

# Incendiary Middle East

The human face of suicide bombers

**PARADISE NOW** (Palestine, Netherlands, Germany, France, 2005): Directed by Hany Abu-Assad. Written by Hany Abu-Assad and Bero Beyer. Producers Bero Beyer, Hengameh Panahi, Amir Harel, Gerhard Meixner, Roman Paul. Cinematography, Antonine Heberlé. Editor, Sander Vos. Production design, Olivier Meidinger. Sound, Uve Haussig. Costumes, Walid Maw'ed. Starring Kais Nashef and Ali Suliman and Lubna Azabel. With Amer Hlehel, Hiam Abbass, Ashraf Barhoum. Warner Independent Pictures, 2005. PG-13. 90 minutes.

An original and almost unbearably suspenseful international film about two young Palestinian men, *Paradise Now* follows these ordinary, working-class guys who've been friends since childhood through two scary days.

Writer, director Hany Abu-Assad and writer, producer Bero Beyer's feature-length, fictional film shows what it means to be chosen suicide bombers. During the next 48 hours, the acts of these two men will affect many people, including their families, the wider community and enemy strangers. Their own inarticulate desires for a better life will also come into play.

Saïd (Kais Nashef) and Khaled (Ali Suliman) live in the West Bank town of Nablus, where they work as auto mechanics, drink tea, smoke from a hookah and wait for their lives to begin. Nablus is a beaten-down looking town, full of other idle men. On a parallel track, the film has followed a young Palestinian woman, Suha (Lubna Azabal), as she comes into Nablus through an Israeli

checkpoint. When Suha brings her car to the garage to be fixed, interest sparks between her and Saïd.

But later the same day, Saïd runs into Jamal (Amer Hlhel), a middle-aged front-man for an unnamed organization who tells him he and Khaled have been chosen as martyrs to carry out a suicide mission together in Tel Aviv. Jamal says he will stay with Saïd until they leave Nablus. But Saïd slips away during the night to see Suha. They talk. She's working for peace. He wants to tell her what he's doing. At home the next morning, Saïd's mother (Hiam Abbass) gives him sandwiches to take on what she fears is his last day.

Such a simple plot but many variables, and things go wrong in unexpected ways. Tension builds from the moment Saïd and Khaled agree to go into Israel. Cosmopolitan, upscale Tel Aviv stands in vivid contrast to Nablus's dilapidated visage. Economic issues underlie every part of life in Nablus, while Tel Aviv thrives. The border itself is so fraught with danger I felt myself tense up as the characters approached it.

I could hardly tell Saïd and Khaled apart after they shaved their facial hair, got haircuts and donned dark suits. I believe their physical similarity was a deliberate device to make the pair of them look anonymous and forgettable. Later, their separate identities became clear.



SEANUS MURPHY: WARNER INDEPENDENT PICTURES, 2005

The film is about human choices, which are never simple but are based on what has been experienced before, external expectations and inner conflict. As the film draws us closer and closer to Khaled, Saïd and Suha, we discover we are more like them than unlike, even if we are not of the same ethnicity, nationality, religion, age or gender.

It is a mark of brilliance that such a potentially incendiary film story appeals on so many levels. The film was shot on location in Nablus, and the multi-national cast and crew were in real danger from rival Palestinian factions as well as from the Israeli Army and its missiles. Rumors were rife, and personal safety an issue. Before shooting finished, some crew left Nablus and the picture. Despite further difficulties, shooting also took place in Nazareth and in Tel Aviv.

Director Hany Abu-Assad: "I understand that it will be upsetting to some that I have given a human face to the suicide bombers. I am also very critical of the suicide bombers, as well. ... The film is simply meant to open a discussion, hopefully a meaningful discussion, about the real issues at hand. ... The full weight and complexity of the situation is impossible to show on film. No one side can claim a moral stance because taking any life is not a moral action. The entire situation is outside of what we can call morality. If we didn't believe that we were making something meaningful, that could be part of a larger dialogue, we wouldn't have gambled our lives in Nablus."

