

Blu-Ray Review: Talented Director Lost in Saga of 'Miral'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 21, 2011 - 2:17pm

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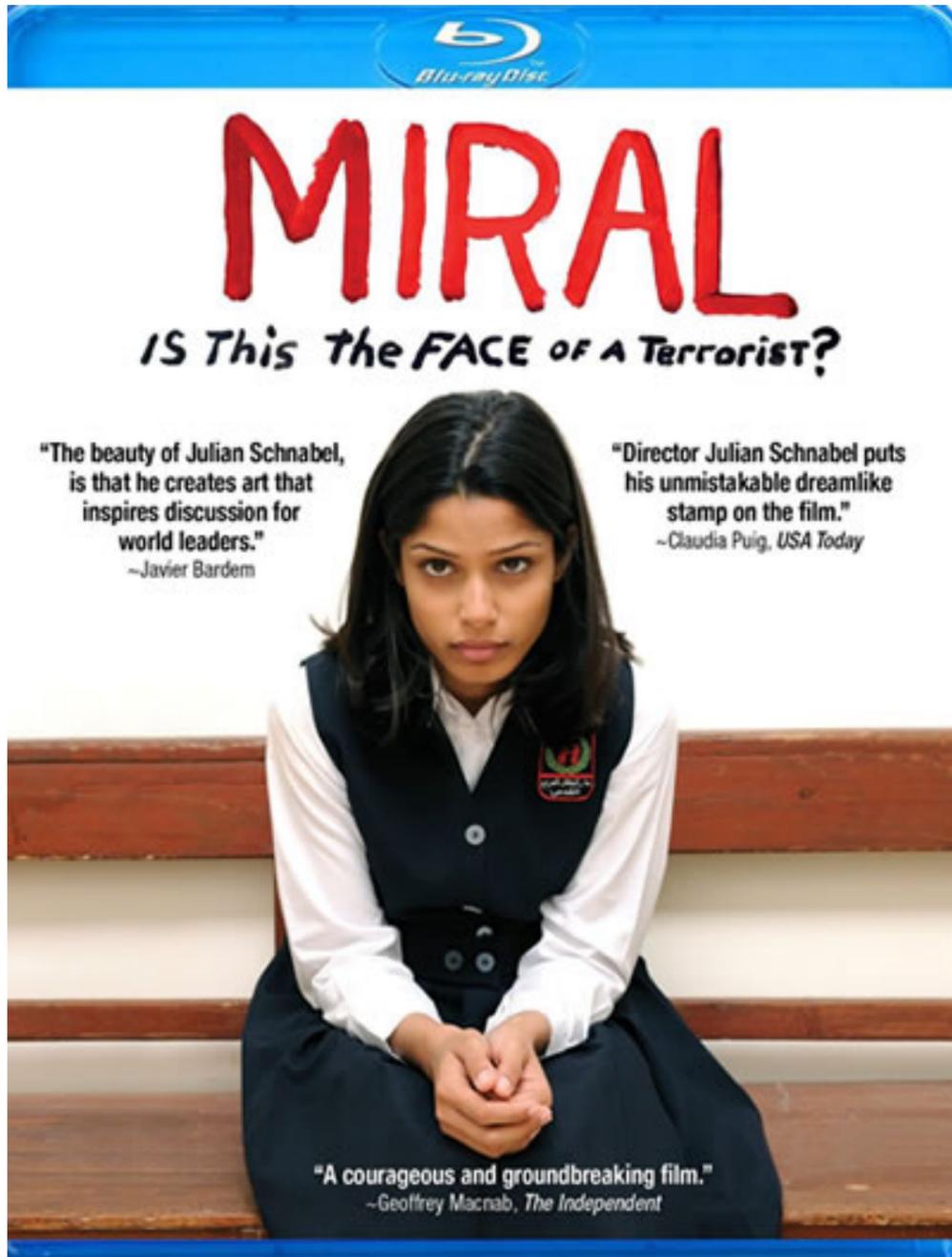
CHICAGO – I wanted to like Julian Schnabel's "Miral" for so many reasons. I think Schnabel ("The Diving Bell and the Butterfly," "Before Night Falls") is not only one of our most interesting filmmakers but he's redefining what one should expect from a biopic. I love the supporting cast — Hiam Abbass, Alexander Siddig, Willem Dafoe, more. I want Freida Pinto to be more than that pretty girl from "Slumdog Millionaire." Despite my high hopes, this is Schnabel's least effective film, a startling misstep that both bites off more than it can chew and still finds a way to be his least passionate work.



Blu-Ray Rating: **2.5/5.0**

The biggest problem with "Miral" comes down to scope. Trying to tell the story of multiple generations of women caught up in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a daring task for a book writer and a nearly impossible one for a filmmaker. The blend of history, war, female rights, and even a love story into one film results in one that fails both politically and personally. Schnabel clearly wants to tell a "big picture" story by incorporating actual historical footage into his work but he loses both that and the personal picture of Miral by not really focusing on either. I'm sure Schnabel wouldn't want us to read Miral's story as that of all Palestinian women and yet it doesn't register as a character study either. It's lost in the middle and, therefore, remarkably inert. We never come to care about Miral or the plight of the people for which she fights.

The film is hurt most by its first act, which should have been cut entirely or truncated so the film could more distinctly focus on its title character. Instead, we get generations of background, first focusing on Hind (Abbass), a woman who opens the orphanage which will eventually take in Miral, and later the title character's suicidal mother. After these bizarrely unengaging early scenes, "Miral" settles in for the bulk of its running time with its lead as she grows up in one of the most tumultuous places in the world.



Miral was released on Blu-ray and DVD on July 12th, 2011

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

The incredibly episodic script for "Miral" is primarily a coming-of-age story in a lot of ways as a young girl goes from an orphan who misses her father to a resistance fighter for her people. If it sounds like a complex, tough arc for an actress, it's because it is and the fact that Pinto never gets under the skin of this character. We never know Miral. And I'm not sure we ever could. Her story is the kind that registers so much more distinctly in written form than it ever could on celluloid. I'm pretty sure the book on which "Miral" is based is interesting stuff but the movie never engages.

To be fair, "Miral" is not a complete disaster. Schnabel is too talented for it to become so and he finds some poetic moments and striking details within the larger story. He just never links them together into something as memorable as the real story of "Miral."

Special Features:

- o Deleted Scenes
- o The Making of Miral
- o Julian Schnabel Studio Tour
- o Filmmaker Q&A
- o Feature Commentary with Director Julian Schnabel and Producer Jon Kilik

"Miral" stars Freida Pinto, Hiam Abbass, Alexander Siddig, and Omar Metwally. It was written by Rula Jebreal and directed by Julian Schnabel. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on July 12th, 2011.



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