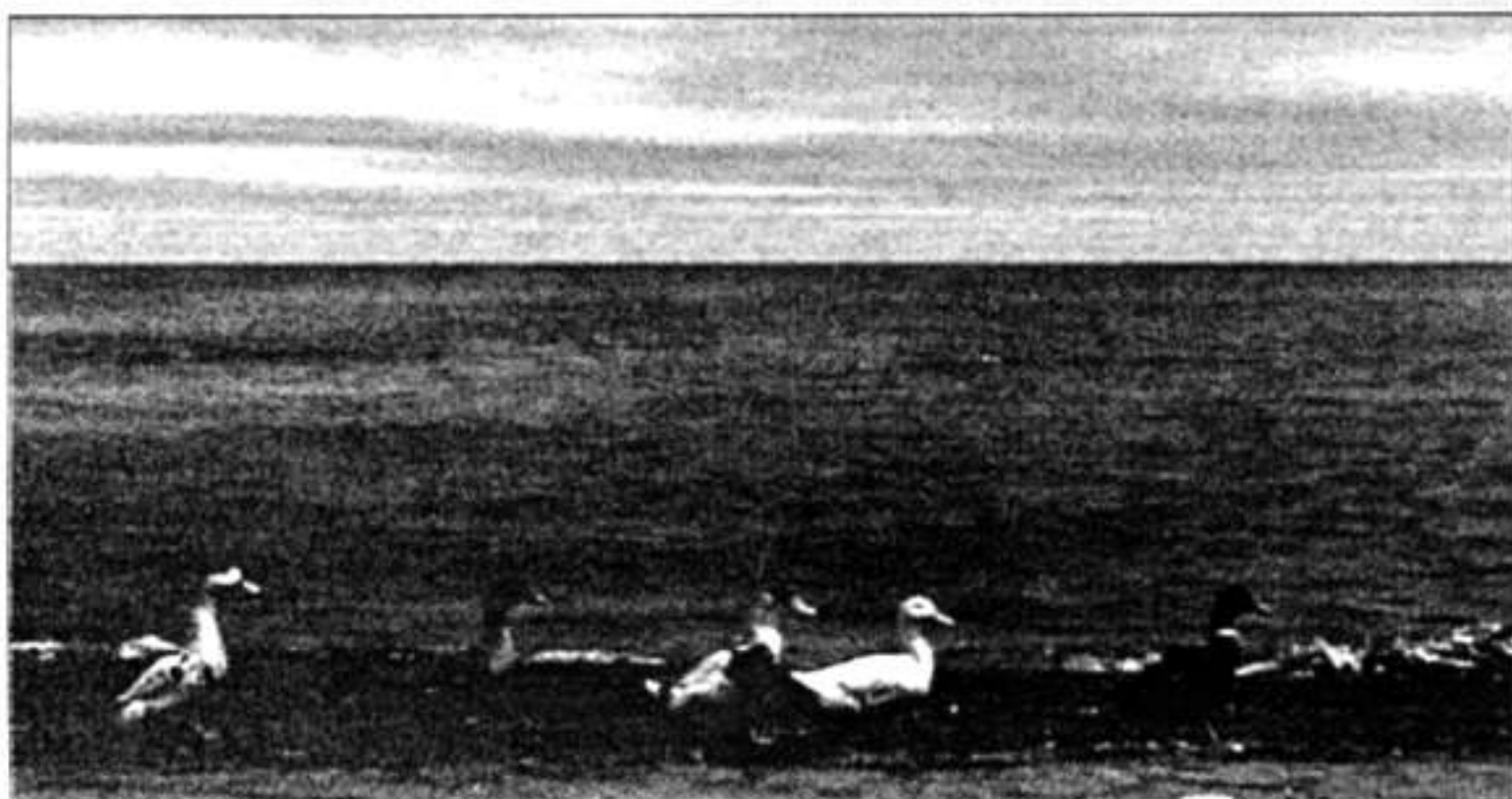


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MAKE WAY FOR DUCKS: In *"Five,"* helmer Abbas Kiarostami uses seascapes to stitch together an abstract art film in DV.

5/24-30/04 **FIVE** VARIETY
(FRANCE-JAPAN)

An MK2 Diffusion release of an MK2/NHK co-production. (International sales: MK2, Paris.) Produced by Marin Karmitz.

Directed, written by Abbas Kiarostami. Reviewed at the Cannes Film Festival (noncompeting), May 13, 2004. Running time: 74 MIN.

By DEBORAH YOUNG

Alongside his career as a filmmaker, Abbas Kiarostami has explored the world through poetry, theater, photography and video installations. *"Five"* takes his work with digital video in yet another direction, that of the abstract art film. Though a handful of seascapes will hardly be everyone's cup of tea, they create a relaxing, meditative canvas which the director spices with subtle humor and an inspiring relationship to nature. It was to be released theatrically in France this month in a Kiarostami retrospective, and is slated to come out on DVD in October.

Film's subtitle, *"Five Long Takes Dedicated to Yasujiro Ozu,"* should clue audiences as to what to expect, and in fact there are only five camera setups in the 74-minute film.

The connection to the work of Japanese director Ozu lies not only in the rigorous choice to limit camera positions, but in the contemplative quality of waves breaking against the Caspian shore and the film's insistence on natural rhythms. This is most evident in the first "take," as the camera gently pans to follow a piece of driftwood rolling on the waves. Second piece shows people walking to and fro on a boardwalk by the sea. The subject of number 3 isn't evident at first, but as camera imperceptibly zooms in, the strange figures on the beach become a group of joyfully romping dogs.

If that gets a smile, the fourth take earns a burst of laughter as a line of ducks waddles across the beach, screen left to right, in ever increasing numbers, then inexplicably stampedes back, right to left. The fifth piece recalls the director's experiments in *"ABC Africa"* and *"10 on Ten"* with removing the visual image to force viewers to create a scene in their minds through the use of sound alone.

As the camera racks focus, a reflected moon appears out of black on the water's surface. The sound of frogs croaking in mad abandon paints an invisible scene until finally dawn lights up the water again. This part captures an array of sensations, from the comic frogs to ineffable feelings stirred by darkness and light.

In accord with the director's current thinking, technical credits are not specified, but helpful people merely listed at the start of the film, including Ali Reza Riahi, Jafar Panahi, Seifollah Samadian, Bahman Kiarostami, Ali Reza Shoja Noori,

Ueda Makoto and Mani Haghighi.

While Kiarostami obviously controlled or oversaw the cinematography and editing, it should be mentioned that the uncredited music used between takes is extremely beautiful.