Opening Friday at the Bijou, this remarkable film is not to be missed. Very highest recommendations. **EW**

## movie clips

### OPENING OR RETURNING:

**Aeon Flux:** Starring Charlize Theron and Marton Csokas and directed by Karyn Kusama (*Girlfight*), this futuristic sci-fi thriller is based on characters created by Peter Chung for the MTV animated series. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark.

**First Descent:** Documentary by Kemp Curly and Kevin Harrison about snowboarding – its history and future. Stars snowboarding greats (as themselves): Shawn Farmer, Terje Haakonsen, Nick Peralta, Hannah Tefer and Shaun White. Mountain scenery, music and action! PG-13. Cinemark

**Happy Birthday, Lola!** (2001): Adaptation of popular Russian comic strip. Two strangers come to visit Lola on her birthday and make her their captive. She learns of an assassination plot only she can stop. In Russian with English subtitles. At 7 pm on 12/7 in 111 Pacific, UO. Free.

**Nightmare Before Christmas:** Director Tim Burton (Edward Scissorhands, Beetlejuice, Batman) returned to animation for this tale of a Halloween town ghoul who ends up in Christmastown. PG. LateNite Bijou.

**Paradise Now:** Excellent multinational film by Hany Abu-Assad and Bero Beyer about two young Palestinian men selected to be suicide bombers and how their subsequent actions affect their families, the wider community and their own inarticulate desires for life. Great performances by Kais Nashef, Ali Suliman and Lubna Azabel. Don't miss! Very highest recommendation. PG-13. Bijou. **See review this issue.**

**Prime:** Therapist (Meryl Streep) helps a client (Uma Thurman) involved with a younger man (Bryan Greenberg), who is the therapist's son. Comedy written and directed by Ben Younger. PG-13. Movies 12.

**Sin City:** Based on the graphic novel by Frank Miller and directed by Miller, Robert Rodriguez (and "special guest director" Quentin Tarantino), film stars a host of players including Jessica Alba, Rosario Dawson, Elijah Wood, Bruce Willis, Benicio Del Toro, Clive Owen and Josh Hartnett. Highly recommended for style. R. At 7 pm on 12/1 in 110 Willamette. Free. **Online archives.**

**Street Fighter** (rated X), **Return of**

**the Street Fighter**, and **Sister Street Fighter:** Merciless martial arts mercenary Terry Tsurugi (Sonny Chiba) kicks and punches his way through three cult classic films, with assistance from Sue Shihomi. See ad for dates, times. LateNite Bijou.

**Films open the Friday following EW publication date unless otherwise noted. See archived reviews at [www.eugeneweekly.com](http://www.eugeneweekly.com)**

### CONTINUING:

**Bee Season:** Richard Gere and Juliette Binoche star as the parents of a precocious son (Max Minghel la) and daughter (Flora Cross) in Scott McGehee and David Siegel's (*The Deep End*) adaptation of Myla Goldberg's novel. The tightly knit family falls apart when the father, an academic religion expert becomes obsessed with his daughter's rare ability to spell perfectly at spelling bees. PG-13. Bijou. **Online archives.**

**Capote:** Director Bennett Miller and writer Dan Futterman create a moving portrait of writer Truman Capote (*In Cold Blood*) during the years following grisly Kansas murders that rocked the country. Philip Seymour Hoffman gives an indelible performance, likewise Catherine Keener. Clifton Collins plays Perry Smith, one of the killers befriended by Capote. Very highest recommendations. R. Bijou. **Online archives.**

**Charlie and the Chocolate Factory:** Tim Burton's reimagining of Roald Dahl's perennial children's favorite dark chocolate treat stars Johnny Depp as Willy Wonka with Freddie Highmore, his child co-star from Finding Neverland, along with Helen Bonham Carter. Loved it! Highest recommendations. PG. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

**Chicken Little:** Disney's first fully computer-animated feature film is a comedy adventure that brings a satirical twist to the classic fable. Voices by Zach Braff, Garry Marshall, Joan Cusack, Steve Zahn. G. Cinemark.

