

Sonita review – profile of an irrepressible wordsmith

By Jonathan Romney

An Afghan teen uses rap to attack the practice of selling daughters into marriage in this powerful documentary

This vivid documentary is about an aspiring teenage rapper from Afghanistan, living in Iran with her sister and young niece. The ferociously talented and independent-minded Sonita Alizadeh wishes that Rihanna and Michael Jackson were her parents, dreams of having a car named Sonata, but most of all, hopes that her raps will help quash the tradition of Afghan parents selling their daughters in arranged marriages. Iranian documentarist Rokhsareh Ghaemmaghani captures her subject's irreverent energy and her vulnerability, while also raising questions about her own role as a film-maker: should she stand back and only observe, or should she shed her professionalism to take a hand in Sonita's fortunes? The candid intensity of Sonita's video for protest rap Brides for Sale is harrowing indeed, but it shows you an irrepressible wordsmith who's in the game for real.