



## NEW RELEASES

# In Camera

### In Camera

A Film by: Naqqash Khalid

©: In Camera Films Ltd, British Broadcasting Corporation, The British Film Institute

Presented by: BBC Film, BFI

in association with: Uncommon Creative Studio

A Prettybird Limited, Public Dreams Limited production

This production was made possible by the support of: HM Treasury & DCMS' Film and TV Production Restart Scheme

Developed with the support of BBC Film, iFeatures, Creative UK via the BFI Network

Made with the support of the BFI's Film Fund

Executive Producers: Eva Yates, Claudia Yusef,

Kristin Irving, Charlie Gatsky Sinclair

Produced by: Juliette Larthe, Mary Burke

Line Producer: Idris Ahmed

Location Manager: Chris Chambers

Casting Director: Shaheen Baig

Script Supervisor: Amanda Nally

Written by: Naqqash Khalid

Director of Photography: Tasha Black

Editor: Ricardo Saraiva

Production Designer: Guy Thompson

Art Director: Simon Scullion

Set Decorator: Becca Djan

Music by: Clark

Supervising Sound Editor: Paul Davies

Production Sound Mixer: Billy Bannister

Re-recording Mixer: Paul Cotterell

Costume Design: Natalie Roar

Hair and Make-up Designer: Diandra Ferreira

Visual Effects by: Biggerboat

Colourist: Simone Grattarola

Main & End Titles by: The Morrison Studio

Stunts Co-ordinator: Justin Pearson

Cast:

Nabhaan Rizwan (Aden)

Amir El-Masry (Conrad)

Rory Fleck Byrne (Bo)

Aston McAuley (lead actor)

Josie Walker (Joanna)

Antonio Aakeel (actor that books everything)

Shahid Ahmed (Uber diver/inde film dad)

Jamie Ballard (husband)

Gana Bayarsaikhan (photographer)

Clare Burt (acting teacher)

Sarah Jane Potts (casting director)

Hussina Raja (production assistant)

Misha Adesanya (casting director/assistant 3)

Wilson Benedito (brand rep)

Lindsay Bennett-Thompson (receptionists/waitress)

Saranne Bulman (casting assistant 4)

Mary Burke (agent)

Clare Burt (acting teacher)

Rosina Carbone (FBI agent)

Bryony Davies (self tape centre assistant/teen girl)

Hannah Donelon (casting assistant 2)

Karan Gill (new Aden)

Parry Glasspool (indie film director)

Issrar Hussain (brown actor 1)

Gabby King (casting assistant 1)

Liv McMullen (acting student/camera operator)

Hamza Medley (brown actor 2)

Hussina Raja (production assistant)

Alex Reece (cop show director)

Andrew Sheridan (cop show officer)

Charlie Parker Swift (casting director)

Top Tarasin (first assistant director)

UK 2023 96 mins

Digital

A Conic release

This bold and delightfully unpredictable portrait from Naqqash Khalid both highlights and critiques the challenges of navigating the UK film industry as a British Asian actor. Aden, a struggling actor in his twenties, is caught in a cycle of nightmarish auditions and demoralising gigs. He shares his flat with Bo, a junior doctor suffering from burnout. They gain a new flatmate when Conrad moves in. He's a suave fashion influencer and stylist who's positively brimming with self-confidence. As he observes how Conrad moves through the world, Aden decides to create a new role for himself.

This brilliant and witty feature debut is imaginatively structured and overflowing with ideas around identity and masculinity. Khalid playfully blends elements of surrealism and satire, while offering sharp commentaries on the economic struggles and racial microaggressions encountered in the UK film industry. Nabhaan Rizwan draws us into Aden's inner world with his subtle emotive performance, while Limbo's Amir El-Masry excels as the self-absorbed Conrad. Both earned BIFA nominations for their performances.

Kimberley Sheehan Film and Events Programmer

On the set of a TV show somewhere in London, cameras are rolling. A good-looking young actor (Aston McAuley) plays a greenhorn detective standing over the bloodied body of a dead man. He looks a little queasy and is told to toughen up by his more experienced superior. The director calls 'cut!'. Immediately, the young actor shrugs off his character's humility and strides off set to take a call from his manager where he complains about the show, and all the juicier opportunities his multi-series contract is keeping him from taking. It's a clever opening to Naqqash Khalid's showbiz satire debut, complete with a mispronounced reference to the director himself as 'the Asian guy' shopping a hot new project round town, but it's about to get cleverer still. The star of *In Camera* is not the petulant white guy, but the brown-skinned 'corpse' lying in a pool of fake blood.

