

The Devil's Double

reviewed by [John Petrakis](#) in the [October 4, 2011](#) issue

The Devil's Double seems destined for midnight screenings on college campuses, maybe on a double bill with *Scarface*. Both films concern a psychotic cocaine-snorting killer. This time it is Uday Hussein, son of Saddam, who is living la dolce vita in Baghdad right before the first Gulf War. For his own protection, Hussein decides he needs a "fiday"—a body double—just like Dad. He chooses his ex-schoolmate Latif Yahia, threatening to slaughter his old pal's family unless he agrees to take the job.

Somewhere in this vat of depravity is a movie screaming to get out, but writer Michael Thomas and director Lee Tamahori never seem to heed the call. Instead, they just lay out a series of cruel and bloody scenes, which include rape, disfigurement, torture and, in the film's biggest set piece, a disemboweling.

Alas, all this excess squanders the remarkable performance of young Dominic Cooper, who as both Uday and Latif bounces effortlessly between bellowing and seething. Cooper deserved a cohesive script about the way absolute power corrupts or about how the sins of the father are visited upon the son.