



HE NAMED ME MALALA is a First Quarter 2017 LVCA dvd donation to the Hugh Stoupe Memorial Library of the Heritage United Methodist Church of Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Following is Kino Ken's review of that dvd film.

United Kingdom / Pakistan / United States / Norway / Nigeria / Jordan / Abu Dhabi / Kenya / Netherlands 2015 color 88 minutes partly subtitled live action feature documentary Fox Searchlight Pictures / Image Nation Abu Dhabi FZ / Participant Media / National Geographic Channel / Parkes-MacDonald Productions / Little Room Producers: Walter Parkes, Laurie MacDonald, Davis Guggenheim, David Diliberto, Shiza Shahid

12 of a possible 20 points

***** of a possible *******

Key: *indicates outstanding performance or technical achievement

(j) designates a juvenile interviewee

Points:

- Direction: Davis Guggenheim**
- 0 Editing: Greg Finton, Brad Fuller, Brian Johnson**
- 1 Cinematography: Erich Roland, Gustavo Brum, Robert Chappell,
Nick Deacon, Wouter Bues, Harvey Glen**
- Still Photography: Caroline Furneaux, Khaula Jamil, Muhammad Usman**
- 1 Lighting: Simon Cho, Michael Lee**
- Special Visual Effects: Allan Duso**
- 1 Animation: Jason Carpenter (Supervisor), Leah Chun, Krissy Estrada,
Asavari Kumar, Natalya Serebrennikova**
- 2 Writing: Malala Yousafzai***
- Music Supervision: John Houlihan**
- Music Editing: Bill Bernstein, Jennifer Nash, Shie Rozow**
- Music Recording: Thomas Vicari, Shinnosuke Miyazawa**
- Music Mixing: Thomas Vicari**
- 1 Music: Thomas Newman**
- 2 Production Design: Alex Fuller Art Direction: Lori West**
- Set Dressing: J. A. C. Redford**
- Costume Design: Yasmine Abraham**
- 1 Sound Design: Joel Dougherty**
- Supervising Sound Editing: Skip Lievsay**
- Sound Effects: P. K. Hooker**
- Dialogue Editing: Susan Dudeck**
- Sound Recording: John Soukup**
- Sound Mixing: Stephen Bores, Grant Bridgeman, Simon Charles,
Joe Garten, Adam Grass, Tim Green, Max Martinez,
Eddie O'Connor, Paul Rusnak, Jeff Santana,
Tjodi van Elk**
- Casting: Hamzah Saman, Dixie Webster**
- 2 Interviewees: Malala Yousafzai* (j), Ziauddin Yousafzai*,**

Toor Pekai Yousafzai, Khushal Yousafzai, Atal Yousufzai (j)

1 Research: Jessie Beauchaine, Kate Coe, Beth Osisek, Liz Stefan

12 total points

Director Davis Guggenheim is known for creation of educational documentaries, films focused on problems involving contemporary issues such as American public school deficiencies and global warming. Here, in HE NAMED ME MALALA, he explores the character of perhaps the world's most ardent supporter of female empowerment through education. Combining picture book animation with news footage, he winds up with a not totally satisfactory hybrid. Though quite adequately researched, HE NAMED ME MALALA suffers from comparison with an INSIDE JOB or ENCOUNTERS AT THE END OF THE WORLD. It lacks the tension, humor, and extraordinary images which make those others memorable for content and form. Guggenheim's film succeeds solely on the interest generated by its biographical subject, a teenage Pakistani girl nearly killed by a Taliban-inspired assassin's bullet. In profiling for viewers the home life and cultural background of Malala Yousafzai, he understandably ends up reinforcing the common view of her as an intrepid adversary of any group, religious or secular, attempting to intimidate girls into forgoing studies. Ignorance, for both director and star, is not bliss. Rather, it's a cover beneath which otherwise insignificant males wield power over the most vulnerable members of their patriarchal society.

It is clear from watching the Yousafzai family dynamics the dominant influence on Malala is Ziauddin, her father. Mother Toor Pekai, left to her own inclinations, would be content to fulfill the usual roles of Pakistani adult females as homemaker and cook. Illiterate herself, she doesn't really understand the drive for knowledge which propels her daughter. Toor perceives chiefly dangers of unbridled vanity and arrogance learning can engender. She has less awareness of its capacity to expand compassion and understanding out to a larger world beyond one's own tribe or faith. Unwillingly banished, Toor, unlike husband and children, cannot find solace in corroborating ideas and affirming experiences. What she values most, tradition and accommodation, are the very standards the rest of her family holds suspect and challenges.