Meet Aden (surely a breakout Nabhaan Rizwan). Aden is also an actor, but far from delivering ultimatums to his manager, he's just trying to book a gig. His handsome face comes slowly into focus in a mirror, as he thanks the rising star, who looks right through him. Then he's shooed off the set by a production assistant in a headset, in a manner that leaves neither us nor him under any illusions as to his place in the pecking order.

A series of unsuccessful auditions are drolly outlined in Khalid's sharp, skewering screenplay, all their bright, hard edges showing in DP Tasha Back's shellacked images. 'Would you like to try an accent?' one casting agent helpfully suggests as Aden, not for the first time we gather, goes out for the part of a generic Middle-Eastern terrorist. She doesn't specify which accent, just one that's 'not from here.' Other times, Aden, usually referred to by call-time number, is harangued into making his teeth whiter on cue, or simply shunted into a room of similarly non-white hopefuls, standing elbow to elbow. They mutter mutinously amongst themselves about the one guy among them who gets cast all the time, and against whom they have no hope of landing a part – a precisely aimed swipe at an industry that tends to accord stardom to a maximum of one British-Asian actor at a time.

## NEW RELEASES

### Sing Sing

From Sun 1 Sep 17:45

### Starve Acre

From Fri 6 Sep; Sat 7 Sep 15:00 + discussion with filmmaker Daniel Kokotajlo and novelist Andrew Michael Hurley

### My Favourite Cake

From Fri 13 Sep

### In Camera

From Fri 13 Sep; Preview Thu 5 Sep 20:35 + Q&A with director Naqqash Khalid and actors Nabhaan Rizwan, Amir El-Masry and Rory Fleck Byrne

### The Substance

From Fri 20 Sep

### The Outrun

From Fri 27 Sep

### The Goldman Case

From Fri 4 Oct

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Aden lives with Bo (Rory Fleck Byrne) an Irish junior doctor so strung out on endless shifts that he has started to hallucinate, seeing hospital vending machines in the strangest of places. His tiredness also manifests in a kind of distraction as regards Aden, with whom he's friendly while seldom bothering to meet his eye. But then they get a third roommate, and Aden meets smooth-talking, self-promoting fashion consultant Conrad (a terrific Amir El-Masry) who arrives sporting immaculate tailoring, ordering lavish sushi deliveries and enthusing about how, for minority Britons like him and Aden, it is 'our time'.

Inspired in part by his interactions with Conrad and in part by a disastrous episode in which he tries to aid in the therapeutic process by acting as a surrogate son for a grieving couple, Aden starts to realise that his talents – for he is evidently a very talented actor – could also be applied to everyday life. What if he approached the idea of success as, itself, a role?

With so many witty, knotty ideas about ethnic dis/advantage at play, there is some extraneous noise in Khalid's exuberant, take-no-prisoner's first feature. Certainly, the subplot about Bo's exhaustion is surplus to requirements, especially given there's perhaps a suggestion of Bo's deeper connection to the surrogate plotline that didn't end up making the final cut.

As it occurs now, in an apparent attempt to make a broader, generational statement about professional pressures among young British men, Khalid risks a both-sidesism that gently excuses and softens Bo's unconscious racism. *In Camera* is at its best when, like in that early shot, it is slowly pulling focus from the inequities and idiocies of the entertainment establishment to Aden himself. He's the watchful observer of these unfairnesses, but also their victim and eventually, in an inevitable but satisfying homage to OG showbusiness satire *All About Eve* (1950), their compromised conqueror.

And while many of the performances around him are sharpened to a cutting point, Rizwan remains extraordinarily subtle as Aden, which is especially remarkable, given the span of his dramatic arc. It's such a finely honed performance that we can't see the joins, we don't notice the moment when Aden crosses the line from sympathetic, put-upon striver to something more closely resembling sociopathy. But then again, there is no line – that's the point of the jagged, erratic but frequently inspired *In Camera*, a debut as fully ambitious and as dubiously moral as its hero: when you know the game is rigged, playing dirty is the only way to win.

Jessica Kiang, *Sight and Sound*, [bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound](https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound), 17 July 2023