

Blu-ray Review: 'Searching For Sugar Man' Driven By Great Music

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 29, 2013 - 9:14pm

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CHICAGO – Malik Bendjelloul's "Searching For Sugar Man" is a beloved documentary that not only made a nice dent at the box office (\$3 million, a solid figure for a doc and 5th place on the year for the genre) but earned an Oscar nomination for Best Documentary. Now on Blu-ray and DVD, it's the kind of film that I expect to find a huge audience on the home market, pushed along by solid word-of-mouth and, most importantly, killer tunes.

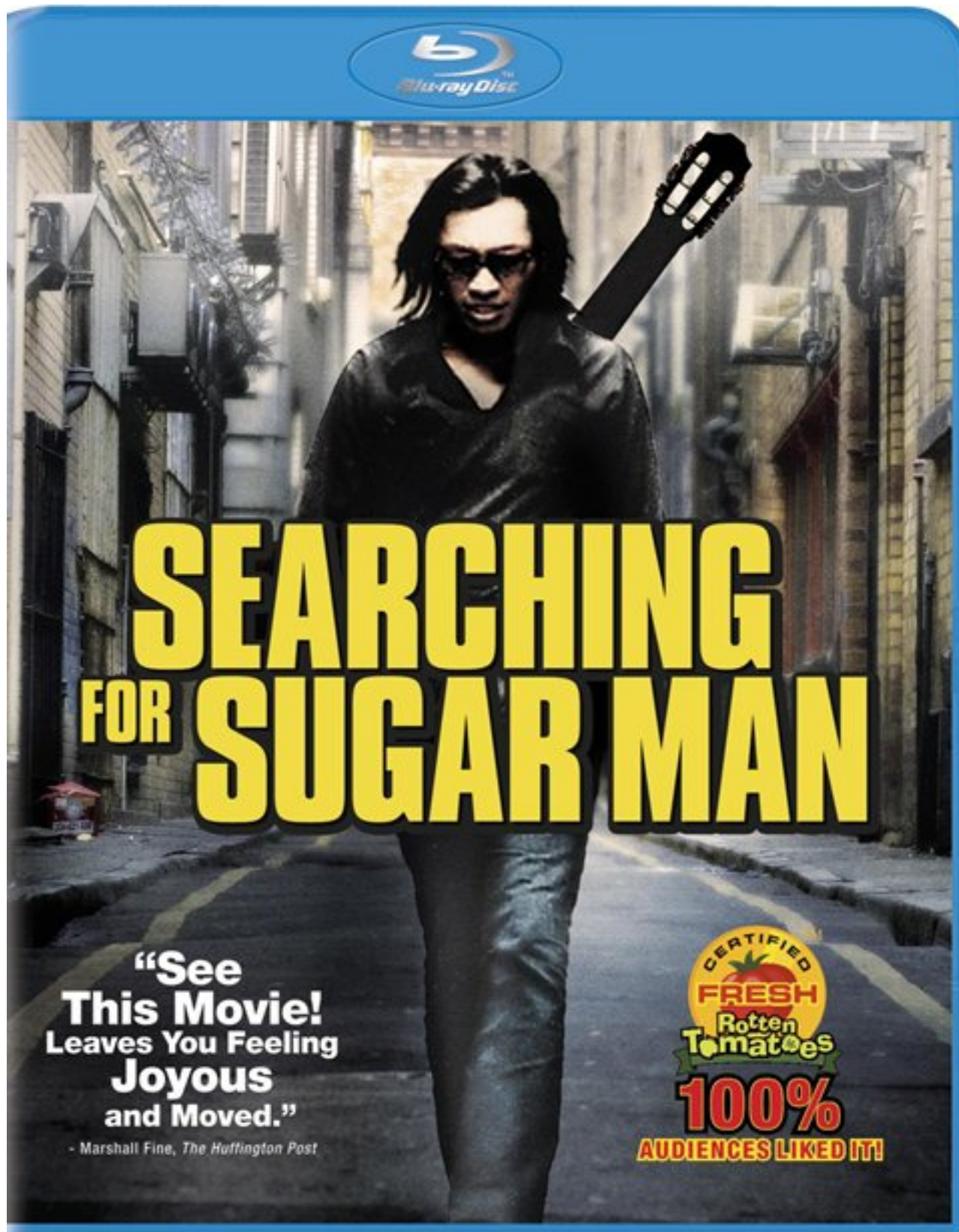


Blu-ray Rating: **3.5/5.0**

Rodriguez was a stellar talent. His two recordings, "Cold Fact" and "Coming From Reality," should have made him a singer-songwriter superstar in the '70s. In fact, the best thing about Bendjelloul's movie is how much it focuses on the actual music, often letting large portions of the songs play out to give you a full flavor of Rodriguez's talent. As we know, talent doesn't always equal fame and Rodriguez never sold a measurable amount in the States and he drifted off into music history with some even reporting that he had killed himself on stage. Over the next two decades, Rodriguez became a superstar in South Africa, as his music even became the anthem for the end of apartheid. And that caused people to try and track him down.

The music and true story of Rodriguez are undeniably fascinating but I'm a little surprised that "Sugar Man" has reached a level of acclaim equivalent to great 2012 docs like "The Invisible War," "The Central Park Five," and "West of Memphis." In fact, I think Bendjelloul misses some key aspects of the story, like why Rodriguez never took off in the '70s and who exactly collected his royalties for the decades afterwards. He does make some very smart decisions, especially allowing for ample time for Rodriguez's beautiful, well-spoken daughters and focusing as much on the music as he does, but "Searching For Sugar Man" is a good movie, not a great one.

As for special features, the best is "An Evening with Malik Bendjelloul and Rodriguez," which features an uncut performance by the man. I wish the Blu-ray had more actual concert footage but maybe they can save that for the sequel.



Searching For Sugar Man
Photo credit: Sony

Synopsis:

SEARCHING FOR SUGAR MAN tells the incredible true story of Rodriguez the greatest '70s rock icon who never was. After being discovered in a Detroit bar Rodriguez's sound struck 2 renowned producers and they signed a recording deal. But when the album bombed the singer disappeared into obscurity. A bootleg recording found its way into apartheid South Africa and over the next two decades he became a phenomenon. The film follows the story of two South African fans who set out to find out what really happened to their hero.

Special Features:

- o Commentary with Director Malik Bendjelloul and Musician Rodriguez
- o An Evening with Malik Bendjelloul and Rodriguez
- o Making Sugar Man

"Searching For Sugar Man" was released on Blu-ray and DVD on January 22, 2013.



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