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Friday April 29th, 2016: 7.30pm

Rosewater

(USA 2014. Cert 15)

dir: Jon Stewart

starring: Gael Garcia Bernal, Kim Bodnia

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Newsweek reporter Maziar Bahari's first appointment in his native Tehran, having travelled from London to cover Iran's 2009 presidential election, is an interview with a young spokesperson at President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's campaign HQ. Watching from the sidelines, Davood - Bahari's driver and a supporter of Mir-Hossein Mousavi - scoffs at the young man's pious intensity: "Who talks like that?" The same could be asked of the liberal Davood and other satellite characters in *Rosewater*, whose expositional first third is awash with this kind of clumpy overdetermined dialogue.

Similarly wanting for sophistication and groping towards a greater refinement is the film's title character Rosewater, a prison guard named for the toilet water that announces him to the blindfolded Bahari (Gael Garcia Bernal), who has been incarcerated on a charge of espionage for disseminating footage of pro-government forces firing at protesters following Ahmadinejad's re-election (judged by Mousavi's voters to be rigged). In Evin prison, Iran's biggest and most notorious gaol, Rosewater has been put in charge of Bahari and told that he requires more than the routine "fist". This suits Rosewater - not because he has developed an aversion to violence but because he believes himself to be meant for better things than the beatings he administers by rote: punishing a prisoner to confession point by purely psychological torture fits the hubristic image he nurtures of himself, and gives him hope of winning the respect of his superiors. His motivation then is no more complex - and no less human, the film would argue - than workaday professional dissatisfaction.

Rosewater is the writing-directing debut of satirist Jon Stewart, who stepped down from a 16-year stint as host of *The Daily Show* following the film's Telluride premiere. It seems an unusual film on which he should choose to cut his teeth. But Stewart has stated that feelings of "guilt and atonement" were behind his decision to option Bahari's 2011 best-selling memoir *Then They Came for Me*. Mr Stewart's perceived culpability derives from a spoof interview that Bahari conducted in Iran with *The Daily Show's* Jason Jones, a recording of which was used as evidence of his alleged espionage.

Clearly enamoured of Bahari's ability to spar with his captor, Stewart lets his protagonist's seditious sense of humour dominate the film, punctuating fraught interrogation scenes with flighty irony. The kind of humour that will out no matter what, and is dangerous, is what appeals to Stewart, along with Bahari's intellect. *Rosewater* positions itself as the thinking man's survival film, wherein triumph over adversity rests on the resourcefulness of the trapped male; it is, as such, a cerebral counterpart to Danny Boyle's *127 Hours* (2010).

But there's an irony that Stewart overlooks. Bahari's method of



survival is to use Rosewater's sexuality against him, mollifying him Scheherazade-style with tall stories of massages, wanton women and orgies. Lucky for Bahari that he only has to talk about such matters to win the esteem of his captor. Not so a woman, who - in Evin prison, as a matter of course - would be raped, or raped, beaten and killed, as was female journalist Zahra Kazemi in 2003. Irrespective of her intelligence, a woman would not have been able to assuage her jailer with easy-come chauvinist chit-chat in the way that Bahari does.

Of course, survival isn't relative; Bahari does what he must. As he jets out of Tehran a free man, a would-be sobering, panoptic

Synopsis: Tehran, 2009. Iranian-Canadian journalist Maziar Bahari travels from London to cover Iran's presidential election for "Newsweek" magazine. He meets Davood, a supporter of reformist candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi, and takes part in a satirical interview with "The Daily Show's" Jason Jones. Filming on the streets on election day, Bahari is surprised to hear of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's victory before polling has concluded. When the election is declared rigged, Bahari films the ensuing protests, and sends footage of shots fired at demonstrators to the BBC. He is arrested and taken to Evin prison, where he remains in solitary confinement for 118 days. During this time, he is tortured by an interrogator nicknamed Rosewater, pressed to confess to spying on behalf of foreign intelligence agencies and coerced into apologising on television for conspiring with western media to tarnish Iran's electoral process. Following international pressure, Bahari is freed. He flies home to his pregnant wife.

Credits

Maziar Bahari	Gael Garcia Bernal	Director	Jon Stewart
Rosewater	Kim Bodnia	Screenplay	Jon Stewart
Paola	Claire Foy	DoP	Bobby Bukowski
Davood	Dmitri Leonidas	Editing	Jay Rabinowitz
Moloojoon	Shohreh Aghdashloo	Music	Howard Shore
Maryam	Golshifteh Farahani	Production Design	Gerald Sullivan
Baba Akbar	Haluk Bilginer	Sound recording	Falah Hannouin
		Costume	Phaedra Dahdaleh

USA 2014. 103 mins

addendum about other detainees who have not had his "advantage of international attention" isn't enough to offset the general mood of jubilation that colours the last 20 minutes of the film, and which lacks propriety. But it gives pause for thought, which is what Stewart clearly intended.

