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The 'New Iranian Cinema': New Cinema? New Iranians?

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The distinctive forms and achievements of Iranian cinema have provided both a focus and a forum for discussions about what for- eign audiences look for, and see, in these films. Not least of the achievements of Iranian cinema has been that it provides both a so- cial critique and a forum for discussion be- tween Iranians inside and outside the country. The internal success of the 'New Iranian Cinema' is that it has broken through the ideological straightjacket of the past, and has allowed for new themes and ideas to be explored.

The New Iranian Cinema, in June and July 1999 the National Film Theatre in London screened over 50 Iranian films, made before and after the 1978-79 Revolution. The proceedings of the accompanying conference have now been published. Contributors review the development of Iranian cinema before the Revolution, efforts to cre- ate an Islamic cinema afterwards, and the subsequent international success of the 'New Iranian Cinema'. Typi- cal features of this cinema are examined: the blurring of boundaries between documentary and fiction, the focus on children as a focus, and the way the success of Iranian cinema has provid- ed a focus and a forum for Iranians to reconsider their national and cultural identity.

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