

**MK2 PRODUCTIONS
MARTIN KARMITZ PRESENTS
ABBAS KIAROSTAMI
10 on TEN**

**Translation and Adaptation: Voice and Script International, London
Voice Over: Steve Gadler**

1. (film head count 1)

(MCU Abbas Kiarostami (AK) interior 4wd at wheel address to camera through window.) After the screening of *Ten* some members of the audience said they had become familiar with seeing certain landscapes and natural settings in my previous films and that they had hoped to see them again. True, every picture requires its own setting and *Ten* needed to be shot in an enclosed space. It's also true that people who are tired of having life with its traffic jams and cramped apartments go to cinemas to escape to different surroundings and to see a movie that expresses something closer to their own nature. I completely understand this so to make up for this and to express my sympathy with these viewers I've decided to place my camera here and to start my lessons on the cinema of 10.

This is the setting for *Taste of Cherry*. **(Single continuous shot from window of car, of place he references.)** This is the tree from *Taste of Cherry*. This is the same ditch but seven years later it has been filled. It's the same setting and the same twisting paths of *Taste of Cherry*. As you can see this is the city of Tehran and the cars you can see in the picture I imagine they are the continuing story of *Ten* and other stories. Unfortunately, I didn't have the chance to be there and record them.

(Cuts to MCU AK address to camera) In spite of the apparel contrast between *Ten* and *A Taste of Cherry*, one can find some common points in them. *Ten* appears to explore women and their problems while *Taste of Cherry* is about the abstract inner life of a man. I believe the common link between these two films is that of existence which goes beyond the relationship between a man and a woman and even beyond the problems of children or other social or political and geographical issues.

But there is a more justified reason, or excuse, for beginning the lessons about *Ten* here. It was at this place in 1996 that I first used a digital video camera with which I finished the final chapter of *Taste of Cherry*. This is one of the reasons I'm here. The more important and personal one is I may no longer have the chance of finding a reason to bring my camera to this place, which is one of my favourite places.

2. THE CAMERA (film head count 2)

(MCU AK interior of car from ext car, ext dry landscape in background; he begins to drive as he addresses camera.) I would like to point out that it was impossible to make a film like *Ten* without using the digital camera. While filming the epilogue of *Taste of Cherry*, the film was ruined at the processing lab. It was impossible to film it again as we had already missed the best part of the Spring and could not wait for another year for the next spring. Therefore I used the rushes shot with a small simple video camera which we used for filming the behind scenes story and finished *Taste of Cherry* with those. **(Cuts to behind the scenes footage.)** What dramatically distinguished the performance of the video camera from that of the 35mm camera was the reaction of the simple people who behaved so naturally and spontaneously in front of it. This is something that I've always striven to achieve during my 30 year career.

I should say that I've always worked in natural settings and tried my best not to make any drastic changes to it; and to remain faithful to nature and to human nature. However whenever I said "action" there was action but it was artificial. To eliminate this sense of artificiality I've tried many things. For instance recently I've stopped using the clapper board and stopped saying sound, camera, action. I've been trying to start action with a discreet cue but people aren't as good as they are in real life. I do confess that this is very difficult and it's expecting too much. They know there's nothing natural on the other side of the camera, so why should they be. In front of them there's a large crew even though I've tried to make it smaller and smaller. There's lighting, travelling, booms and so on. All these different things can hinder them from giving a natural performance.

(AK int driving car; MCU from ext window.) The second time I used a camera like this was for ABC Africa when I went to Uganda to recy with one of my colleagues. We had two digital cameras with us which we used for taking pictorial notes. These cameras were to be our pens. We were planning to return to Uganda to make a film about children with AIDS. **(Cuts to footage from Uganda shot from int. car: travelling down road, people riding on bikes and in truck. Voice over: "according to the 1991 population census, and that is the latest Uganda has had, there are 1.5million orphans at that point, that is the figure that was given; the number of orphans 1.5million.")**

(Cuts to AK videoing Ugandan children and people in a village and market place.) On our return to Iran when we watched the rushes or travel notes, I felt we would never be able to repeat the sense of ease and comfort we had with this video camera, so we edited these travel notes which became the film ABS Africa. I felt that a 35mm camera would limit both us and the people there whereas the video camera displayed truth from every angle and not a forged truth. To me this camera was a discovery. Like a god it was all encompassing, omnipresent. The camera could turn 360 degrees and thus reported the truth, an absolute truth.

Directing was spontaneously and unconsciously eliminated, by which I mean artificial and conventional directing. By eliminating the directing and the director doesn't mean eliminating the auteur of course. This video gives both the director and viewer the possibility of discovery. In this way the camera illuminates the artifice so implanted in the industry. It gives you the possibility of expanding the dimensions of cinema and getting rid of the clichés, traditions, imposed foils **(cuts back to MCU AK in car driving)** and pretentiousness that it is (?)

