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PROFANE (2012)

Published by [David Carter](#) on 2014/7/13 (65 reads)

Directed by Usama Alshaibi  
Review by David Carter

**BUY IT**

Released by MVD Visual  
Running Time: 79 minutes  
Rating: Not Rated  
Color format: Color  
Audio/Subtitles: 2.0 Stereo English  
Region Code: 1, NTSC  
Aspect Ratio: 1.33:1  
16:9 Enhanced: Yes  
Special Features: Bonus Footage  
Trailer Online: [Yes](#)



Short Version: Transgressive art/horror piece

I always have a nice chuckle to myself whenever the media mentions a new "controversy" regarding a mainstream film. Like the rest of you FilmFanaddicts out there, I know that there are films lurking just beneath the surface of mainstream cinema that would cause heart palpitations in conservatives and liberals alike. Once you consider art cinema in the discussion, practically no taboo is left untouched and no sacred cows spared. The latest shocker to cross my desk is PROFANE, an art/horror hybrid from Iraqi-American filmmaker Usama Alshaibi. PROFANE is the first truly transgressive film to come around in several years, and is now available on DVD from MVD Visual.



PROFANE is the story of Muna, a Jordanian woman who works in Chicago as a dominatrix. Despite her unconventional career, Muna remains a devout Muslim and considers her faith an important part of her life. Since as a dominatrix she is the exploiter, rather than the exploited, she sees no contradictions between her job and her faith – in her mind, she is still submissive to Allah only. Her friend and occasional partner Mary spends little time thinking of such higher matters, and choosing to go through life in a drug-induced fog.

Muna has recently been troubled by something, however. She has been hearing voices in her head that are saying disturbing things to her, causing her to question her life choices and her faith. A chance encounter with a Muslim cab driver, Ali, is both helpful and worrisome for Muna. In Ali, she finds a friend and sometimes protector, but the devout young man also places the idea in her head that the voices she hears are the result of being possessed by a Djinn. Ali forces Muna to confront the apparent contradictions between her job and her faith, sending her on an introspective journey further disconnecting her from the real world.



PROFANE takes two of society's largest taboos, sex and religion, and combines them in such a way that is guaranteed to shock even the most seasoned transgressive cinema viewers. Furthermore, this level of frankness in a film concerning Islam is rare, and one can easily imagine the film causing a furor should it become more widely known. However the fact that Muna is Muslim is somewhat incidental as her crisis of faith and attempt to reconcile the incongruence in her life is a universal concept. Muna is at peace with her choice of career and how it relates to her faith and Ali's entrance into her life upsets that balance,

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forcing her to reevaluate her life and bringing issues she believed to be settled back to the surface. Strip away the sexuality and quasi-sacrilege in the film and you have a very human and relatable story told in a unique and refreshing way.

PROFANE doesn't follow the format of traditional narrative cinema and instead more closely resembles a visual art piece. Muna's thoughts are shown in psychedelic sequences that are brilliantly realized and disorient the viewer to the point that they are in a similar mind state to the character. I would characterize the film as art/horror, since director Alshaibi's visual style places an emphasis on the grotesque to a large degree. Coupled with the Djinn subplot and dreams (flashbacks?) of Muna undergoing an exorcism, and one can easily imagine the film being read as horror by many viewers.

MVD Visual's DVD of the film does a good job of bringing Alshaibi's film to home video. Doubtlessly, it was intended to be seen in a larger format, but the visual quality is strong enough that viewers will still be able to have the appropriate experience at home. The twenty minutes of extra footage on the disc is a mixture of deleted scenes and behind the scenes footage showing how some of the film's more interesting moments were achieved. This is definitely a film I would recommend to viewers looking for something more challenging than mainstream cinema and for anyone who feels there are no longer any transgressive subjects.



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