

A Window Into Palestine

Wednesdays April 18 through May 9, 2018, 2:00 pm, Moss A

Schedule

April 18: *The Idol*, by Hany Abu-Assad (2015; Netflix; 1:39)

Charming fictionalized story of the real-life Mohammad Assaf (Tawfeek Barhom), a wedding-singer from a Gaza refugee camp who competed in the Arab Idol singing contest in 2013. Abu-Assad's camera focuses on the contrast between the Gazan youths' good-natured and ever-resourceful struggle for survival in the depressing ruin of their home and the decadent glitz of Beirut, where the contest takes place. Hamas might be said to count as an aspect of the ruin Mohammad must negotiate to achieve his goal. The film isn't at all polemical, but there are sideways barbs at Gaza's imprisonment by Israel.

April 25: *When I Saw You*, by Annemarie Jacir (2012; 1:38)

An autistic boy, Tarek (Mahmoud Asfa), in a Jordan refugee camp, is obsessed with returning to Beit Nuba, the Palestinian village from which his family was expelled in 1967, and finding his missing father. He runs away and joins a Fedayeen (Palestinian guerilla) band, where Layth (Saleh Bakri) takes him under his wing. His mother (Ruba Blal) must contend with his obsession, and in the process undergoes a transformation herself. The movie is carried along by a sustained lyricism punctuated by affectionate mockery of the hapless Fedayeen. This film is not overtly political, but the ever-present subtext—in this film, as in Jacir's *Salt of This Sea*—is *awda* (return): Palestinians' yearning to recover the land they lost.

May 2: *The Wanted 18*, by Amer Shomali and Paul Cowan (2014; 1:15)

The 18 were 18 cows purchased from Kibbutz Hillel by the people of Beit Sahour (a predominantly Christian village just east of Bethlehem in the West Bank) during the First Intifada. The town was a stronghold of the uprising and didn't want to buy milk from Israelis. The cows were soon declared a threat to the security of the state of Israel, and the cow hunt began. The story is told with gentle irony in a mash-up of Claymation, graphic novel, amusing testimony by participants 20 years after the fact, and archival footage. The result is not really entertainment; it's deep inspiration mixed with an elegiac sense of loss.

May 9: *The Occupation of the American Mind*, by Loretta Alper and Jeremy Earp (2016; 1:22)

This is the only film in the series by U.S., not Palestinian, directors. It's a documentary about the influence of Israeli political propaganda on U.S. media coverage of Israel-Palestine. The associate producer and main interlocutor is Sut Jhally, professor of communication at the University of Massachusetts. His professional specialty is analysis of advertising. Narration is by Roger Waters of Pink Floyd.