This camera gives the filmmaker an opportunity for experimenting without fear of losing the essential. It's a liberty for the filmmaker to discover an ideal beauty. This camera frees cinema from the clutches of the tools of production, capital and censorship. It permits the kind of experimentation which has nothing to do with the overuse of putting several cameras side by side. Using cameras like that appears to me to be a new track set by capital and capitalists. The third time we used a digital camera and this time consciously and deliberately, was for *Ten*.

(Vision cuts to ext continuous WS of AK's vehicle moving down a hill on a winding dirt track; at the bottom moving towards and past new buildings to climb another hill.) Now we can consider that filmmaking is not that different from writing a book, sculpting a statue or painting a picture. No longer will you need investment or investors to make a film, nor do you need all sorts of skills. All of the necessary skills are self-contained in this small camera. This camera allows artists to work alone again. It was the answer to my indispensable demands. It's a weightless (?), loyal and discreet companion on my real and imaginary travels.

The world looks more interesting and attractive to me through this camera. Whenever I've been in a natural setting I've regretted not being able to record it with anything other than a photography camera. Now with this camera my mind thinks more fluently than ever. Problems out of censorship and censorship have been somehow solved. It backs up my own eye. It's an invitation to new discoveries. My outlook on life and the world around me can now be recorded and reproduced; and it's an undeniable truth.

With its impact on cinema this new phenomenon will bring about structural and fundamental changes in the concept of film, cinema, directing, cinematography, editing acting and so on. A digital camera is a very firm and valid invitation to return the auteur to the scene.

3. THE SUBJECT (film head count 3)

(MCU AK interior of car from ext car, ext landscape in background; he is driving as he speaks.) The subject of *Ten* is based on everyday life. Undoubtedly many serious viewers, as well as some critics, meaning the advocates of modern cinema, will find such a subject dull. It's not surprising that cinema is always a captive of the natural need to tell stories. We're accustomed or rather we've been made accustomed to only accepting reality within the framework of a story so that it can be exciting or moving. This is the same ancient style used by the story teller Ashara Arzan in her tale of the king who used to murder his guests. But I don't believe the job of a filmmaker is to excite or move a viewer merely through creating special moments.

By simply showing the reality one can make people think about their own and other people's acts or behaviour and see it and accept reality as it is. It's from this point that the viewer's duty to complete a work or a film begins. The viewer must be enticed into reflection on himself and the surrounding world. The combination of the filmmaker's and viewer's mind creates a film which is more durable, original and fruitful than a film which merely aims at telling a story and impressing the viewer.

This is the most essential difference this type of cinema and that of Hollywood. In this kind of cinema the most important subject matter is human beings and their souls. In this kind of cinema, man and his complex inner problems comprise the most important material; whereas in presently fashionable cinema, techniques, special effects and exciting stories are considered more important. With its endless thirst for reality and truth the cinema I uphold never has any short coming of subject. As ? says **(vision cuts to MS of a woman passenger in car, a subject from *Ten*, and cuts between MCU woman driving and passenger)** the first person who passes by could be the subject of your film. The presence of millions of people with millions of problems is an unlimited source of subject matter for this kind of cinema. In my opinion it will never come across a crisis and will never be short of subjects. **(Women in car speaking, MS passenger: "Before, praying seemed ridiculous. I used to say 'You pray to force God to give you things.' Driver: "That's interesting: Sorry!" Passenger: "Don't mention it."")**

4. THE SCRIPT (film head count 4)

(MCU AK interior of car from ext car, ext greener landscape in background; he is driving as he speaks.) I usually don't write my scripts as accurately as screen plays are normally written. My first ideas on plot are not more than half a page. I then develop this into three pages by which time I know if the film can be made. I make my final to make a film based on these three pages. Of course this was not the case early in my career. I've been doing this only since I no longer have to submit a script to a Producer or to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Values. Now both the Producer and the Ministry are well aware that it's almost impossible for me to remain faithful to the screen plays I write. I only remain faithful to the original idea of a film and even that is not something you can be sure of. When I write a full and accurate screen play I'm no longer interested in making it and usually hand them over to colleagues.

A few years ago somebody gave me an idea in just a few lines. It's about a woman psychoanalyst who finds out one day that her office has been shut down by government officials because a lady has complained that the counselling she had received from her had led her to divorce her husband; and of course she regrets her decision. A court has found the psychoanalyst guilty and closed down her office. So the analyst decides to see patients in her car for a week. I think I like this plot because the story took place in a car. In the lesson on location I will tell you why cars have always had such central roles in my recent films.

Anyway after doing some initial research for the screen play I reached a deadlock. Everybody knows that analysts usually don't speak in psycho therapy sessions; they tend to listen rather than talk, so this risked turning the dialogue into a monologue which gave me no chance of writing a tight, integrated and flawless screen play for making a film. So I set the plot aside but in the course of my research I met people who were interesting enough; people with real experiences whose lives could easily become complete screen plays. Thus I decided to change my plan and to prepare another plot and structure based on the same material. I would gather interesting people in a car, my favourite location, and then as a screen writer all I would have to do is give shape to these characters.

