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## Silent discontent: A portrait of the jihadist as a young man



First Run Features

### SILENT WATERS

Directed by Sabiha Sumar

First Run, opens October 8, Cinema Village

**M**easuring the human impact of Pakistan's late-'70s turn toward Islamization, *Silent Waters* charts the disintegrating bond between a widowed mother (Kiron Kher) and her only son (Aamir Malik), who gets peer-pressured into joining a radical fundamentalist group. The movie's steadily darkening tone mirrors the boy's frightening transformation from mild-mannered teenager to committed jihadist; what begins as a seemingly aimless,

### Islamabad girls: *Silent Waters*

leisurely paced comedy soon turns into a multidimensional family tragedy. When a state-sanctioned visit by Sikh pilgrims digs up secrets about the village's history, the true subject of *Silent Waters* (as well as the monstrous meaning of its title) comes into horrifying focus. Attentive to the sociocultural roots of fundamentalism's appeal to young men—limited economic opportunity, lack of respect for women—Sabiha Sumar's debut feature could scarcely be more relevant to Pakistan's present, or, given this country's history of backing such repressive regimes, to ours. **JOSHUA LAND**

### ANDROMEDIA

Directed by Takashi Miike

Pathfinder, October 8 through 14, ImaginAsian

A sort of *Idoru* meets *Spice World*, Takashi Miike's 1998 J-pop jaunt congregates girl group Speed and boyband Da Pump in an effervescent riff on memory and virtualness. When teenage Mai (Hiroko Shimabukuro) dies in an accident, her scientist father embeds an artificially intelligent reincarnation named Ai on her boyfriend's laptop. Miike fulfills the teenybopper brief with relish—a mid-movie plunge off a cliff cues a choreographed music-video routine—and gives the rote plot a weird, mood-swinging energy, alternating between puppy-love melodrama and garish cyberhallucinations. Any film nuts enough to cast wild-man cinematographer Chris Doyle as a shorts-clad villain is its own kind of must-see. **DENNIS LIM**

### ARNA'S CHILDREN

Directed by Juliano Mer Khamis and Danniell Danniell  
ThinkFilm, opens October 8, Quad

*A To Be and to Have* with politicking replacing nose picking, *Arna's Children* documents the theater productions at a Jenin school where kids liken their performances to Molotov cocktails. The film's uncompromising portrayal of youths struggling with the Israeli military presence raises questions about the catch-22 these kids face, choosing between accepting the occupation or violently opposing it. The directors render the children with a Thornton Wilder bluntness—as a boy skirts across the floor meowing, the narrator describes the child as a teenage intifada combatant. Refreshing and depressing, the film never condones the violence that has devastated Jenin for decades but makes it clear how seemingly innocent children become martyrs for a cause. **DAVID BLAYLOCK**

### THE CARD PLAYER

Written and directed by Dario Argento

Anchor Bay, October 6 through 13, Two Boots Pioneer

Dario Argento, the Visconti of violence, is back with an ingenious but relatively tame thriller. Irish cop John (Liam Cunningham) teams up with Italian inspector Anna (Stefania Rocca) to investigate the kidnapping of a British tourist. This poor lady is the first victim of a serial killer who forces the Roman police to play video poker for his captives' lives—if the cops win, the women will be spared, but for each round they lose, a body part will be cut off. The clueless carabinieri can do little but watch until they enlist the services of a teenage video poker ace to play for them. Argento

builds suspense nicely when Rocca is trapped with the killer inside her apartment. And—shades of silent-serial queen Pearl White!—she spends most of the final reel handcuffed to railroad tracks as an express bears down on her. Although less bloody than the director's usual splatterfests, *Card Player* contains quite a few scenes of cops poking around inside rotting corpses. See it, but not after a full meal. **ELLIOTT STEIN**

### LADDER 49

Directed by Jay Russell

Touchstone, in release

Not as snort-worthy as *Backdraft*, *Ladder 49* is a serviceable testament to the firemen who would bravely risk their lives to protect the safety of others, etc., etc. The movie follows rookie Jack (Joaquin Phoenix) from hazing to heroism, through courtship with a juicy jeweler (Jacinda Barrett) and onward to fatherhood, when parental love *almost* supersedes his testosterone-driven altruism. Never mind that the central couple doesn't generate much heat, or that Barrett seems strangely unconcerned with the dangers inherent in her husband's job. Never mind that neither Phoenix nor veteran fireman-cum-group therapist John Travolta really has the physique for this line of work, or that the rest of the company (best friend Morris Chestnut, resident asshole Robert Patrick) seems as phony as a toy fire truck. Just sit back and enjoy the movie's warm glow. And for a real meditation on the existential dilemmas of the firefighter, see *I ♥ Huckabees*. **BEN KENIGSBURG**

### RAISE YOUR VOICE

Directed by Sean McNamara

New Line, opens October 8

The God-squad answer to Todd Graff's *Camp*, this after-church special finds chaste cover girl Hilary Duff playing a red-state songbird who, when her beloved brother dies in a car wreck after a Christian emo show (Jesus evidently wants him for a sunbeam), decides to buck their toothpick-chomping daddy's rules and sneak off to a summer music program in scary urban L.A. Adorable Britboy Oliver James valiantly competes for second billing with Duff's camera-hogging silver cross talisman necklace. We're supposed to be rooting for this left-behind sister in her struggle to hit "Hallelujah Chorus" high notes, but all we can do is marvel at how the mighty—*Northern Exposure* hottie John Corbett (as a weirdly flirty music teacher) and *Risky Business* babe Rebecca De Mornay (as Duff's frisky aunt)—have fallen. **LAURA SINAGRA**