



fish

A Hero
(Iran/France 2021)

Spoiler alert: You may prefer to read this review after the screening

DIRECTOR : Asghar Farhadi

RUNNING TIME : 127 mins

RATING :

Synopsis:

A morality tale set in Iran. Ramin is serving a prison sentence for financial crimes after going bankrupt and failing to repay a loan. Will a chance to pay back some of the money offer an opportunity to get his life back on track?

Review: Dave Calhoun

The Iranian writer-director of *A Separation* returns with a similarly brilliant morality tale set in his home country

Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi won all sorts of plaudits a decade ago (including the Foreign Language Oscar) for his Tehran-set divorce drama *A Separation*. This is a similarly clear-eyed, precise and thrilling work that begins with an endearing but also slightly unreadable man, Ramin (Amir Jadidi) leaving prison on temporary leave. Ramin is serving a sentence for financial crimes after going bankrupt and failing to pay back a loan to his former father-in-law, Brahm (Mohsen Tanabandeh). Now back in the city of Shiraz for a few days, Ramin has a chance to pay back some of that money, get his life back on track and regain some of his dignity. Is it a fool's mission, or a noble break for regained glory?

Ramin's plan is fragile. It revolves around selling 17 gold coins found abandoned in a handbag by his new partner, Farkhondeh (Sahar Goldust), who picks Ramin up from prison and who Ramin would like to marry – if only he can persuade her brother that he's not a deadbeat with no prospects. At every turn, judgement calls. Then our own questioning kicks into gear as Ramin's evolving scheme starts to look a little crazed to anyone with clear eyes.

Cont.

FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

10.00 am Sunday 17th September 2023

8.15 pm Tuesday 19th September 2023

Review: Cont.

Disappointed by a fall in the price of gold (although is that the real reason?), Ramin instead decides that celebrity is the way to regain the respect he so sorely needs in all areas of his life, from his financial situation to his relationship with his nervous son (who has a prominent stutter) and various members of his immediate and extended family. Ramin engineers a hero status for himself, declaring that he's found this treasure and putting up posters everywhere looking for its rightful owner. Soon, he's on TV, being championed as selfless – a prisoner who decided not to pocket this gold but instead hand it back. Not everyone is convinced. We watch through our hands as Ramin tries desperately to keep up this charade.

So much here rides on pride and dignity: the appearance of respectability is all. Status is key. Perhaps that's why Ramin digs a grave for himself into which we see him slipping deeper, scratching at the soil walls around him, although almost always with a warm smile, always trying to persuade someone of his worth. Farhadi handles all this brilliantly. It's tense and thought-provoking throughout.

Especially smart is the mist of ambiguity around Ramin's character that Farhadi never allows fully to clear. That handbag with 17 gold coins: it's a bit convenient, isn't it? A too-easy story device? Are we really meant to believe his girlfriend 'found' it in the street? Or is the film testing our own cynicism here, our own willingness to damn a man on the basis of his reputation? It's a superb morality play that immerses us deeply in a society's values and rituals and keeps us guessing right to its powerful final shot.

Source: www.timeout.com : Dave Calhoun 14/7/2021 ~ Edited extracts accessed 10/5/2022

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COMING UP

October	<i>The Blue Caftan</i> [Morocco]	Sunday 15 th & Tuesday 17 th
November	<i>Decision to Leave</i> [South Korea]	Sunday 19 th & Tuesday 21 st
December	<i>My Old School</i> [UK]	Sunday 10 th & Tuesday 12 th
February 2024	<i>Alcarras</i> [Spain]	Sunday 11 th & Tuesday 13 th

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Some Thoughts on: *Quo Vadis Aida*

Dear FISHERS,

I think that I have been a member of FISH for about ten years now and consequently have watched many movies of your choice; however, I cannot remember being so transfixed by a movie as I was by *Quo Vadis, Aida* last night - the 'pin drop' silence throughout the movie and afterwards spoke volumes. The realism at times was such that I almost believed that I was watching some contemporary documentary.

I do not of course enjoy all of the movies that FISH chooses for us and indeed still shudder when I think of *Antoinette in the Cevennes* but I applaud your decision to show 'Quo Vadis', I imagine that it would not have been an easy one to make.

Thank you, last night was precisely why I enjoy my FISH membership so much.

Best wishes,

Roger Thompson.

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Some Late Thoughts on: *Fire of Love*

I think I have mentioned before on these pages that, 'the Documentary' is, on balance, my very favourite film genre. *Fire of Love* is a perfect example of why that is so.

This compelling film had just about everything. Spectacular footage, heart stopping, high risk examinations and confrontations with volatile volcanic activity, devotion, passion, perseverance, insanity, bravery, humour, commitment, compassion and deep, deep love. All of which was actual and real. The intensity of the work that Katia and Maurice were engaged in was mesmerising. It was so much more than just work though... it WAS their lives.

So totally immersed and devoted to the science of vulcanology, that they made the logical, but selfless, decision not to have children, fully accepting the massive risks of their work and the virtually inevitable prospect of being killed by that work. Madness or extreme bravery for the advancement of scientific knowledge? Or both?

On a personal level, we shared the joy, warmth and love of these often, to us, foolhardy adventurers. What fantastic joy they found in each other's kindred spirit in both attitudes towards vulcanology and to life itself. Their happiness together was fulfilled every day, either in the field or writing, recording or talking about their life's work and passion.

The cinema was held in amazement, gripped and hushed by both the power of nature being so dramatically portrayed on screen and by the seemingly carefree and almost relaxed Krafft couple going about their 'dance of death' with those same terrifyingly lethal but so, so beautiful fickle forces.

The inevitability and sadness of their death was so very moving to experience. This was brilliantly powerful film making, equally extraordinary in its depiction of the spectacular forces of nature, and, in the depiction of a unique example of the ever- complex human condition.

Thank you, FISH, a stunning season opener!!! **Ross Armfield.**

Message from the President

We hope to see you at our AGM which will be held prior to our Sunday, September 17 screening of *A Hero*. The AGM will commence promptly at 9.30 at which time the doors will be closed. At the conclusion of the meeting those not attending will be admitted in time for our 10am screening.

Once again, we are indebted to Ross Armfield for his willingness to provide reviews of our films. We also look forward to his thoughts on *Quo Vadis Aida* which will appear in the October newsletter. Thanks also to Roger Thompson for his comments on that very powerful film.

My thanks to our committee members who have been so supportive during my tenure as President.

Sandra Gillespie

Musings on Barbie... received from former committee member Paul Williams

It is a very fine film indeed. It can be taken on so many levels. But at its heart, and it does have a very big heart, it is a film about what it means to be mutable and mortal.

The story, just like *Everything, Everywhere, All at Once*, is triggered by a dysfunctional mother / daughter relationship. While *Barbie* and *Barbieland* offer an immutable existence, real life can disappoint. Yeah, simple themes, but carried off so adeptly by Gerwig in this film.

Space Odyssey and *Blade Runner* are referenced in the film. I asked myself why?

Well, both films explore what it means to be human, with all our flaws, ego and our ability to build and destroy. We have a propensity to play god, a theme also explored in *Oppenheimer*, in destructive ways.

While the film looks, in more obvious ways, at female empowerment, or lack thereof, it also examines male empowerment through a critique of toxic masculinity and ego. The scene where the two Ken 'tribes' go to 'war' is at once comical and tragic. The absurdist visuals of faux violence parody the real violence of our world.

There is so much more to say, but I've said enough.

Like most things in life, go to this film with an open mind.



FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

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