



4TH

In THE IMPERIALISTS ARE STILL ALIVE!, a dark comedy from first-time writer-director Zeina Durra, there is a scene set at a chic New York party after 9/11. One young woman advises a friend, "We have to act normal." And, for this cosmopolitan clan of Arabic-speaking socialites, "normal" means a life of Margiela bags, Oscar de la Renta gowns, and password-protected Chinatown speakeasies. The film's heroine, Asya (Elodie Bouchez), has more than a few things in common with Durra, who is of mixed Middle Eastern descent and moved from Europe to New York in 2000 to study film. "It's a heightened version of my own experiences," the director says of living in post-9/11 America as a Middle Eastern woman, and its attendant paranoia. (Asya inquires of her lover, "You're not CIA, are you...or Mossad?") Though it touches on politics, Imperialists, which opens March 4, is not a polemic but a comedy of manners. Says Durra, "I'm trying to show how surreal the whole thing is." FAN ZHONG