**Corpse Bride, Tim Burton's:** Stop-motion animated film set in a 19th century European village is voiced by Johnny Depp, Helena Bonham-Carter and Emily Watson. Movies 12.

**Derailed:** Married lovers Clive Owen and Jennifer Aniston's carry on until they find themselves in a world of danger. Thriller also stars Maelissa George, Vincent Cassel, The Rza and Xzibit. English-language debut feature film by acclaimed Swedish director Mikael Hafstrom. R. Cinemark.

**Flightplan:** Jody Foster stars in this Brian Grazer-produced psychological thriller about a woman whose 6-year old daughter disappears without a trace mid-flight in a state-of-the-art aircraft. Directed by Robert Swenke, film also stars Peter Sarsgaard and Sean Bean. PG-13. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

**Fog, The:** Remake (and slight re-write) of John Carpenter's horror flick by the same name, this version tells the story of ghostly lepers returning to take their revenge on a small town's descendants. Stars Tim Welling, Maggie Grace and Selma Blair. PG-13. Movies 12.

**Forty-Year Old Virgin:** Andy Sitzer (Steve Carell) has lived a life of involuntary chastity, and his friends are determined to do something about his state. Directed by Judd Apatow, the film stars Catherine Keener, Paul Rudd and others. R. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

**Good Night and Good Luck:** Edward R. Murrow did more to make television a serious news venue than almost any other journalist. George Clooney's film is set in 1953, when the CBS newsman (played by David Strathairn) battled powerful Senator Joseph McCarthy (shown only in archival shots and speaking his own words).. McCarthy's witch hunting tactics were on display in the House Un-American Activities Committee, and Clooney wants us to remember Murrow's courage. As *The New York Times* puts it: "Murrow, a war hero in his own right, recognized McCarthyism as a domestic echo of Nazism." This may be the best movie of the year. Very highest recommendations. PG. Cinema World. **Online archives.**

**Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire:** Starring Daniel Radcliffe. Emma Watson and Rupert Grint, this episode finds Harry's friends trying to help him through difficult times, as evidence of the presence of Voldemort (Ralph

Fiennes) appears. Voldemort was last seen 13 years ago, the night he murdered Harry's parents. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark.

**History of Violence, A:** After foiling a robbery in his small-town diner, Viggo Mortensen's quiet life with his wife and two children is plunged into a media circus, which attracts unsavory characters who claim they are from his shady past. Directed by the great David Cronenberg, the film also stars Maria Bello, William Hurt and Ed Harris. One of the best films of 2005, despite its violence. R. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

**Ice Harvest:** John Cusack plays a mob lawyer and Billy Bob Thornton's a pornographer who get themselves in a bind one Christmas Eve in this action comedy from director Harold Ramis and writers Richard Russo and Robert Benton. Connie Nielsen, Randy Quad and Oliver Platt also star.. *Variety* calls it "a treat for grown up audiences with an ear for sardonic dialogue." Let's go! R. Cinemark.

**In Her Shoes:** Directed by Curtis Hanson, Sisters Maggie (Cameron Diaz) and Rose (Toni Collette) have little in common, but after a major break, they find their way back together with the help of a grandmother (Shirley MacLaine) they didn't know existed. Unsentimental tale of sisters who must find their way to self-awareness, film features great performances by all three principals. Perfect little film deserves highest recommendations. PG-13. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

**In the Mix:** All's fair in love and gangster warfare in this hip romantic comedy starring Usher, Chaz Palmenteri and Emmanuelle Chriqui. Directed by Ron Underwood. PG-13. Cinemark.

**Jarhead:** Screen adaptation of Marine Anthony Swofford's memoir of his disorienting experiences in the Gulf War stars Jake Gyllenhaal as "Swoff," Jamie Foxx and Peter Sarsgaard. Directed by Sam Mendes. Highest recommendations. R. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

**Just Friends:** When Chris (Ryan Reynolds) returns to his 10-year high school reunion, he's hoping his best friend (Amy Samart) will be more than friends. PG-13. Cinemark. Cinema

World.

