



◀ previous

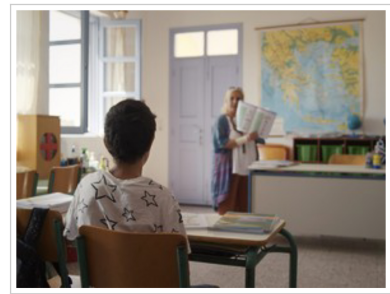
next ▶



VENICE 2022 Giornate degli Autori
Review: *Kristos, The Last Child*

by **DAVID KATZ**

© 16/09/2022 - VENICE 2022: Giulia Amati's insightful documentary follows a messianically named tyke who's the youngest person living on the 30-inhabitant-strong Greek island of Arki



ADVERTISEMENT



▶ trailers & videos

It's good to be surprised at film festivals, and how intriguing it is to be faced with an upsetting succession of downbeat scenes in Venice, in this sedate, minimalist character portrait set in a gorgeous Mediterranean clime. Maybe things cut that little bit deeper when you're a kid; director **Giulia Amati** twists the knife as she captures a long masterful shot of our focal figure, sixth-grader **Kristos Kabosos**, as he shoots hoops through a rickety basketball net on his absolute ownsome lonesome. Can a team sport such as this be enjoyed all alone, if we laugh less on our own and more enthusiastically with a group? The carefully captured sounds of island silence magnify this solitude even further. But some dramatic irony does remain: the film may tug at sympathetic audiences' heartstrings, but to what extent does this aura of nigh-on Beckettian loneliness actually affect the lad?

A test case for how a community portrait in a developed country can feel ethnographical [*ed-meaning a study of the social customs of a remote society*] when viewed from a certain angle, Amati's documentary *Kristos, The Last Child* [+], which is premiering in the Venetian Nights section of this year's **Giornate degli Autori**, brings insight and tiny touches of poetry throughout its short runtime. It accomplishes something which many of the best documentaries achieve: it brings numerous diverse and disparate issues to light through a modest, unassuming entry point. Yet its upbeat ending and positive trajectory for Kristos also leave a slightly sugary aftertaste. This tonal issue is the only drawback in this very well-thought-out and artfully shot work, which conveys a real sense of where southern Continental Europe might be heading as we move through the 2020s.

After establishing Kristos as a youngster with almost the entire island to himself, if not for his family who've kept up a thriving livestock trade for generations, the film's other primary focus can be summed up by a famous political pledge made by the former leader of the UK Tony Blair: "education, education, education." We witness many scenes of Kristos and his heroic schoolteacher Maria working through the sixth-grade syllabus, emphasising his isolation within the well-appointed classroom as opposed to a private tutor-type relationship. Kristos is a dab hand at maths and the basic science syllabus - in one scene, Maria insists that he could be a botanist or an agronomist, practically directing her remark to the strictly observational camera.

The truly sad undertow of this film - a mix of Nicolas Philibert's orthodox documentary *Être et avoir* and Michelangelo Frammartino's quasi-doc *Le quattro volte* [+] - is that this Christ-like Kristos is wholly incapable of redeeming his family or the other inhabitants of Arki: his gifted nature can't help them to renew themselves or to return the island to a many-peopled paradise. Instead, his destiny is to leave for another school on a nearby island, affording him the socialisation which is so necessary for a young person's development. Another of the film's most telling scenes takes place in a barn, which is transformed into a matriarchal sanctuary where Arki's women are able to converse far away from the gaze of men; a shepherd's life is undoubtedly dignified, but has it been over-idealised, they wonder, while the interests of succeeding generations are left to wither?

Kristos, The Last Child is an Italian-French-Greek co-production by **Blink Blink Prod, Les Films de l'œil sauvage, Bad Crowd, RAI Cinema, E.R.T., ARTE France** and the Aljazeera Documentary Channel. World sales are managed by **Deckert Distribution**.

international title:	Kristos, The Last Child
original title:	Kristos, l'ultimo bambino
country:	Italy, France, Greece
sales agent:	Deckert Distribution
year:	2022
directed by:	Giulia Amati

Co-funded by the European Union Europe MEDIA

Subscribe to our newsletter to receive the most important daily or weekly news on European cinema

e-mail address

CLICK HERE TO SUPPORT UKRAINE

Donate and watch Ukrainian films