

Searching For Sugar Man

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ANDY'S RATING: ★★★★★

In cinemas on Thursday



IN the early 1970s Detroit singer/songwriter Sixto Rodriguez made two failed albums then disappeared. Some said he shot himself on stage. Others that he doused himself in petrol and set himself on fire.

But weirdly those rumours were forged in the far off country of South Africa. In the rest of the world nobody gave a hoot what had happened to him.

This extraordinary documentary

reveals how the forgotten American became one of the most influential artists of apartheid era South Africa.

Thanks to bootleg copies, his protest songs hit a nerve with white middle-class youngsters who were sick of their oppressive racist government.

Legit South African re-issues followed and soon Rodriguez was outselling the Rolling Stones and becoming more revered than Elvis Presley. The

South African government's ham-fisted attempts to silence him (the vinyl was scratched on Rodriguez's most contentious tracks) only ended up adding to his legend.

By the 1990s South African journalist Craig Bartholomew

and record shop owner Steve "Sugar" Segerman had had enough.

With the help of the new-fangled World Wide Web they embarked on a mission to track down the spokesman of their generation. I'm not going to spoil

the twist by revealing what their ridiculously improbable discovery was.

You probably wouldn't believe me anyway.

But I will say that Malik Bendjelloul's near-perfect film crafts suspense, comedy and a conclusion touching enough to leave your hankie in shreds.

Perhaps there's one more twist to come and Rodriguez's talent will finally get the global recognition it deserves.

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