

THE SALESMAN (Forushande)

Iran (2016) 124 minutes

Director: Asghar Farhadi

Written by: Asghar Farhadi

Cast: Taraneh Alidoosti (Ranaa), Shahab Hosseini (Emad), Babak Karimi (Babak)



Screening 31 January 2018 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

Forced to leave their collapsing house, Ranaa and Emad, a young Iranian couple who happen to be performers rehearsing for an amateur performance of Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman*, rent an apartment in the centre of Tehran from one of their fellow performers. Ranaa is assaulted by an intruder in her new home and the aftermath is a life-altering situation for the couple.

Reviews



It's a surprise to find a classic post-war play by a Jewish-American playwright at the centre of a new Iranian film.

Farhadi is far too sly and subtle a filmmaker to draw the parallels between Emad and Willy Loman in too obvious a fashion. Nonetheless, what gives the film a searing emotional impact is the way it exposes the hidden flaws in its main character.

It's a characteristic of many Iranian films that small-scale domestic incidents can take on an epic quality. In Jafar Panahi's allegorical *The White Balloon* (1995), for example, an entire feature film hinges on a seven-year-old kid's quest to buy a goldfish. Here, the mood is darker but there is the same relentless focus on a single goal.

The Salesman is shot in the director's familiar realist fashion, with long takes and naturalistic performances. Farhadi focuses on what seem like banal everyday moments – negotiations over rent, shopping for groceries or bread, conversations on cell phones – but gradually gives us a far more nuanced view of his characters and their motivations than we would get in a more conventional film. In Farhadi's universe, ambiguity reigns and everyone is capable of duplicity.

Geoffrey Macnab, The Independent

With the obvious visual links between the film's story and that of Arthur Miller's work, with the events happening off-stage affecting how the performances sway those on it, Farhadi's film brings to the surface our human condition to avenge, to make right the wrongs that have been done, but here amplified higher when the local law enforcement seem unmoved. Emad's conscience begins to evade him as day-by-day his rage, and resentment of the police and himself, boil over despite Ranaa desperately trying to forget the horrible incident. Farhadi has always been adept at telling stories about real human conditions and emotions and here is no different – it's a compelling, reflective central conceit; one which raises many questions as to what we as an audience would do in similar circumstances.

Driving Farhadi's stirring and gripping tale are the superb assortment of performances from all involved, led by exquisite turns from leads Hosseini and Alidoosti. Reteaming with the director again after 2011's equally impressive *A Separation*, Hosseini excels once more in what might be the actor's best performance yet, one that is both powerful and meditative. Alidoosti, meanwhile, is equally staggering as Ranaa as she wrestles with her own guilt as well as her desperation to try to erase such trauma from her mind. The ensemble too is excellent, Karimi in particular, shining throughout.

Scott Davis, Filmoria

Film Facts

- The film won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 2017.
- Farhadi boycotted the Oscar ceremony as a protest against US President Trump's travel ban stopping citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries, including Iran, from entering the US. Farhadi's address was read to the ceremony.
- Farhadi's earlier film *A Separation* (also shown by SFS) won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 2012.