

HER FAMILY / HIS

Reviewing Family Entertainment



HERS

HIS

Muhammad^{PBUH}*: The Last Prophet

We are in the season of family. Worldwide people begin to gather in November and December to feast and celebrate the passage of a year. Of course, traditionally I think of Thanksgiving and Christmas as pivotal family celebrations because I am a Christian American. But this year, a new animated film, is opening my eyes to a broader world and enlightening my perception of both family and faith.

Muhammad^{PBUH}: The Last Prophet opens in theaters across the country on Nov. 14 coinciding with Eid al-Fitr, the feast that concludes Ramadan. At this time in history, it is critical that Americans see and hear the tenants and history of this faith. Too often our impressions of the Muslim faith have been influenced by widespread negative stereotypes drawn from the actions of a fanatic fringe. *Muhammad^{PBUH}: The Last Prophet* educates, enlightens, and entertains an audience of all ages.

This was not an easy project to bring to the screen. The producers tapped the creative talent of Richie Rich, a former Disney animator who directed *The Fox and The Hound*, to tackle the difficult job of telling a story where the main character and his closest allies could not be represented through either image or voice. Shooting the film from the point of view of Muhammad and integrating the convention of a narrator to speak the words of the Qur'an eliminates any distraction for the audience and respects the fundamentals of this faith. Mr. Rich is to be commended for a beautifully drawn film rich in exotic detail and authentic depictions but, especially, I commend the score. Bravo to the Salt Lake City Symphony.

According to the distributor, Oussama Jammal of the Fine Media Group, the response from around the world has been very upbeat and supportive, "Americans are not used to seeing a movie about us, everyone is very excited. We hope it opens a dialogue." After watching the film my family, including my fourteen-year-old son, spent the evening discussing the history of the Muslim faith and the fundamental values we share with Muslim people. We all wondered why our perceptions were so negatively distorted before seeing the film. We concluded that it was time to see more films like this about a people who have been too long ignored by film.

Was the film good? Yes, very entertaining. Was the animation cutting edge? No, but very acceptable. Was the film worth your time and mine? Absolutely. The week of Nov. 14-18 there are several big budget productions bombarding you with advertising. Look past the hype and find your way to this small film and remember to take your children. It will open your eyes, provide discussion, and a new vision of our world. It is especially important in this season of family, thanks and peace.

From my family to yours, Happy Thanksgiving.

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With Thanksgiving's unique sights, sounds and especially tastes before us, November is a particularly blessed month. As the weather turns cool and beacons us inside for warmth and occasional self-reflection, there is an animated film you'll want to see.

Scheduled to screen at selected theaters Los Angeles area theaters (check www.finemediagroup.com for updates) this month, the animated film *Muhammad^{PBUH}: The Last Prophet*, is not only a important film to see for its clear messages of peace, abiding love, religious and racial tolerance, but in view of the current war in Iraq, it's a timely film as well.

Since this film condenses 23 years of the life, trials, tribulations, eventual liberation and ascension to God of the Prophet Muhammad^{PBUH}, you might suspect this film couldn't resist proselytizing the Islamic faith to its non-Muslim viewers in a heavy-handed way. After all, this has been tried on more than one occasion in the past. Quite the opposite is true. I discovered that this film, much like *The Passion of the Christ*, chronicles the highlights of a most miraculous life – you are free to draw your own conclusions as to how you might act upon the film's information.



Like most other small town mid-westerners born and raised in central Ohio, I'd never learned much about Muhammad^{PBUH}, the Islamic faith or the Kaba, which Muslims believe to be the House of God in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. I'd venture to say many other Americans haven't either. *Muhammad^{PBUH}: The Last Prophet* serves as the perfect primer to chip away large chunks of Western ignorance regarding a way of life and belief shared by more than 1.6 billion other people on this planet.

The film is adeptly and artistically crafted, the film's score soars, and the action is well paced. I especially appreciated the social respect shown to women within the Muslim faith throughout the film. *Muhammad^{PBUH}: The Last Prophet* certainly provides a peaceful and humane understanding of Islam compared to the erratic and graphically violent drama of the war in Iraq being broadcasted on our television's nightly news. If you get the chance, go see this important animated film or DVD with your kids. It's sure to enlarge and enrich your perception of this world – and in our family... there's nothing wrong with that!

Referencing the respectful appellation "PBUH" used throughout this review, may peace be upon us all as we sort out our continued and complicated military involvement abroad. Happy Thanksgiving!

Film Synopsis: From the creators of *The King and I*, *The Fox and the Hound*, and *The Swan Princess* comes the first animated feature length film for Badr International. Set 1,400 years ago during the early years of Islam, this film relates to the events that unfolded and led to the rise of a renewed religion in the Arabian desert, eventually spanning seven continents and counting 1.6 billion adherents around the world. Though the Prophet is not personified, sound, cinematography and other storytelling conventions are employed in the telling of his story.

* PBUH stands for 'peace be upon him,' an appellation accorded to God's Prophet by Muslims.