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Search films here

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[Home](#) | [Film Critics](#) | [Top 10 lists](#) | [All Reviews](#) | [Festival Courses](#) | [Film Studies](#) | [SoMA](#) | [Film Shop](#)
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Yes Madam, Sir (Megan Doneman, 2008): Australia

Reviewed by [Kathleen Amboy](#). Viewed at the Santa Barbara Film Festival.



[Yes Madam, Sir](#) (Megan Doneman, 2008) is a documentary film on the extraordinary life of Kiran Bedi. It is an inspiring story about a woman of integrity trying to succeed in a corrupt society. Kiran, a former tennis champ of India was the first woman to enlist in the IPS (Indian Police Service) at the age of 23. Her career on the police force was an uphill battle amongst an all male “good ol’ boy” mentality – she was (and still is) a force to be reckoned with. Referred to as “that girl” by the department, Kiran was given one tough

assignment after another – once, she was expected to rescue victims from a burning building and taking the initiative, she first drenched herself at a nearby water pump; after witnessing her success with the first victim, other officers followed suit. Later, assigned a detail to calm an angry sword-wielding mob, Kiran single-handedly dispersed the crowd with only her billy club in hand, as her fellow officers fled the scene in fear of their lives. Ultimately earning the respect of her fellow officers, she became referred to as “madam” and then “sir” (hence the title). With the loving support of her family and much to the chagrin of the police force, Kiran rose in rank eventually becoming Inspector General of a prison, but it wasn’t just any prison – it was the worst toilet you could imagine. It was Tihar Prison, one of the largest in the world with over 10,000 inmates where humans were left to rot. Sleeping on dirt and squatting in puddles of feces, basic human rights were ignored as gangsters ran the prison by passing bribes to the guards. Healthy prisoners were thrown in together with the insane and went crazy themselves while little children were forced to live amongst the general populace until they were six years old. Fighting government red-tape and jealous peers, Kiran reformed the prison and many of its inmates by setting new standards with the guards, listening to complaints from the prisoners, instituting prayer and meditation, educating the children, creating jobs for the inmates within the prison walls, and ultimately bringing hope to the hopeless – all of this in only 2 short years!

After reading the synopsis of this film, it was not my intention to attend the screening, until I listened to an interview on the radio with the director Megan Doneman. Megan grew up in Australia and had always heard about this remarkable woman (Kiran Bedi) from her mother, until the story became an actual obsession (being a film lover, I know a little bit about obsession). The screening I was fortunate to attend was the U.S. Premiere which held a Q & A with Megan afterward. My question to her was “how did you ever acquire Helen Mirren (one of my favorites) as your (voice-over) narrator?” Megan said she decided to “shoot for the top,” and she contacted Helen’s agent – the agent loved the story, who then submitted the story to Helen, who in turn loved the story as well.

About this entry

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1. *Jesse Solomon* 01.27.09 / 10am

Wow! You just convinced me to see a film that I had previously dismissed i love the idea of a documentary about such an inspiration woman, as well as the tackling of important social issues such as human rights violations. I have never heard of this woman but I like her style!

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Pages

- [A list of SBCC Student Film Critics](#)
- [About the SBCC Film Review Club and Site](#)
- [AFI Filmfest Hollywood 2008 Film Critics](#)
- [Film Festival Course Information](#)
- [Los Angeles Film Festival 2008 Film Critics](#)
- [Santa Barbara Film Festival 2008 Film Critics](#)
- [Santa Barbara Film Festival 2009 Film Critics](#)
- [Sign Up for the Newsletter!](#)
- [Top 10 lists for 2008 Films](#)
- [Travel Abroad > Film Studies](#)

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Film Review Club:

Reviews of current film releases, DVDs, and revivals by student members of the SBCC Film Review Club:

[List of members](#)

Club President:

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Film Festival Course:

[FS108: Film Festival Studies: 10-days or 5-days](#) (2 or 3 units). Field course at film festivals to study U.S. and international fiction, experimental and documentary films. Fee required.

Contact: Prof. Nico Maestu (maestu@sbcc.edu)

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- [01.27 Kabuli Kid \(Barmak Akram, 2008\): France](#)
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- [01.26 Apron Strings \(Sima Urale, 2008\): New Zealand](#)
- [01.26 Vicky Christina Barcelona \(Woody Allen, 2008\): USA](#)
- [01.26 Automorphosis \(Harrod Blank, 2009\): USA](#)

Monthly Archives

- [January 2009](#) (38)
- [December 2008](#) (38)
- [November 2008](#) (113)
- [October 2008](#) (15)
- [September 2008](#) (11)
- [August 2008](#) (6)
- [July 2008](#) (16)
- [June 2008](#) (12)
- [May 2008](#) (6)
- [April 2008](#) (8)
- [March 2008](#) (7)
- [February 2008](#) (96)

Categories

- [Academic Papers](#) (2)
- [AFI Filmfest 2008](#) (94)
- [Animation](#) (11)
- [Cinema Society](#) (18)
- [Documentary](#) (39)

- [DVD](#) (81)
- [Films](#) (420)
- [Los Angeles Film Festival 2008](#) (12)
- [Online Films](#) (1)
- [Santa Barbara Film Festival 2008](#) (148)
- [Santa Barbara Film Festival 2009](#) (19)
- [Santa Barbara Human Rights Festival 2008](#) (4)
- [Silent films](#) (14)
- [TV](#) (1)
- [Videos](#) (1)
- [Winter Holiday Films](#) (13)

• **Links**

- [All Film Reviews](#)
- [Film Festival Courses](#)
- [Film Shop](#)
- [List of Film Critics](#)
- [Santa Barbara City College](#)
- [SBCC Film Studies](#)
- [SBCC Travel Abroad](#)
- [School of Media Arts](#)
- [SoMA Digital Art Center](#)
- [SoMA Media Incubator](#)
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- [The Channels](#)

[Home](#) | [SBCC](#) | [Class Schedule](#) | [Film Studies](#)

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