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صَالُون هُدَى **HUDA'S SALON**

a film by HANY ABU-ASSAD

PRESSKIT



HUDA'S SALON

Film by

Hany Abu-Assad

Duration

88 min

Countries of Production

Palestine-Egypt-Netherlands-Qatar

Year of Production

2021



LOGLINE:

A newlywed Palestinian woman must choose between her honor and betraying her country.



SYNOPSIS:

Based on real events, Huda's Salon is a heart-racing, entertaining feminist thriller, where two women fight for their freedom. Reem, a young mother who is married to a jealous man, goes to Huda's salon in Bethlehem for a haircut and an attentive ear. However, this ordinary visit turns sour after Huda puts Reem in a shameful situation, blackmails her to work for the secret service of the occupiers and betrays her people.



ABOUT HANY ABU-ASSAD:

Hany Abu-Assad is a Palestinian film director, writer and producer. Born in Nazareth 1961, he is one of the most eminent Arab directors of our time. He broke into filmmaking after working for several years as an airplane engineer in The Netherlands. In 1994, he produced the feature film Curfew, directed by Rashid Masharawi. Since then, Abu-Assad has written, directed and produced several award winning films which include Nazareth 2000, Rana's Wedding, Ford Transit, Paradise Now, The Courier, Omar and The Idol.

His film Paradise Now was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film and won the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language film. His film, Omar was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film 2014 and won several awards. The awards include the Best Film at the Dubai Film Festival, the Jury Prize in the competition of Certain Regard at Cannes Film Festival, Independent Spirit Award, Felix Award, Berlin Blue Angel Award and Amnesty International Film Prize.

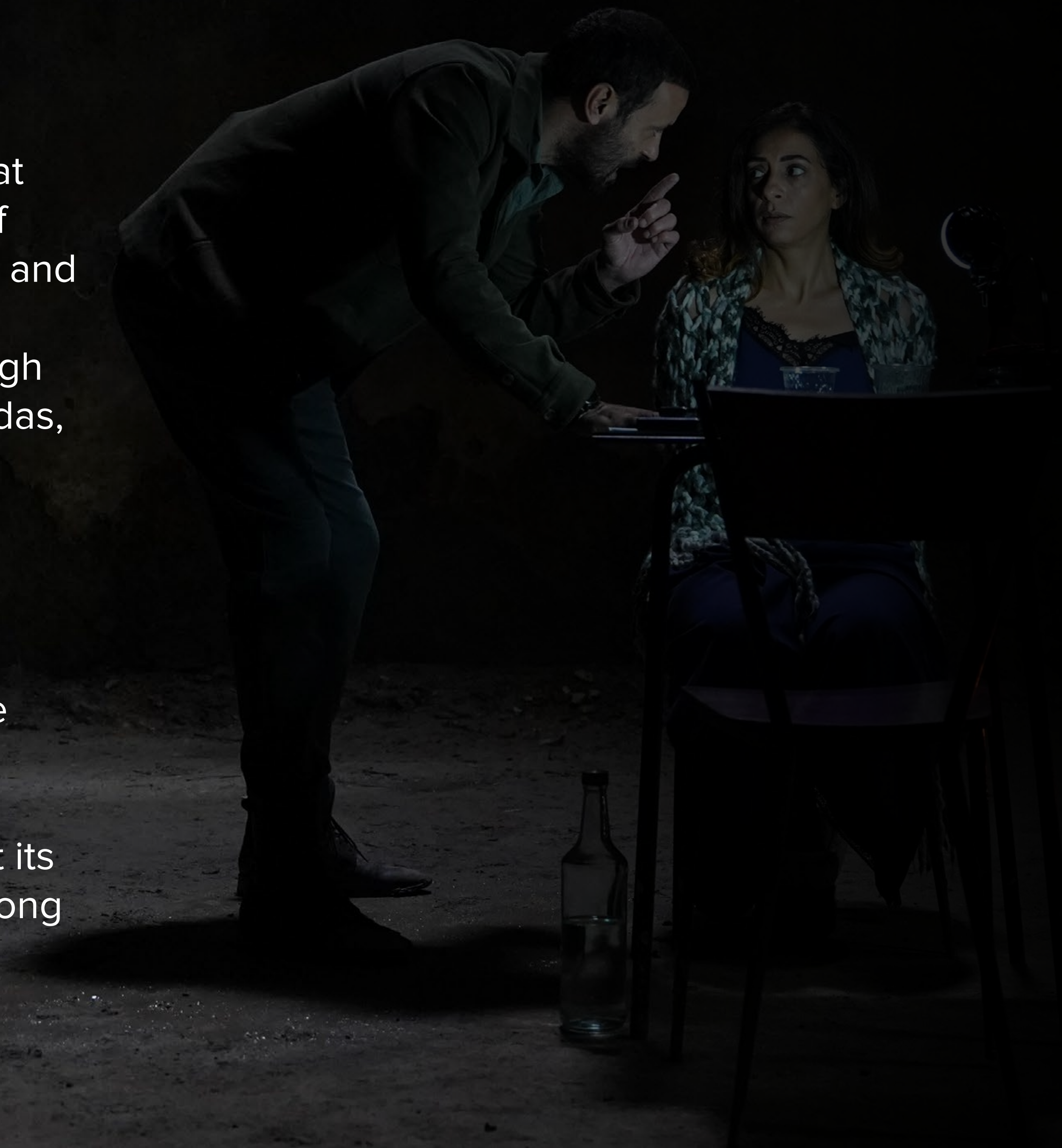
In 2017, Abu-Assad directed The Mountain Between Us, starring Kate Winslet and Idris Elba, which opened the 39th edition of Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF). Huda's Salon is his latest feature film.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

