

# Films Feast on World Diversity, Languages

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as a chauffeur for a retired colonel who, now senile, has no memory of his own brutal actions years before when Magallanes served under him. Magallanes remembers, and carries scars as a result -- and the old wounds trouble him afresh when a woman enters his cab whom he recognizes as a war-time captive of the colonel from years before. Magallanes sets out on a quest for redemption for his own part in the woman's suffering that reveals just how elusive true redemption can be when the

systems that enabled the original sin remain untouched. This is a very sensitive story, carefully told and full of small details that make it feel more true than many films about the victims of war and atrocities -- and it is anchored by two especially fine performances, *Damián Alcázar* as Magallanes and *Magaly Solier* as Celina, the Indian woman whose life was forever altered all those years ago and whose power emerges in the course of this retelling. This is a fine first feature from director *Salvador del Solar*, and plays on Feb. 13 and 15.

Another one to make time for is "The Idol," a Palestinian film inspired by the true story of *Mohammed Assaf*, who emerged the victor of the 2013 season of *Arab Idol*. It's the first film to be (partially) shot in Gaza in decades and, though it follows the expected underdog formula (think "Underdog Millionaire"), it doesn't feel as manipulative as many in its genre -- perhaps because it is not a Hollywood product and feels consequently better grounded in the culture that it represents. This feel-good story also offers an interesting window into As-



The Portland International Film Festival presents 'The Idol,' a new film based on a true story of Palestinian singing sensation Mohammed Assaf, who went from being a wedding singer in Gaza to winning the TV singing contest 'Arab Idol' in 2013. Shows Feb. 20 and Feb. 25 at the Northwest Film Center located inside the Portland Art Museum.

saf's childhood in a refugee camp and into what pop culture looks like in (and how it impacts) the Arab world. And Assaf sings like an angel -- he is an inspiring example of the inexplicable power of music to move and unite and elevate the human soul. The film plays on Feb. 20 and 25.

The festival runs through the end of the month, and you can find info and order tickets or a screening pass at [nwfilm.org](http://nwfilm.org) or at the box office inside the art museum. Paper guides are all over town and the online guide contains links to previews of most of the films. It pays to show up at

least a half hour ahead of every show with an advance ticket, as Portland shows every year what a great movie town it is by the enthusiastic audiences who come out in force. I'll have more reviews next week of some of the 40 films I plan to see. Come join the feast!

*Darleen Ortega is a judge on the Oregon Court of Appeals and the first woman of color to serve in that capacity. Her movie review column Opinionated Judge appears regularly in The Portland Observer. Find her movie blog at [opinionatedjudge.blogspot.com](http://opinionatedjudge.blogspot.com).*

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