

OutThere

A street-smart guide to New York news and newsmakers

ISSUE ORIENTED
Farjam (center) and the NYC crew are already working on the next *Bidoun*.



REMOTE PATROL

Bidoun magazine celebrates a worldly Middle East

B*idoun* could be any other slick, cosmopolitan lifestyle magazine lining the walls at Universal News—until you notice that the title's in Arabic and the cover boys are wearing headdresses. The English-language quarterly is published in New York, printed in the United Arab Emirates and targeted to the Middle East diaspora. The latest issue, the fourth, covers everything from serious architectural reviews of Dubai's fantastical development projects to *Control Room* director Jehane Noujaim's favorite recipes.

"There are art magazines in the Middle East and here, but there aren't any magazines that connect these geographies," says founder and editor-in-chief Lisa Farjam in the publication's New York office. Farjam, 27, was born in New York to Iranian parents and attended a British high school in UAE capital, Dubai. She launched *Bidoun*—which means "without" in Farsi and Arabic—in 2004 with Bard classmate and editor Brian Ackley, a grant from the Iranian Arta Foundation and not much else. Today, with a circulation of 12,000, it's distributed across Europe, the U.S. and the Middle East. The permanent staff of seven is similarly distributed in New York, Zurich, Iran and the UAE—so far-flung that the

masthead, she says, have gotten together only in print, the staff has never all been in the same room.

The advantage of this unique setup is range. *Bidoun* explores the trivial ("Beer was invented by Egyptians during the Pharaonic era, along with the very material—glass—from which it is now consumed") and the monumental (an analysis of Dubai's "world project": 250 private, man-made islands carved out of the city's sandy coast, arranged in the shape of the world's continents). The winter issue was devoted to hair, summer 2004 to public art.

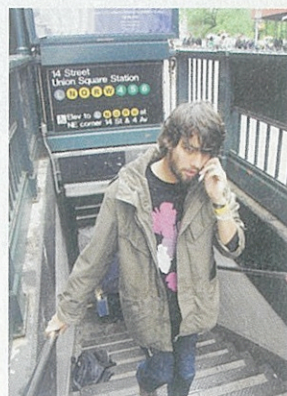
The challenge of putting out the Western-style magazine in the Middle East is more than just logistical. Recently, police raided *Bidoun*'s Dubai printer and confiscated copies because the latest issue pictures a high-heeled woman in front of a portrait of the late (and highly respected) ruler of the UAE. "All Western magazines circulating in the UAE have pictures blacked out," Farjam explains. "That was just poor judgment on our part." The editor remains unflappable—although, starting with the next issue, *Bidoun* will be printed in Canada.—*Chiara Barzini*

For more info and where to buy *Bidoun*, visit www.bidoun.com.

What's up with that?

Q: What's up with not being able to use a cell phone in the subway? In Europe and Japan, cell phones work fine underground.—*Evan Nass, Brooklyn Heights*

A: Although you can use your cell phone in some of NYC's shallow and elevated subway stations, most stations and tunnels are too deep to receive aboveground signals, and the beleaguered Metropolitan Transportation Authority doesn't have plans to wire them for service anytime soon. Check that—anytime at all. "We've looked at it," MTA spokesperson Tom Kelly admits, "but it's not feasible." Technologically not feasible? "It's cost-prohibitive," Kelly explains.



"It's too expensive to do even certain segments." He notes that several phone-service providers have also declined to wire the subways. End of story, if not for congressman and mayoral candidate Anthony Weiner. Introduced in May and currently in subcommittee, his Subway Cell Access Act would require that all underground train platforms in the country be wired for cell-phone use. So much for that "Gotta go, I'm going into the subway" excuse.—*Katherine Pushkar*

Curious about something around town? E-mail us at whatsup@timeoutny.com.

TONY poll: Stem cell research

Do you think the government should regulate stem cell research?

A. Yes B. No

To vote, go to www.timeoutny.com/poll/

Replies must be received by 10am on Tuesday, June 7. Results will be published in TONY 507.

POLL RESULT: In TONY 503, we asked if you thought the NYPD or the FDNY should be in charge if there's a disaster. New York's Bravest edged out the Finest, with **59 percent** of you preferring that the firefighters call the shots.