**Just Like Heaven:** Romantic comedy starring Reese Witherspoon and Mark Ruffalo is set in San Francisco, where both claim a charming apartment is theirs alone. When she discovers she can walk through walls, they determine to solve the mystery. Directed by Mark Waters (*Mean Girls, Freaky Friday*). PG-13. Movies 12.

**Legend of Zorro, The:** The original masked man again played by Antonio Banderas is now working to gain statehood for California. (Huh?) Catherine Zeta-Jones and director Martin Campbell from the original return as well. Action adventure with a flair. PG-13. Cinemark.

**Lord of War:** International arms dealer (Nicolas Cage) tries to stay ahead of an Interpol agent (Ethan Hawke), his competitors and his ruthless customers. Also, Bridget Moynahan, Jared Leto, Ian Holm. R. Movies 12.

**March of the Penguins:** Documentary director Luc Jacquet's film chronicles the oft-repeated survival of the species in the wind-strewn wilderness of Antarctica. Film tracks a pair of Emperor Penguins across continent. Includes intimate scenes of the big birds mating. This unique film has now played in every theater in Eugene, Springfield. G. Movies 12.

**Pride & Prejudice:** Jane Austen's romantic, witty and emotionally delicious romance stars Keira Knightley as Lizzie and Matthew Macfadyen as the man she loves to hate, Mr. Darcy. Ably directed by Joe Wright and adapted by Deborah Moggach, film also stars Rosamund Pike, Jena Malone, Brenda Blethyn, Donald Sutherland, Simon Woods, Tom Hollander. Playful and pleasing but with strong subtext of the situation of poor women, this excellent social comedy has stayed timely since its publication in 1813. Highest recommendations. PG. Cinemark. Cinema World. **See review this issue.**

**Rent:** The acclaimed Broadway show based on Puccini's classic opera, *La Boheme*, comes to the small screen with performances by Rosario Dawson, Taye Diggs, Jesse L. Martin, Idina Menzel, Adam Pascal, Anthony Rapp, Wilson Heredia and Tracie Thoms. Set in New York's East Village, the film fol-

lows a group of artists struggling with obstacles of poverty, illness and the AIDS epidemic. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark.

**Saw 2:** Bloody sequel to James Wan's grisly 2004 thriller stars Donnie Wahlberg. Cinemark.

**Sky High:** Son of superheroes The Commander (Kurt Russell) and Jetstream (Kelly Preston), poor Will (Michael Angarano) must go to Sky High, an elite high school, where he battles a nasty gym coach (Bruce Campbell), a bully, teen angst, parental expectations and girl problems. Wow! PG. Movies 12.

**Walk the Line:** The new Johnny Cash biopic stars the excellent Joaquin Phoenix as the singer, songwriter known as the Man in Black and Reese Witherspoon (with dark hair) as singer, songwriter June Carter Cash, his second wife and partner for 35 years. Directed by James Mangold. Highest recommendations for this musical love story. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

**War of the Worlds:** Directed by Steven Spielberg, this retelling of H.G. Well's seminal sci-fi adventure thriller about an invasion of Earth by Martians, as seen through the eyes of ordinary people played by Tom Cruise, Dakota Fanning, Justin Chatwin, Miranda Otto, and Tim Robbins. Riveting, challenging and moving; very highest recommendations. PG-13. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

**Yours, Mine and Ours:** When single parents Frank (Dennis Quaid) and Helen (Rene Russo) marry they have 18 children between them. The kids don't approve of the merger. Trouble follows. Co-stars Rip Torn and Linda Hunt. PG. Cinema World. Cinemark.

**Zathura:** Brothers (Josh Hutcherson, Jonah Bob) are launched on an adventure when their house takes off for space, where they meet up with an astronaut (Dax Shepard) and others. Dad is played by Tim Robbins, and film is directed by Jon Favreau. PG. Cinemark.

Bijou Art Cinemas (686-2458)  
Cinema World 8 (342-6536)  
Cinemark 17 (746-5202)  
Movies 12 (741-1231)