But I must confess that I'm not a good writer. At least I should say is that I cannot write dialogues for various characters in line with their own language and culture. Dialogue for an intellectual, a child, an office worker, a high ranking government employee, taxi driver and so on, all of these characters have their own culture and speak in their own language. They use their own words for expressing their feelings. The language differences between the various characters in the movie allow the viewer to have a better understanding of the relationship between them. I use characters from different cultures and social classes in my films. Naturally they should not use my language as director or screen writer. This would be a big mistake. It's like the work of translators who translate the language of various others, with various cultures, into their own personal language. Who can write dialogues for a worker better than an illiterate worker? Who can write dialogues for an old religious woman, better than she can? It's a shame that these dialogues are translated into the translator's own language. Obviously I can't ask the illiterate worker or the old woman to sit at the table and help me write the screen play, it's not their job. But as I spend days and days with them before the filming I find out a lot about them. I discover things that belong to them and use them to give shape to the screen play. And once they're put into a proper framework and the right conditions it can say our shared dialogue perfectly well.

Many people may think that I don't write screen plays for my films. That's because none of those who have worked with me on my recent films have ever seen us exchanging sheets of paper containing a proper screen play. If you give written dialogue to non-actors they may be tempted to speak it word for word. And if that happens, non-actors become real actors, but for this type of film non-actors should always remain non-actors. Another important point is when we write we take care of grammar but spoken language doesn't always follow grammatical rules. Grammatical rules should be broken; this will produce natural dialogue in line with the culture of the person speaking. As I said I don't write exact screen plays. It's in the process of shooting and production that daily changes gradually shape the film and the screen play finds its final form as the film is being made. The advantage of open screen plays for me is that they make the work more interesting. Everyday after shooting new and unexpected things are added to a film. This stimulates me to continue day after day and gives me more energy and desire.

(Vision cuts to WS AK's vehicle winding along dirt track through landscape.) This is and has been the formula for my work but in *Ten* this was done in an even more simple and spontaneous way. The characters in this film were real people and I hardly need to manipulate them. Good timing alone lead to getting the best possible performance from them in terms of expressing their inner and private feelings; and this eventually became the film *Ten*.

5. THE LOCATION (film head count 5)

(MCU AK interior of car from ext car, he is driving along a range road; in background high angle view of landscape; he is driving as he speaks.) In silent movies setting was an imitation of that of the theatre and a stationary camera filmed the scene. With the appropriate use of camera movement setting was no longer confined to just one scene. Overtime cinematographic techniques became employed in such an exaggerated way that all control over the camera was lost, and the camera started moving around all over the place for no real reason. The only logic for all this camera movement is the logic imposed by today's cinema. I think that one should have a reason for each camera movement just as one should have a reason for keeping the camera stationary or for choosing a certain lens.

Ten provided me with a reason to use a stationary camera in a moving room, like a car, which is my favourite location. Two very comfortable seats, and a very intimate dialogue between two people sitting next to each other rather than opposite each other. This reassures both and creates the right mood for dialogue. Of course they can look at each other if need be, in other words, in this position characters can interact together or each character can be by his or her self. In this position characters can look at each other, or not. They can look straight ahead or they can look at the other when seeking a response or reaction. The camera too is placed in a particular position. It's absent, stationary and in motion, all at the same time.

The significance of this form of dialogue, as I have said, is the sense of security created in both parties during their exchanges. A friend of mine told me many years ago that she and her husband had their most important conversations in their car. I think the open space of a home is not always ideal for maintaining dialogue or settling arguments. Of course a car is also the ideal place for creating arguments, particularly in traffic jams. Who has never had this experience in a car? It's a space that can create emotional or nervous tension because of proximity or because of the discomfort caused by bad traffic.

Another important point, at least as far as I'm concerned, is that there's no room in a car for crew or equipment. So everything is in place to create an intimate and private atmosphere in which we can obtain extraordinarily spontaneous simple and natural performances from actors and non-actors, as we see in *Ten*. **(Vision cuts to footage from *Ten*, int car MS woman passenger talking to driver: "Mum says the more I help him the less grateful he is. I told him "She's your grandmother. You can't treat her like that. What's this attitude? You're part of the family." Not this way there's a hole. You found it." She smiles.)**

(Vision cuts back to int car from ext through window, MCU as AK drives and speaks.)

Another advantage this gave me in *Ten* is the absence of a Director's heavily critical eye. Here the Director is in the position of the viewer enjoying the performances. He's not there to judge, evaluate or criticise or to say that terrible word "cut". This word "cut" can ruin the imagination of non-actors. I shall talk about this in more detail in the lesson on acting and directing.