Seldom do I find a story inspired by real events that also contains contradictions. Huda's Salon is full of contradictions that work together in a precise way and begin to fit together like the main wheels inside a clock, eventually strengthening one another through their fight. Despite having different jobs and agendas, they're all working for the same ticking clock: suspense.

The story is entertaining, a ticking bomb, ensuring tension, and makes you find yourself emotionally involved and clearly rooting for Reem. At the same time, it also has an ending that is both emotionally satisfying and is an honest representation of life without being false, yet still raises questions about its themes. Perhaps Reem is saved, but in reality, as long as women are oppressed by society, the whole society will always be easily oppressed.



It is basic yet rich in elements. Despite featuring just two major locations, and three main characters, it manages to be incredibly cinematic. There is a constant tension between the flowing cinematic dynamic and the more static theatrical dynamic. This tension is visualized through the underground world and the above ground world while the polaroid picture functions as the ultimate cinematic connection. Huda is underground, trying to save herself and the girls by winning as much time as possible, but is trapped in her own web.

Reem's case is opposite to Huda's. She lives above ground, trapped in her own apartment as though standing on quicksand. The more she moves, the more she sinks. This tension will inspire artistic execution, and taking bold and daring steps. In order to intensify the experience for the audience, I constructed each scene to be taken in one shot. This gives the audience the feeling that they are a part of



the lives of the characters and, in the meantime, pushes the actors to their maximum capacity. The suspense and the ticking bomb are natural, so there was no need to have artificial means such as music to stimulate the suspense.

There's ambiguity in the story where you find yourself understanding the incomprehensible and questioning the unquestionable. We are supposed to stand on Hasan's side, but we find ourselves standing on the side of the traitor, Huda. This movie will explore the thin line between wrong and right (Loyalty and Betrayal) with depth and seriousness, but also with doses of humor, relativism and banality of life.

The film is entertaining yet shares some aspects about humanity and its history. Huda's Salon is not just showing the consequences of oppression, but also shows the relationship between gender

inequality and oppression. Reem and Huda struggle for equality, full rights, and work. Huda's Salon explores equality from a different perspective. It's about women being equal to men, not the opposite. The prominent director Mike Nichols once said: "There are only three kinds of scenes: a fight, a seduction or a negotiation,". In Huda's Salon almost every scene contains seductions, negotiations, and fights all at once.

Huda's Salon is each of the following: a feminist journey with controversial themes, a thriller with humor and a Shakespearean drama with a tragic love story. We hope to see Huda's Salon and everything it represents on the big screen soon.

Director Hany Abu-Assad

CAST



ALI SULIMAN

Ali Suliman is a Palestinian actor who started his career in the late 1990's. He landed his breakthrough in Paradise Now (2005), marking Palestine's first ever nominee for the Academy Award in Best Foreign Language category. He then starred in a slew of high-profile films that propelled his name as an international actor landing roles in more than 50 films across more than 10 countries such as: The Kingdom (2007) by Peter Berg, Disney Ramallah (2014) by Tamara Erde, From A to B (2014) by Ali Mostafa, Rattle the Cage (2015) by Majid Al Ansari and Amira (2021) by Mohamed Diab.

Ali Suliman was awarded Best Actor at different events and film festivals, including El Gouna Film Festival for his role in 200 Meters, by Ameen Nayfeh, Dubai International Film Festival and Carthage Film Festival (JCC) for his role in The Last Friday, by Yahia Al Abdullah, to name a few.



MANAL AWAD

Manal Awad is a Palestinian actress who studied acting at the Institution Supérieure D'Art Dramatique, Tunisia. She holds a Master's Degree in Theater Directing from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) in London.

