



# Wow Women

These women-centric films provide a voice and aspire to bring about change. *by* RITIKA JAIN



A still from *Lore*

In the past few months, I've been watching some quality world cinema—thought-provoking films from brilliant directors that revolve around women and courage, courage to question tradition, courage to stand by a friend against all odds, courage to carry on in a world gone awry. A departure from mainstream Hollywood formula films, these gritty flicks will make you sob, grind your teeth in anger and even look away in disgust.

## **wadjda** (Saudi Arabia, 2012)

**Director:** Haifaa Al-Mansour

Nominated for Best International Independent Film, Best Foreign Language Film and Best Children's Feature Film, this is the first film to be shot in Saudi Arabia. It's

about Wadjda, a free-spirited girl who takes a fancy to a bike simply because she wishes to race her friend Abdullah. Discouraged by everyone around her because 'girls don't ride bikes', she's determined to save up to buy one. The film offers a non-preachy look at everyday life while exploring gender biases.

## **lore** (Germany, 2012)

**Director:** Cate Shortland

In the post-World War II Germany, a young girl is forced to grow up and take charge of her siblings as her parents are taken away for prosecution. Journeying to the safety of their grandmother's house in extremely testing circumstances, she's forced to rely on a Jew, making her question her

parents' beliefs and why she's been taught to hate the community.

## **4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days** (Romania, 2007)

**Director:** Cristian Mungiu

A woman assists her friend to arrange an illegal abortion in 1980s Romania. Set in the pre-cellphone era, it's a statement on how women were exploited, and how they risked their lives to make the choice of terminating an unwanted pregnancy. It's also a touching story about the lengths a girl can go to, to support a friend in need.

## **asmaa** (UAE, 2011)

**Director:** Amr Salama

A woman with AIDS is denied medical treatment for her gall bladder condition. To help those suffering from the same disease, and to educate them about their plight while also asking for her rights, she decides to appear on television, despite the stigma.

## **cairo 678** (Egypt, 2010)

**Director:** Mohamed Diab

*Cairo 678* is the poignant story of three women of varying social backgrounds and their search for justice from the daily plight of sexual harassment. The film reveals a raw side of Egypt that the world has never seen and sheds light on a rarely depicted subject. It took the top prize in the 2010 Dubai International Film Festival.

## **café de flore** (Canada, 2011)

**Director:** Jean-Marc Vallée

The film chronicles the parallel fates of Jacqueline, a devoted single mother whose son is born with Down Syndrome in 1960s Paris, and Antoine, a recently divorced, successful DJ in present-day Montreal. A touching film with two stories bound together by obsessive, tragic, timeless love. ☘