In *Ten* I tried to minimise the décor in accordance with the film's subject; though when I started I didn't imagine limiting the camera work to only two angles and two lenses. After viewing the first sequence I realised that any change of angle or lens for the sake of variety could serious harm the structure of the film. And this as I have said is more important than the subject or the story. I thus returned the camera to its initial position to keep the feeling of suffocation and stress in a two by two metre room. The choice of setting in an enclosed space was made in view of the painful situation of the protagonists. This space corresponded perfectly to the situation as the car is a means of daily transportation. The choice of a car and limiting camera angles makes the space even more enclosed and as I just said is in line with the character's dreadful situation.

Renaissance painters had a sense of economy and portrayed only what was necessary based on selection and omission. This is why I limited camera angles. The film was based essentially on dialogue, and characters need to open dialogue with others in order to know themselves. A moving car creates a sense of security for me personally. I imagine my voice getting lost amongst the noise of other cars and these iron cells give me a sense of security and this facilitates my own inner dialogue. I insist on hearing my own voice in this dialogue. A person sitting next to someone else might not even pay attention to the other's presence. Each of them narrates his or her own inner world. So the choice of setting is appropriate for treating the psychological issues of the characters in the film; the serious problem of existence. **(Vision cuts to *Ten* footage, MS passenger sitting silently in car waiting for driver to return.) (AK VO)** The simplest natural or nervous reactions can unveil the insignificant secrets of life which is apparently ordinary or without mystery. I know that as we're talking about an external and representative art-form this may sound like a contradiction, but it's the internal conflicts of the characters which gives true drama to a film. The setting logically makes these people prone to externalising their reactions and this we owe to the confining cell which is the car.

6. THE MUSIC (film head count 6)

(MCU AK interior of car from ext car, ext landscape in background; he is driving down a hill on a dirt track as he speaks.) I consider our convictions to be the sum of our past acts. Only our personal history can give true account of our ideas and convictions; though theoretically we can be influenced by a certain school of thought which is different and contradictory to our personal reality. But our personal reality, in my opinion, is nothing but our past acts.

My first ever film "Bread and Alley" (?) opened with music. I knew the first picture appeared simultaneously with music. The second film, "Break Time" had no music; and for my medium length film "Experience" I called honorary nowned (?) composer Chek Narverian to compose an

original score. He watched the film and said that it didn't need any music. It took me years to find out that my films didn't need music or that they didn't need it as much as other films did. I gave the film "Passenger" to a young composer who had just returned from the United States. He composed 17 minutes of music for it and I could hardly use five minutes of it at the beginning point only; but he was young and so was I. I have to say it was a very good musical score but this was the first time I was seriously confronted with the issue of film music. It was a very hard day trying to put all these rhythmic and harmonic sounds I had never heard before, to the film.

Usually we give long thought on every detail of the film such as the subject matter, the screen play, the actors and the settings, which we must find before filming. As for the music we pick someone we trust and ask him to work on our music but at the end of the day what he gives us is something completely foreign. It's an interpretation of our ideas and our film plus a dash of exaggeration coming from professional deformation. It's a tricky situation where you're suddenly given a tape and you're expected to add this music to your film. Things come to a complete stand still. It's a bit like an arranged marriage, you go blindly ahead with it.

In my following experiments, music was gradually emitted from my films. In "Where is the Friend's Home" I chose a piece of music from Anahnora Houssen (?) only because of the pressures exerted by some of my colleagues who had seen the film and believed that it needed some music in order to keep the viewer's attention during so called lulls. They weren't totally wrong; unfortunately viewers had become accustomed to gratuitous and misplaced things; without this conditioning there are plenty of films that don't need to be reinforced with music. When I look at them closely I realise that music is something which has been imposed on the film from outside by viewers' customs, and the fears of the filmmaker and producer. In many films music aims at giving viewers guidance or imposing something on them. Be happy here, be sad here, be scared here, joke there – it's as if the Director is standing by the screen like a conductor, calling on the audience to show their feelings. And the more worked up the audience gets, the more the Director gets excited – I can keep the viewers on the edge of their seats. But I don't know how necessary it is to take the viewers hostage. These days technology also helps such hostage taking with Dolby surround sound systems and other new things. I don't know how far this game of intimidating poor viewers will go. I'd like to remind you what Neitsche said "that which is truly deep needs a mask".

Cinema is really a wonderful thing. Any viewer sitting in a seat in a dark movie theatre is turned into an innocent child and there's nothing quite as magical as light and darkness, it can send viewers into raptures. Under the circumstances this is akin to picking pockets in the dark. By captivating the viewer we rob him of his reason which is even worse than emptying his pocket. Sometimes when some film-makers read their screen play for me and when they reach a weak point they say they'll make up for it by using music or they'll get all excited and say we're going to kill them with our music here, which usually means overload it with music. What I'm saying is not against music nor am I against the appropriate use of music in cinema, I'm talking about abusing music. Music is an extremely stimulating and moving art form, maybe that's why I have a problem with using music for stimulating and moving the viewer.