Since her graduation, she has worked on many projects in theatre, television and cinema. Her presence in the Palestinian cinema industry became remarkable. She started her career with Rana's Wedding film (2002) by Hany Abu-Assad who she collaborated with later on film The Idol. She took part in Pomegranates and Myrrh by Najwa Najjar. And ,recently, she starred in Gaza Mon Amour by Arab and Tarazan Nasser who she teamed up with before on De'grade' that was selected at Cannes Film Festival.

Manal is mostly famous as a comedian, where she performed many comedy shows in the Middle East. Lately, she embarked on a tour in Canada with her latest Stand Up comedy show.



MAISA ABD ELHADI

Born in Nazareth, Maisa Abd Elhadi is a Palestinian actress who studied acting at Jaffa Institute. She starred in several remarkable Palestinian films, such as Susan Youssef's *Habibi Rasak Kharban* for which she won the award for Best Actress at Dubai International Film Festival in 2011 as well as *The Reports on Sarah and Saleem*, for which she reaped Best Actress award at Durban International Film Festival.

In a few years, Maisa's career ascended to fame after teaming up with some of the Arab world's most prominent directors. She landed a number of leading roles in films like *Dégradé* (2015), *3000 Nights* (2015), directed by Mai Masri, *The Idol* (2015), *Tarzan and Arab Nasser's Gaza Mon Amour* (2020), and *The Alleys* (2021), by Bassel Ghandour



REVIEWS

“This movie is an emotional rollercoaster, in the best way imaginable...A masterpiece — you can't miss it.”

Alisha Mughal- Exclaim

“This is a return to form and to more familiar territory for Abu-Assad.”

Wendy Ide-Screendaily

“Huda's Salon” doesn't waste a second in its crackling first 10 minutes, zooming from easy chatter to absolutely horrifying drama without missing a trick.”

Kate Erbland-Indie Wire

“Huda's Salon is an effective thriller that feels almost like a horror movie.”

Orla Smith-Seventh Row

“A sobering reminder that in any type of conflict, women tend to get the short end of the stick.”

Tomris Laffly-Variety

“Hany Abu-Assad does what he does best, delves into the idea of "how contradiction can meet, because everything good cannot exist -- without evil, good has no meaning.”

E. Nina Rothe-MIME

“Abu-Assad stages an exemplary scene of this to open the film, and follows it up with several cleverly choreographed long-takes.”

Michael Scoular-Inreviewonline

“Huda’s Salon recalls Hollywood mysteries from the 1940s in both its brisk pace and disarmingly simple style, resulting in a sparse, intelligent thriller.”

Dan Mecca-The Film Stage

“Strikingly bold in its dramatic construction, and adept at folding the macro issues into the lives of everyday residents of a tumultuous area of the world.”

Carlos Aguilar- The Playlist

“Making the such psychological parameters specifically for women tactile not only proves to be a novel insight into life under occupation, but the foundation of a strong claustrophobic thriller that doesn’t require walls.”

Stephen Saito-The Moveable Fest

“The interrogation scene between Huda and Hasan is a stand-off between two equal opponents, matched in intelligence, cunning, and courage.”

Sheila O’Malley-RogerEbert.com

"It offers a satisfying dramatic snap while bequeathing a more lasting anxiety."

Anthony Lane-The New Yorker

“Thanks to filmmaker Hany Abu-Assad, this long-underserved sub-genre—once perfected by directors like Hitchcock, Pakula, and Weir—feels briefly resurrected thanks to his new picture Huda’s Salon.”

Jordan Raup-The Film Stage

Nearly every scene takes the form of a single unbroken shot, a technique that sometimes pulls you in and sometimes merely calls attention to its own virtuosity.

Justin Chang-Los Angeles Times

FESTIVALS

Toronto International Film Festival
WORLD PREMIERE

Red Sea International Film Festival
ARAB PREMIERE

Reel Palestine Film Festival
OPENING FILM

Beirut International Women Film Festival
SPECIAL JURY MENTION



CAST & CREW

Writer & Director

Hany Abu-Assad

Cast

Ali Suliman

Maisa Abd Elhadi

Manal Awad

Produced by

H&A Production

(Hany Abu-Assad and Amira Diab)

Film Clinic

(Mohamed Hefzy)

Co-produced by

MAD Solutions

(Maher Diab and Alaa Karkouti)

Lagoonie Film Production

(Shahinaz El Akkad)

Key Films

Cocoon

Philistine Films.

Associate Producers

Daniel Ziskind

Director of Photography

Ehab Assal

Peter Flinckenberg

Sound Designer

Raja Dubayah

Ibrahim Zaher

Editor

Eyas Salman

Music

Jeffrey van Rossum

International Distribution

MEMENTO INTERNATIONAL

Distribution in Arab World

MAD Solutions

Lagoonie Film Production