

The Prince of Nothingwood

Cert 15 France /Afghanistan 2017 85 mins

Crew

Director Sonia Kronlund
 Cinematography Alexander Nanau
 Film Editing Sophie Brunet
 / George Cragg



Cast

Salim Shaheen himself
 Sonia Kronlund herself
 Qurban Ali himself

Synopsis

Salim Shaheen is the most popular and prolific Afghan director-actor-producer, who has self-produced and self-distributed 110 films in war-torn Afghanistan.

In this documentary, reporter and filmmaker Sonia Kronlund follows Shaheen from Kabul to Bamiyan to shoot scenes for Shaheen's latest film - or films! Like most of his other work, Shaheen is making this one with a few close friends (many of them war veterans like himself) who serve as both cast and skeleton crew, as well as a small video camera, a few Kalashnikovs and a box of live ammunition.

The result is a fascinating glimpse into filmmaking in a country at war, and a chance to meet a flamboyant character who continues his passion for making films despite lack of resources.



Booking Information

Distributor: Vertigo Releasing

DVD bookings:

0203 141 3440

info@vertigoreleasing.com

www.vertigoreleasing.com

Available: June



Reviews

...This is not just a crowd-tickling portrait of a fascinating, charismatic individual who cares more about cinema than safety. Shaheen and his small crew and cast don't just film in war zones, they also use real guns and bullets - and in one hilarious scene, ask to borrow Kronlund's own camera.

The Prince of Nothingwood also provides an unusual and probing study of Afghanistan relative to what we normally see. Kronlund and Shaheen tour villages and towns where Shaheen is a beloved figure mobbed by ordinary folk, the army and the Taliban alike. Meanwhile Kronlund's voiceover critiques her surroundings and the wider society, highlighting scenes it is not possible for her to film, such as women watching Shaheen's films. We see his romances and revenge stories play to packed town halls full of men instead...

Isabel Stevens, Sight and Sound, September 2017

...While Shaheen is in some ways a comical figure (a view only encouraged by his high-volume jollity), French documentarian Sonia Kronlund never lets him become a joke. His output may be no-budget and pitched somewhere between Bollywood and Chuck Norris, but to many in his perpetually war-torn homeland he is a true hero, offering escapism to people living in what he calls "a savage world".

Kronlund never loses sight of the surroundings and keeps the context in sharp focus. As well as studying the man himself, she invites his collaborators into the frame (such as the daringly camp actor Qurban Ali, who takes most of the female roles) and through them composes a fascinating portrait of everyday life in one of the world's most dangerous countries.

Neither does she let Shaheen off the hook. She questions and highlights his refusal to introduce her to his two wives and six daughters (while filling a room with his eight sons), and shows how he can fly into rages and sulks, even while shamelessly requisitioning her own crew to film scenes for his autobiographical epic. You may like him for his (mostly) cheery tenacity, or you might find him a patriarchal bully. Either way, he proves a fascinating subject, well worth 85 minutes of your attention.

Dan Jolin, Empire Magazine, December 2017

FILM FACTS...

- ☆ The film premiered at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival in Director's fortnight, and has been well received at international festivals across the world.
- ☆ Sonia Kronlund is a French journalist, who covered events in Afghanistan for French radio for 15 years.
- ☆ Qurban Ali did not return to Afghanistan after the premiere at Cannes. He is said to be seeking asylum in France