In my most recent films I've used music only at the end. The stories of my films don't have clear cut endings, therefore I use a selective piece of music to help the viewer; I want to tell them "watch out" the film is coming to an end. This way of using music is a comforting sign to both myself and the viewer. At the end of one version of *Ten* (**vision cuts to footage from *Ten*, MS passenger in car. AK VO.**) the actress surprised me by singing a sad Persian song. I edited that version of the film with this song for the ending (vision cuts back to MCU AK int car, speaking as he is driving, side of hill landscape in background). Then I used the same melody played by

the piano but I found that it too was over sentimental. Finally I changed the ending of the film by taking another sequence. I thought that the story, the actress's face and the sad melody would overwhelm the audience. **(Vision cuts back to footage from *Ten*, MS passenger in car. VO AK.)** I take care not to force anything on viewers to the point where they might lose their patience, so I omitted the music even though it had emerged from the heart of the film and that everything justified its presence to move the viewer. But now that I'm giving these lessons on cinema I'd like to end this one with that melody. **(*Ten* footage, MS Woman passenger singing melody quietly.)**

7. THE ACTOR (film head count 7)

(MCU AK in car from ext car, ext landscape in background; he is driving along a dirt track as he speaks.) The only similarity between my style of cinema and that of Hollywood is in the role of actors and non-actors. In this cinema non-actors are no less important than superstars. In this cinema what eventually remains on the screen is the actor. I believe that in a good movie everything should fade away in the interest of the entirety of the film. A good shot is not one that stands out. A good musical score is one that goes almost unnoticed. In a good movie all these elements should take a back seat in order to benefit the whole and should not stand out. Only the actor should be present on screen and leave his impact on the viewers mind. His job is to link all the other elements together. But this rule also applies to the actor and that a good performance is not seen as acting. However what remains on the screen in the end is the actor, regardless of the actor being a star, an extra, a superstar or a simple worker in an independent movie, a professional or a non-professional.

Thus actors, I mean non-actors have a special significance in my films, which is perhaps even more than a professional movie actor. I usually work with non-professional actors and have always had a determining role in my films. Some 32 years ago I made my first film with an eight year old boy an 80 year old man and a stray dog, all non-professionals. It was my first movie and naturally a non-professional film. My first experience of working with these non-professional actors set a blue-print for my next works without realising it thought; but I must admit that I learned a lot from them. Every one of them was like a school of film-making for me not only in acting but also in the areas of directing, cinematography, editing, costume design and art direction all without the slightest knowledge of film-making. They were teaching me unknowingly. The less they knew the more they helped me. They mainly taught me how to deal with human beings, the most important element in cinema. They taught me how to know and direct them and how to let them direct me.

This is not exaggeration, I learned not only about cinema but also about life from them. I learned under what conditions they would accept change and turn it into what I was looking for and to what extent this change was possible. They taught me that a master servant relationship cannot work in this cinema and that non-actors cannot work like soldiers who merely follow the orders of their commander. In fact they do obey because it's rule of cinema but this causes their work to decline. The non-actors learn from you but at the same time he teachers you. It's a bilateral relationship.

Generally when I need to shoot a scene in two or three takes and an actor cannot utter a particular word properly, I realise it's a word that I like but it's not his word, so I need to change the word for his sake, to a-line it to his character and culture. Working with non-actors is a delicate charm which is hard to describe here, it's along story and its probably best summed up in a poem by Rumi (?). He says: you are my porobor (?) and you run before my mallet (?), and I run after you, although I made you run. This means that I push you forward but now I need to

follow you and run after you as a Director. Eventually I will take you to where I planned; but you're the one who determines how to get there, I just determine the direction. Sometimes the idea of a film takes shape through a particular character, a real person like Hossein in *Through the Olive Trees*, who was discovered while I was making *And Life Goes On*. Or like the character Abzubzeon in *Close Up*. These individuals are self contained subjects and screen plays. As Sabbatini said these are often special and interesting enough people with a bulk of experiences which help them to create a more tangible, realistic and refined character. I must stress that we chose these non-actors because of their strong resemblance to the character we had imagined in the first place. As they're non-actors, it's unlikely, if not impossible, that they could successfully perform as another character. In other words they play very well in one role, and that is, as themselves. Frankly no one in *Ten* acted badly, all of them were good, even those for those for reasons relating to the length of the movie, we don't see in the final cut. Another *Ten* could be made from the footage of those people. They were individuals who were really themselves and had a really good presence in the film, because as I said, they didn't act.

There is a misunderstanding on the part of many Directors who assume they can work with any non-actor; and on the part of a non-actor who comes to believe that he can play any role. This is a big misunderstanding. It has been said that anybody can write a good novel, as long as the novel is about himself. (51.42 in problem with CD) Concerning *Ten* the actor who played in the key role came to introduce herself. She knew I was going to make a film about women. I offered her a five minute role to act as her self or as somebody she knew well, then due to her talent she became the main character and the others became the secondary roles although each person played an essential role by acting as themselves.

