



Caveh Zahedi in *I Am a Sex Addict*

ADDICTED TO, UH, LOVE

I Am a Sex Addict

review by M. Faust

It's a good thing for Caveh Zahedi, an authentically "independent" filmmaker, that the phrase "sex addict" didn't exist in the 1960s and 1970s. Because if it had, it would certainly have appeared in various forms in the names of dozens of porn movies, depriving him of a title which guarantees his film will do at least a modicum of business.

He certainly needs it. Once a rising star, considered to be the next Todd Haynes or Richard Linklater, Zahedi's career never quite took off after his UCLA student film was shown at the Sundance Film Festival. The 46-year-old Zahedi's press bio almost gleefully details a lifelong succession of woefully failed projects, including several that were rejected after years of development and one finished feature that he spent several years developing only to be rejected by his sponsors and several finished efforts that were "virulently panned by most American critics and a box office disaster." Even his positive reviews describe his films with phrases like "paralyzing angst."

You might expect that anyone who would include such self-deprecating information in his resume would be someone who doesn't take himself too seriously. That's half-true. On the evidence, Zahedi takes his life very seriously indeed, to the extent of making it the subject of most of his work. But like Woody Allen he is able (at least from a distance) to see the humor in his own failings and obsessions.

These include what he calls a "fetish for prostitutes," which is more specifically the subject of the film. Narrating from the church where he is about to be married for the third time, Zahedi leads us backward through a lifelong fascination with prostitutes, mostly of the variety who ply their trade on the streets. Engaging their services is only a small part of his obsession. He spends more time observing and approaching them, inquiring about their

rates and services, than he does in the actual cavorting, which seldom lasts for as long as you can keep your head underwater.

If you're expecting titillation, you'll have to look elsewhere. A thin, toothy, curly-haired fellow who might be called "nebbishy" if it weren't for his Persian roots (the uncharitable might classify him as the type for whom the practice of prostitution exists in the first place), Zahedi is more interested in showing the effect his self-destructive impulses had on his relationships. A former philosophy student, he seems to have spent most of his life discovering the difficulties of applying philosophical tenets to the nitty-gritty of human relationships.

For instance, honesty. Zahedi is a great believer in honesty and hates keeping secrets from his wives and girlfriends. They profess to be glad that he has chosen to reveal his darkest secrets to him. These moments usually turn out to be the beginning of the end for the relationship.

Like most filmmakers who work in this self-confessional vein, Zahedi realizes that humor is the only way of getting an audience to subject itself to his navel-gazing. And *I Am a Sex Addict* is amusing enough to get you through Zahedi's study in self-loathing and redemption.

But compared to a film by, say, Ross McElwee, who makes stylistically similar diary films (*Sherman's March* is the best known), *Sex Addict* lacks poetry and depth. We only feel like we've skimmed the surfaces, both of Zahedi's psyche and the larger issues of male sexuality. Maybe that's asking for too much. Zahedi says that the original script of *Sex Addict*, written in the early 1990s when he was first starting to come to grips with his problem, was "kind of hostile...Back then, I had a kind of antagonistic relationship with the audience." Sometimes a little hostility to the audience is a good thing: It certainly would have helped here. **av**

Le METRO

Bistro & Bakery

SUSHI MON DAYS

Elmwood+
Sushi =
Le Metro

LIVE MUSIC SERIES*

JAMIE MOSES This Thursday

UNIT9 This Saturday

D-MOTT JERRY LIVINGSTON
WADE HAWKINS MICHAEL DISANTO
ERIC LIVER CARLOS DAY
ERIC CRITTENDEN WILL HOLTON

the **SALON:** Private & Corporate Dining
at Tony Walker Plaza

520 ELMWOOD (AT WEST UTICA) Buffalo 885-1500

5110 MAIN STREET (AT the TONY WALKER PLAZA) Williamsville 631-2725

WATER STREET

L A N D I N G

Memorial Day with a view to dine for.

MEMORIAL WEEKEND
Fri: BOOGIE MONSTERS
Sun: WILLIE & THE REINHARTS
Mon: Clam Slam
\$4.99 clams \$5 Pitchers of Labatt Blue & Light

LEWISTON, NY
(716) 754-9200
www.waterstreetlanding.com

WHO SAID THAT?....
"In three short days, the band won over a significant portion of the 82,000+ hardcore devotees ... A true testament to the power of this band."
ANSWER:
Greg Yost (Rockzillaworld) in a review of The 'Avett Brothers' at Merlefest '05.
See them and 25 other bands at The Great Blue Heron Music Festival, July 7-8-9 Sherman NY
Details at greatblueheron.com

DINNER SPECIALS

OFF THE WALL!

Appetizer
Potato skins stuffed w/ spinach, tomatoes, bacon, cheddar, feta

Entrees
Caribbean Steak & Shrimp
10oz. Flat Iron Steak w/ caribbean style shrimp
jalepeno-cream cheese mashed potatoes

Citrus Salmon w/ garlic mashed potatoes & glazed carrots

Chorizo Risotto w/ peppers

Desserts
Chocolate Mint Paradise
Chocolate Fudge Brownie
Creme Brulee
Chocolate Fondue
Cheesecake (Strawberry or Oreo)

HAPPY HOUR SPECIALS
2-4-1 Drinks
1/2 Priced Appetizers
In The Bar Area
Monday-Thursday
5pm-8pm

OFF THE WALL!

534 Elmwood Ave
716-884-9580
www.offthewallonline.com