

Profane

USA 2011

produced by

Kristie Alshaibi, Usama Alshaibi for Artvamp

directed by Usama Alshaibi

starring Manal Kara, Molly Plunk, Dejan Mircea, Edward Salem, Ricky Sinz, Stephan Wozniak, Kiel Frieder, Celina Paddock, Nigel Murphy, Jessica Bailey, Golbon Eghtedari, Bret Koontz

written by Usama Alshaibi, music by Ehsan Ghoreishi

review by

Mike Haberfelner



Muna (Manal Kara) lives, by almost any standards, a life of sin:

She's a dominatrix who loves to show her naked body and doesn't shy away even from golden or brown shower games, she has once been a hooker basically because she loves sex and money, and has only given up streetwalking because she wanted to be in total control, and she is no stranger to

substance abuse - but Muna is also a Muslim, and she wants to be a good Muslim, too. But she feels detached from her religion, so much so that she thinks she hears voices. Ali (Dejan Mircea), a Muslim cabdriver she and her friend, lover and co-dominatrix Mary (Molly Plunk) befriend when he drives them home from work tells her it's the voice of her Jinn trying to tell her something - and soon, Muna starts discussing everything that has to do with her faith with Ali, who's a devout Muslim but on the liberal side of the spectrum - so he chooses not to see the most obvious signs of Muna's life of sin.

It's interesting then that it was actually Muna's religion itself was what made her what she is, when back in her native Jordan, she has been punished for some (by Western standards) harmless teenage

sexual experiments, has been exorcised (a traumatic experience she still hasn't gotten out of her head), and has actually prompted her to move to the USA, to Chicago, where she has adapted to the Western lifestyle and the liberties that come with it all too easily. And she has taken the road of being a prostitute and later a dominatrix not because she was forced, but because she thinks she was destined to.

Nowadays, Muna feels completely detached from her own culture, so much so that she has difficulties even reading the Qur'an - so she asks Ali for assistance ... which Ali slightly misinterprets when a few days later, he shows up on her doorstep with an Imam - which only leads to disaster, because Muna and Mary are only half-dressed - Mary is tied up even from a sex game they have been playing -, and the drugs and alcohol from last night clearly have not worn off. Ali and the Imam storm off in a rage. So, has Muna's religion turned its back on her?

A very impressive film that uses a mix of documentary-like scenes, provocative images, trip-like sequences and very somber interviews to shatter prejudices and shed new light on often-covered ground. And that works so well because the film is entirely non-judgemental - Muna might be a woman who lives a life of sin (not just by Islamic standards I might want to add), but she can also be a very caring person who is looking for the meaning of life. And Ali might be too caught up in the teachings of his religion, but he wants to help Muna as a friend and not a missionary - sure, that backfires, but it was an honest attempt.

And when you add to this approach a very moody direction and slick storytelling that doesn't try to explain everything away and allows you to come up with your own conclusions, you've got a pretty good film.

Recommended, actually!

review © by **Mike Haberfelner**

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Ali
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Em
Bom
Jung
Bul
Drum
Captain
Charli
Dick
Dr. M
Docto
Dra
Emma
Flash
Frank
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Annett
Party
Freddy
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Jame
Jekyll a
Jerry
Jung
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