Each was chosen according to his or her proximity to the part they were going to play. Except for the role of the prostitute where I came across a problem where I couldn't convince a single prostitute to appear in the film as herself. I suppose it's natural as it is a socially unacceptable trade so they didn't want to be publically known as prostitutes. Then we agreed that I would only use their voice, but even then they spoke like they were chaste women when in front of a microphone. So for that role I used a non-professional, a young woman who was not an actress. And I must say that as her real character was far from the one she played, she defied my theory on acting and performed very well; proving that while sticking to rules we should not forget the exceptions. (Vision cuts to footage from *Ten*, MS of driver VO of passenger, the prostitute: "The reason, sex, love, sex." Laughing. Driver: "That's all life is?" Prostitute: "It's a trade it's my job. And I like it." Driver: "What is it "Interesting?" Prostitute: "Who do you think you are, sitting at your wheel lecturing me, guiding me? I'm not going to start sobbing, "its life or it's destiny".

8. THE ACCESSORIES (film head count 8)

(MCU AK int car from ext car, ext greener hilly landscape in background; he is driving as he speaks.) In *Ten* the principle setting is a car and urban traffic. The actors wore all their own clothes. I never interfered with the way my actors dressed or used make-up. I'd never recommend a specific make-up neither exaggerated it nor down played it. I believe that there is a sense of unity between someone's personality and what they wear and how they make themselves up. No one knows better than them what they should wear and how they should present themselves. They're in the best place to choose that which is consistent with their inner character and feelings. I assume that when people stand in front of their wardrobes they look into it and try to match their inner and outer sides more than they try to match the colour of their blouse with that of their skirt or their shoes with their bag.

Everything you see in *Ten* belongs to the actor and shows their own taste. Clothes, make-up, accessories, bracelets, rings and whatever, they all belong to them and have been chosen by them. In some cases I did interfere in minor ways to improve a shot or introduce a new concept, but in such a subtle way that even the actors themselves did not feel it. Well for instance in one sequence the white scarf was my choice in order to give a new meaning, but I don't believe in interfering with the details of the characters. I believe in an indirect way they are the best costume designers and the best make-up artists for themselves. They do it unconsciously and they should not be made aware of it otherwise they would stop being themselves; and in thinking about their dress, make-up and accessories would create a newly forged character for themselves which is not why they were chosen. I believe that through their appearance, even before they have uttered a word, the viewer understands something about their personality and inner world, as if they would from hearing them speak. **(Vision cuts to MS driver int car, she is wearing a white head scarf and is in traffic, directing someone on the road ahead. Driver: "Sir are you leaving?" ... "You can get by now." To herself: "There's enough room." Directing him: "Come on, back up. Keep going." Directing with her hands: "There's room." "You're through.")**

9. THE DIRECTOR (film head count 9)

(MCU AK int car from ext car, ext in background, a dirt embankment; he is driving as he speaks.) First and foremost a film is a work of art and it should reflect the characteristics of the auteur. In the credit of French films there are two terms for Director, *Metteur-en-scene* and *Realisateur*. *Metteur-en-scene* is someone who give order to the scene and *Realisateur* and is someone who realises or materialises something. I don't know which one of these two terms should be used for what I do. Not only in *Ten* or in *ABC Africa*, but in many of my older films such as *Homework*, *Case No. 1*, *Case No.2*, I never use the term *Metteur-en-scene*. Neither of these terms is right for describing what I do, that's why I've stopped using these titles. In the end credits I simply list the names of those who have worked on films, without mentioning their functions. This is because I've never lent order to anything; I've never been a *Metteur-en-scene* and I've never realised or materialised anything, never been a *Realisateur*. Reality existed and was constantly being played out before me, or out of my sight. I was merely there to record it.

In *Ten* of course I was involved in the general creation of that reality, but I had no part in the details. The characters in this film were so real, they didn't need continuous manipulation. They weren't just parts, but they were extremely strong and real characters, where as work on the film when along found a new situation and character. This is the outcome of this way of working. When you have non-professional Actors you need a non-professional Director and a different kind of directing. This kind of co-operation produces a very satisfactory result. *Ten* was the result of such work. In the first chapter of *Ten* with the choice of the boy and limiting of the chapter to him I had two things in mind. One was filming all his reactions which were generally better than he spoke his lines. Secondly it would make us curious about his mother. As she remained faceless, every mother would be able to see himself as the boy's mother.

We all march to reality in cinema but shattering this reality is the first step in making a film like this. My voice is mine and when I talk, the harmony between my voice and my image confirms this reality. Separating the voice from the image leads us to a new concept which is the very aesthetics of cinema. In cinema one can look at everything in an abstract way. This has been done in a painting and poetry for thousands of years. When we omit the colour green from a leaf we see the leaf in a different way. We can then give the colour green to the sky so we can see the leaf independently of its colour, and see the sky in a new way, a non-blue sky. As Zuffez says, we will see a green field and the sickle of the new moon. By disassociating things we can find new meanings in them; this is absolutely different from a film based entirely on reality.