Guggenheim doesn't pursue this reluctance to embrace Western notions of progress and equality. He plainly admires far more the activism of father and daughter, whose crusades on behalf of liberation from centuries of dogmatic chauvinism appeal to his own liberal instincts. Freedom of speech and freedom of thought, cornerstone American values, are under assault in the Middle East. They need defenders both inside and outside the Moslem world.

It appears the director's intention to rally support from across the globe for girls' access to education. He films Malala's meetings with Syrian refugee children in Jordan and impoverished Kenyan students newly granted opportunity to attend school.

Definitely a role model for Third World juveniles seeking a road out of crime and servitude, Malala is lionized by them, a peer successfully capturing the attention of global media without sacrificing national garb and values. She still looks like a segregated and sheltered Pakistani adolescent, less veiled than fundamentalist counterparts, yet much more modestly attired than Westernized "sisters." Nor does the girl feel any obligation to shed Moslem religious beliefs inculcated throughout childhood years.

Director and subject seemingly agree the destructive component of Islam is neither Koran nor daily ritual. Its menace consists of using the doctrine of "holy war" as a club to batter anyone and everyone who happens to disagree with zealots out to win personal prestige and glory. Killers of children and bombers of schools are not only social misfits, Malala and her dad argue, but religious perverts as well, their activities tugging followers away from charity, mercy, and service to others. The notion human life is to be utilized as a gift for construction and sharing motivates the two of them to inspired oratory offsetting untrammelled hatred and violence. Auditors are reminded repeatedly the world contains many Moslem points of view, not just one.

For those champions of individualism, each human being chooses his or her own path through life and must bear the consequences of private decisions. Even when these include exile, loss of home and homeland, misunderstanding, mental anguish, and detachment from friends and relatives left behind.

An editing style of disruptive patchiness allows only fleeting glimpses into these darker aspects of the Yousafzai family's uprooted lives.

Animation, blending smoothly into a choppy narration, suggests the lively and picturesque turmoil of a child's mind. It's not conducive to adult cravings for closure and order. Chronology is subsidiary to drama, hyperkinetic splashiness fills time and space better devoted to considerations of how to assist and protect reformers like those spotlighted.

Stirring music would have been most helpful. Thomas Newman's score, unfortunately, stands in stark contrast to Malala's words. It is vapid and emotionally colorless, awkwardly yoked to incisive and impassioned oration.

Still, moments of defining insight redeem HE NAMED ME MALALA, as some of the charisma and urgency of its star leak out. Should there have been lengthier excerpts of speeches by father and child? Certainly. Would deeper probing into Malala's sense of displacement and disconnection from mundane concerns of surrounding Britons have increased the film's impact?

What is communicated very expertly is the pervasive fear haunting rebels in a land of armed authoritarians where the intractability of anonymous killers is a persistent given. Blood and ruins shadow life, being especially terrifying when night arrives with curtaining darkness. Evils many dare not attempt in daylight proliferate in its absence. Much like the Yousafzais themselves, viewers see the results only when the next dawn comes.

Painted scenes of school bus mayhem backdrop Malala's subjective account of what happened during the final, fateful day of her life in Pakistan. These then yield to jumpy, accelerated motion hospital shots showing hectic efforts to save the victim's waning vitality. Revival and gradually increasing mobility through daily therapy are displayed in a series of vignettes depicting the relative ease with which Malala overcomes physical pains and constrictions. Not so obvious and harder to treat are mental scarrings. These the girl doesn't wish to open for discussion, hoping adoption of forgiveness towards those committing violence against herself and friends will by itself bring eventual spiritual healing. As her father points out, Malala's resilience is a remarkable asset nullifying the deeds of attackers.

If her sincerest wish is to once again visit the valley of Swat, it is at the moment a suicidal one. No cheery welcoming committee would fondly greet a still defiant child there. She must for the present remain a wanderer, hoping for

change in a world inclined to cherish the status quo. And many detractors are not merely *vocal* opponents. Malala is enough of a realist to err on the side of self-preservation, though steadfastly refusing to shut up.

In doing so, she teaches and embodies the value of speaking out against injustice at all costs. Whenever and wherever it emerges.

Due to extremely adult subject matter and controversial religious philippics, HE NAMED ME MALALA is only suited to viewing by mature teens and adults. It is officially rated PG-13 by the MPAA.

Special features of the dvd are a four-minute featurette devoted to Malala's story, a two-minute theatrical trailer, three minutes supplying background on director Davis Guggenheim, a four-minute encouragement to "Stand with Malala," a three-minute brief explanation of how animation functions in the film, and a compact, three-minute character introduction titled "Who is Malala?" A gallery of stills and brief overview of the Malala Fund complete extra offerings.

HE NAMED ME MALALA is now available on dvd to borrow from the Heritage church library.