

A Mighty Heart

A new movie that takes its theme from our age of terrorism and successfully personalizes it is *A Mighty Heart*, based on the kidnapping incident of Wall Street Journal correspondent Daniel Pearl, who fell into the hands of Islamic fundamentalists in Pakistan in 2002, and his wife Mariane's search for him. What makes the project intriguing is that it is directed by Englishman Michael Winterbottom, one of world's most protean filmmakers.

Winterbottom will try anything and even knows the territory, having made last year's documentary *Road to Guantanamo* in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and having traced a South Asian immigration route also in *In This World*, a terrific docu-drama made in 2003. Winterbottom's presence and eclectic taste (he also co-wrote the movie) makes this picture much more than a simple star turn for the over-hyped Angelina Jolie.

In fact, Winterbottom uses Jolie—playing Pearl's wife Mariane—as an actress and not a “Star.” Better yet, the movie is not all about her but is, in fact, mostly a fine police procedural set in a rough-and-tumble Karachi, Pakistan, filmed in a fluid, fast documentary style that wholly convinces.

The film dispenses with little set-up and gets right to the kidnapping of Pearl (Dan Futterman), the Wall Street Journal man who was due to leave Pakistan right before he was taken. Then the director keeps the pace pulsing with strong and confident intercutting between the anxious home where Mariane Pearl and her support team is staying and the local police headquarters where a dogged captain (a splendid Irrfan Khan) and his team run down leads on the perpetrators. One groans with the authorities as one false lead dies out then exults as the next likely one develops, mirroring the kind of yo-yoing that Mariane and her friends must have experienced.

Jolie, by the way, has to balance the obvious anxieties of the bereaved wife with the cool head needed to push the investigation along, and she manages each state with steady poise. The courageous front she exhibits must, finally, crack under wrenching grief, however, and it does in a chilling explosion of anguish. Not for the faint of heart is *A Mighty Heart*, but a true tale of our times.

(The film is rated “R” for tough terrorist themes, violence, and police brutality.)

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