Sound and image are two absolutely different elements. Neither of them can be replaced by the other; their existence should be considered independently. Sound neither backs image, nor image sound, but if used well sound can create an image in the viewer's mind; it has a kind of aesthetic of its own. When we avoid the literary narration of a story, the explanation of reality, a familiar theatrical architecture, the art director, the sophisticated settings, the special effects and false emotions what remains? Concerning this Bresson was talking not of cinema but of cinematography.

(Vision cuts to footage from *Ten*, MS boy in passenger seat talking with Driver (his Mother) as they move through city traffic. VO AK.) A critic said of *Ten* what would remain of *Ten* if the dialogues were cut out? He believed that nothing would remain. So now we'll cut the dialogues to see what remains. **(Vision of footage from *Ten* continues with dialogue only muted. Boy is reacting to his mother - revealing clearly this stage in their relationship.) (VO KS returns.)** Do you think that these movements mean nothing without the dialogues, that they don't convey anything to us? Now let's turn off the image to see what kind of feeling you get from the dialogue. **(Vision fades to black, vocal argument between son and mother is in progress, the Mother pointing out to the boy the compromised position of women in Iranian society – subtitled in English.) (Vision returns to MCU AK int car from ext car, ext in background, a greener landscape; he is driving as he speaks.)** I believe they leave the same impact on the viewer, only separately. Of course together they follow the narrative line, making it more agreeable for a viewer who wants a film to tell a story.

The thoughts more attractive for viewers - is cinema about story telling or is it about reality? I believe the first step in the aesthetics of cinema is to break this reality. In practice we separate details from each other and in reassembling them we get something new which is absolutely different from everyday reality. Every film **(vision cuts to footage from *Ten*, MS boy passenger in car; VO AK)** is based on a human architecture which is absolutely different from everyday realities. **(Vision cuts back and forth between MS driver, Mother of the boy and MS boy. VO AK.)** In real life this woman is this boy's real mother and he is her real son. In another film they would be two completely different characters from the ones they embody in *Ten*. So *Ten* makes an unreal film out of an existing reality. It's independent of everyday reality but I believe it's close to the truth. This is the essence of Art. Even when a film is based on true stories, with real people entangled in their every day lives, the film is different from that reality.

Another critic said that he had watched the film twice, once in *Carne* with sub-titles and once in Italy where the film was dubbed in Italian. In both cases he saw the film as an aggression against cinema because he believed that it distanced the viewer from the reality of the film. The reality of a film is not in a kind of story telling that leads to an eventual judgement, separating the bad guys from the good guys and passing judgement on them. I don't believe cinema should give us the opportunity of acting as judges.

I remember 20 years ago in Paris watching a Swedish film with French sub-titles. The film was called "Sen da le de corjengal"(?). At that time I couldn't understand a word of French, I still can't. However, I watched the film for three hours without understanding a word of it. When I came out of the theatre I bought another ticket for the same movie and watched it once again. I had a strange feeling when I left the theatre after six hours. Several years later the translated screen play came out and I finally understood the film. I realised that what I had guessed about the couple in the film was in fact very different; although as a viewer I had enjoyed my version better. We cannot consider the psychology of the film and forget about that of the viewer.

I don't believe a film is to be understood. Do we understand a piece of music, do we understand a painting, or the exact meaning of a poem. It's ambiguity that attracts us to a work, not understanding the subject or the story. **However, human beings are standing between heaven and hell because of their existential ambiguity and Art displays this ambiguity.** Pascal, a French philosopher, said that you cannot show a single event in somebody's life and claim to have said everything about him. The secret department of the soul prevents this, and this is what becomes the plinth, the basis of the art of cinema. I believe we can make the viewer experience mortal effort by using omission. He can become involved in the making of the film through his imagination. For the creative viewer this involvement is more interesting than false climaxes or the playing of ridiculous guessing games. Once again I would like to quote Bresson who said "we create not by adding but by subtracting". This is exactly the opposite of resorting to symbols, allegories and signs, and once again I would like to quote Nietzsche who said "that which is truly deep, needs a mask".

I believe one can find out more about the power of cinema through delation (inform against) rather than through the extensive use of tools and technical capabilities. In *Ten* I limited camera angles and reduced the number of shots to a minimum. It appears though that modern filmmakers feel obliged to use all these new technical possibilities. They go through the catalogues and order new tools, Technicians learn how to use them, then the Producers impose them on Screen-writers and Directors; and the Directors feel obliged to use these new tools.

(Vision cuts to WS landscape, vehicle enters scene driving along a dirt track along the side of a hill, moving toward camera.) Ermanno Olmi has been quoted as saying that the first generation of filmmakers looked at life and films. The second generation of filmmakers looked at films of the first generation, looked at life and made films. The third generation just watched the films of the first and second generation and made films. The fourth generation, which is us, looks neither at life, nor watches the films; we merely go through the catalogues and base our movies on technical capabilities. I don't think cinema needs all these technical tools. A camera, three lenses and a couple of tripods will do. Just like in the early days of cinema. They made their films with so little.

