



Searching for Sugarman

12 CERT, STUDIO CANAL, £17.99 ★★★★★

Music documentaries came thick and fast in 2012, but this one was the best and easily the most successful.

That's mainly because it's such an extraordinary story. Rodriguez, a Mexican-American singer-songwriter from Detroit, released two albums around 1970 which barely caused a ripple. But bootleg copies found their way to South Africa, where their counter-culture attitude found favour with anti-apartheid white audiences. No one there



Sweet-natured spirit: Rodriguez

knew the first thing about him – indeed rumour had it he had died by his own hand – but he became as big as the Rolling Stones.

Unaware of his distant fame, this modest man scraped a living doing construction work. Only when two South African fans, a record store owner and a journalist, resolved to track him down was he “discovered” and began to enjoy his late-blooming success.

It's a heartening, uplifting film, touched by the shy, sweet-natured spirit of Rodriguez; you find yourself willing him to succeed. Director Malik Bendjelloul structures his story skilfully, and in a 30-minute “making of” extra, engagingly relates how he came close to abandoning *Searching for Sugarman* because he had run out of money. He emerges every bit as much of an underdog as Rodriguez himself.
David Gritten