

ALSO  
SHOWING

# How South Africa was shaken by Sugar Man

**Jason Solomons**

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During the Seventies, the most popular recording artist in the white areas of South Africa was a man called Rodriguez – a folk singer with a nice line in protest psychedelia; a Bob Dylan-style pop poet chronicling the decay of urban America.

For listeners in that boycotted, apartheid society, Rodriguez was a mystery man. He was rumoured to have committed suicide on stage by blowing his brains out. Other fables said he set himself on fire.

Outside South Africa, hardly anyone was playing Rodriguez records. In his home town of Detroit he had the support of major record producers, but couldn't get his career off the ground. Little did he know that in South Africa he was outselling Elvis.

So new documentary *Searching For Sugar Man* (12A) ★★★★★ has two stories to tell. First, it's about South Africa, censorship, myth, and the opening up of a society. Rodriguez's most famous song was Sugar Man and it was banned by state radio. Second, the film is about Rodriguez himself.

*Searching For Sugar Man* comes from the producer of that wonderful film *Man On Wire*, and similarly uses reconstruction, interview and research to tell its story.

By the end, we care for the man, his music and even those once-unloved white South Africans.

The restaurant El Bulli and its chef Ferran Adria have been acknowledged as the finest in the world. Not that you'd know it from *El Bulli: Cooking In Progress* (12A) ★★. It's a clinically detached documentary about the attention to detail that goes into each dish served at the foodie haven on the Costa Brava, a joint that used to close for half the year to allow its chefs to experiment with new ingredients in their high-tech bunker in Barcelona.

Film-maker Gereon Wetzels has tried to do something as avant garde with his film as Adria does with his food, but the result is bland. I'm not asking for Gregg Wallace salivating over a chocolate mousse, but I would have liked some idea as to how the vanishing ravioli tastes.

The food in *Woman In A Dressing Gown* (PG) ★★★★★ – a forgotten 1957 slice of British kitchen-sink realism – consists mainly of burned eggs and bacon from the frying pan of Amy (Yvonne Mitchell). As the titular housewife, she struggles to remain chipper while her husband (Anthony Quayle) has an affair with his icy blonde secretary Georgie (Sylvia Syms).

This is one of the year's great and most merited rediscoveries.

#### **SOUND SUCCESS:**

Singer Rodriguez out-sold Elvis in South Africa