10. THE LAST LESSON (film head count 10)

(MCU AK int car from ext car, ext in background, a landscape; he is driving along the top of the hill as he speaks.)

In the last lesson about *Ten* I would like to point out a few cases which may cause misunderstanding to those who see or listen to these lessons. I feel a special responsibility towards these students and would like to point out a few essential points.

Hitchcock made his films with such exemplary accuracy that he could have made his films even by telephone. He worked with an extremely professional crew who could put his ideas on film, even in his absence. This is an admirable method, but I'm self taught. I made my films with children, ordinary people, and in real settings, in the absolutely experimental and self-taught way. I've never studied cinema, never had the experience of working with production crews and I want to point out that I've never been an Assistant Director.

So obviously I started out as a self-taught director and I'm afraid that being self-taught may result in bad teaching in these lessons. Therefore let me remind you that my method is not based on other methods of film-making with professional actors and extensive modern technical capabilities. This is my way, this is my method, which is only one method among many others. To be honest with you, particularly with film students, I should stress another point. It's the

responsibility of an artist to be realistic, even if we don't want to accept reality, especially when it does not comply with our taste. We must perceive the reality and make it the starting point of any change.

The reality is that when we hear the word Museum, we think of the Louvre in spite of the fact that there are endless other museums all over the world. When we hear cinema, we think Hollywood, whether we like it or not. In my opinion the power of American cinema is even greater than American military might. In the long run the presence of American cinema across the globe could create more problems than its military presence. This is a reality we should accept. I remember seven or eight years at the Locarno Film Festival I was present at the screening of an American movie at an open air theatre with a capacity of four to five thousand. It was a full house and when the film ended it was booed and whistled at by everybody. Simpleton that I was I thought the American cinema had declined and they should think of something new for their cinema. The audience had shown a negative reaction and movie theatres were going to run empty. But two nights later another American film screened and it was full house. It was standing room only and that was under a fine rain. I should point out that during the ten days of the festival only American films went out to a full house. Of course this is nothing new, I just want to remind you that in most European countries American movies occupy more than 90% of the screens. Thus you ought to take seriously a kind of cinema that has been so successful on five continents.

I remember a speech made by former French President Mitterrand at the Elyse Palace towards the end of his life at the 100th anniversary of the birth of cinema. In it he called upon film-makers to resist the phenomenon of American cinema. But we should be realistic about this and ask how? This love hate relationship with America has taken root everywhere even among those who are apparently unconcerned. The slogan 'death to America' has perhaps not been chanted in any other country more than in my own, Iran. The cultural policy makers of our country are no exception. They too support the filmmakers who, on their own scale, use American cinema as their blue print. Of course they have their reasons for this.

A friend of mine told me something many years ago, which I did not listen to. I'm going to tell it to you and you are free to listen to it or not. I didn't listen to my friend because it was too late for me. I told you that I am self taught and that I learn things the hard way. You are not self taught otherwise you wouldn't be listening to me. You can go your own way without thinking about your success or failure; but in order to learn one must learn to listen. He told me: while others are cultivating acres of land you grow vegetables in a flower pot. What he meant was that making films which would be screened at one or two theatres was like growing vegetables in a flower pot. Another film-maker friend told me: all nations of the world regardless of their culture, ethnic origin nation and language, have a Native American Indian heart in their chest.

If you want to be successful you should talk at this heart and preoccupy the brain, so as not to let them think. You must move them, reduce them to tears, laughter, and fear. Use every instrument at your disposal to captivate the viewer. This is the secret behind the success of American cinema. American cinema has not become successful without good reason, and neither has America. If you want to be successful film-makers, **(stops vehicle)** I suggest as another film-maker, that you never forget the formula of American cinema.

Now take a look at some scenery instead of my ugly mug, while I turn off the camera on the other side. **(AK leaves the car. Int car, tree and landscape in vision. AK VO.)** Well, before turning off the camera I'd like to show you something which reminds me of a Japanese Haiku **(he takes camera to the back of the vehicle, and puts a single tree with landscape in background in the focus. AK VO continues as camera angles down to earth, to zoom in to**

CU of ant hole with ants carrying food into their nest.) The Haiku goes: This cedar tree on top the hill, on whom does it pride itself ... and something else. Light the fire and I'll show you something; something invisible if you don't wish to see it, something which cannot be heard, if you don't wish to listen to its breath. **(Fade to black.)**

CREDITS:

Hamayoun Payvar

Kamyar Minoukadeh

Mazdak Supanlou

Bahman Kiarostami

And

Translation and Adaptation, Voice and Script International, London

Voice Over: Steve Gadler

Dubbing and Mixing El;ude / Digimage Eric Ducher

Technical Facilities RGB

Excerpts

Making of "The Taste of Cherry" Abbas Kiarostami © 1997 Abbas Kiarostami

ABC Africa Abbas Kiarostami © 2001 MK2

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