Another view (Mark Kermode, The Observer)

Outgoing Daily Show host Jon Stewart writes and directs this adaptation of journalist Maziar Bahari's memoir Then They Came for Me, a story in which Stewart played a small but significant role. In 2009, ex-Daily Show correspondent Jason Jones conducted a spoof interview with Bahari on the eve of the Iranian elections wherein Jones jokingly claimed to be a spy. In the wake of the protests that followed Ahmadinejad's contested victory over Mir Hossein Mousavi (which Bahari filmed), the Iranian authorities arrested him, charging him with espionage and producing his Daily Show interview as evidence of his "guilt". For the next 118 days, Bahari was tortured and "interrogated", his prime tormentor being known to the prisoner only as Rosewater. Explaining that "the original impetus for the film came from my own feelings of guilt and atonement over what happened to him in Iran", Stewart offers a powerfully vindicating account of Bahari's Kafkaesque ordeal. The Mexican actor Gael Garcia Bernal makes a very sympathetic fist of playing the Tehran-born Bahari, but Danish Kim Bodnia is the movie's secret weapon as his tormentor, a tightly wound knot of fear and (self-)loathing whose fury toward his captive is fuelled by his own pathetically powerless circumstance. Directorially, it's nuts-and-bolts fare, the imagined apparition of Bahari's father (Haluk Bilginer) being one of its few stylistic flourishes. But the story is engrossing and enraging, and Stewart takes care to remind us that the real victims of oppressive regimes are those who live with them on a daily basis.

Programme news

The following films (in alphabetical order) have been selected (subject to confirmation) for our 2016-17 season.

Attila Marcel (France 2014)	Men and Chicken (Denmark 2015)
Bande à Part (France 1964)	Mustang (Turkey/France/Qatar/Germany 2015)
The Brand New Testament (Belgium/France/Luxembourg 2015)	Our Little Sister (Japan 2015)
The Commune (Denmark 2016)	The Pearl Button (Chile 2015)
Dheepan (France 2015)	Rams (Iceland 2015)
Embrace of the Serpent (Colombia/Argentina/Venezuela 2015)	Sherpa (Australia/UK 2015)
Grandma (USA, 2015).	Son of Saul (Hungary 2015)
Little Men (USA/Greece 2016)	Tale of Tales (UK/France/Italy 2015)
The Lobster (UK 2015)	Tangerine (USA 2015)
Love and Friendship (USA 2016)	Truman (Argentina/Spain 2015)
Maggie's Plan (USA 2016)	Victoria (Germany 2015)
	A War (Denmark 2015)

As in previous years, 3 additional films will be chosen from those released during the summer and autumn. Dates for the season are as follows:

Sept: 16, 23	Nov: 4, 11, 18, 25	Mar: 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
Oct: 14, 21, 28	Jan: 6, 13, 20, 27	Apr: 7, 21, 28
	Feb: 3, 17, 24	May: 5, 12

We aim to release the final programme in print & online in June.

On The Record

In keeping with the summer seasons of recent years, we have organised a short programme of 6 music documentaries between June 10th and June 22nd. Details of the films are below.

Muscle Shoals (USA 2013. 111 mins. Cert PG), showing on June 10 at The Venue (7.30pm)

A film that pays tribute to the prestigious recording studios in a small Alabama town, featuring the likes of Aretha Franklin and Percy Sledge.

The Possibilities are Endless (UK 2014. 83 mins. Cert 12a): showing on June 12 at The Collection (2pm)

Recovering from a stroke, Formner Orange Juice front man Edwyn Collins reflects on his childhood and the positive power of music.

Marley (UK/USA 2012. 142 mins. Cert 15): showing on June 15 at The EMMTEC (7pm)

In Kevin MacDonald's much-praised documentary, the music of the legendary Bob Marley is extensively showcased and the important themes of his life eloquently portrayed.

Mistaken for Strangers (USA 2014. 75 mins. Cert 15): showing on June 17 at The EMMTEC (7pm)

Tom Berninger chronicles his time spent on the road as a member of the tour crew for The National, the rock and roll band fronted by his brother, Matt.

20 Feet from Stardom (USA 2013. 89 mins. Cert 12): showing on June 19 at The Collection (2pm)

In this documentary, the spotlight is turned from the stars onto their talented but unheralded backing singers.

Orion: The Man who would be King (UK/USA. 2015. 86 mins. Cert 12a): showing on June 22 at The EMMTEC (7pm)

The bizarre story of Jimmy Ellis, aka Orion, a masked singer who impersonated Elvis in the years following the star's death

NB: The film will be introduced by the director Jeanie Finlay and will be followed by a Q & A.

Tickets for each film will be available on the door. They will also be on sale at our films on May 6th, May 13th and May 27th to members and anyone attending as a guest: cost - £4 (LFS members and all concessions), £5 (non members)

Our next screening - Friday May 6th Tangerines (Estonia 2013 Cert 15. 83 mins)

A deeply affecting anti-war movie, *Tangerines* takes a simple story and weaves it into a rich drama; deftly balancing pathos, black humour and a pacifist critique of unnecessary violence. It takes place during the short but brutal war between Georgia and Abkhazia in 1992. In a neutral Estonian village over the border most villagers have fled the encroaching conflict, but Ivo, an elderly farmer, stays behind to help his friend Magnus with the harvest, before it goes to waste. The war soon arrives on Ivo's doorstep when two Chechen mercenaries get into a firefight on the road leading to the farm. After the battle Ivo finds two survivors, both badly injured: one of the mercenaries and a Georgian soldier who is in a critical condition. Ivo devotes himself to caring for the two whilst trying to keep the peace between them - particularly as Ahmed, the Chechen mercenary is determined to take revenge for his fallen comrade as soon as he is well enough.

Zaza Urushadze's assured direction is completed by the tremendous performance by Lembit Ulfsak, a veteran actor all but unknown on UK screens. This film has been widely praised by audiences and critics alike. Do come.