



12th NY Sephardic Jewish
Film Festival
FEBRUARY 7 - 14, 2008
www.americansephardicfederation.org

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Launching it's 12th Year
The New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival
Continues To Explore the Cinema of this Rich and Diverse Culture
February 7-14, 2008

The American Sephardic Federation/Sephardic House, in association with Yeshiva University Museum, announces the **2008 New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival** line up, celebrating a dozen years of exciting and thought provoking films. With the expansion to multiple locations, this one-of-a-kind event running February 7 – 14, 2008 will offer a fascinating look through the lens of the Sephardic view point, past, present and beyond.

Since its debut at Lincoln Center over a decade ago the NY Sephardic Jewish Film Festival has continued its commitment to create a unique platform for quality films with distinctively Sephardic themes created by up-and-coming, as well as renowned filmmakers from around the globe.

Lynne Winters, the Director of Programming, states, "The New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival is one of the best expressions of ASF's mission for cultural inclusiveness, and its determined efforts to preserve and support the rich cultural heritage, spirit and history of all Sephardic communities as an integral part of the Jewish experience. This annual exploration of Sephardic Jewry presents the audience with an extraordinary breadth of lands, languages and traditions, revealing the "other" within the Jewish tradition. "

In continuing and enhancing their support of the festival, The New York State Council of the Arts states that they are *...impressed by the curator's work. Particularly the thematic approach and challenging films scheduled to be offered. The panelists recognized that the Sephardic Jewish experience is different than the more commonly understood Ashkenazi Jewish experience, with a more critical, cultural outlook."*

On Thursday February 7th, the **New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival** is proud to open its 12th season with the US Premiere of Ehud Tomalak's ***I Got No Jeep and My Camel Died***, followed by a performance & Q&A with the film's star Yair Dalal and an opening reception. And to close this year's festival, on Thursday February 14th, we are honored to screen the music-driven documentary ***Nuba of Light and Gold***, directed by Izza Genini. Ms. Genini will be present.

- ***I Got No Jeep and My Camel Died*** (US Premiere. Israel, 2006, 65 mins Hebrew w/English subtitles)
Director: Ehud Tomalak, Producers: Aida and Amos Michaeli.

Like the historical Perfume Road, the film portrays the musical journey of Yair Dalal, from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean, from antiquity to modern times and from performing in front of Bedouins to his nomination for the BBC World Music Award. Inspired by the Jewish masters of Iraqi music, he vows to carry on their vanishing legacy. A native Middle-Eastern Israeli, Dalal struggles for recognition in his roots by establishing "Almya" his music school in Jaffa, realizing a social cultural bridge between East and West.

- ***Exodus: Ada's Dream*** (North American Premiere, Italy, 2007, 140 mins Italian w/English subtitles.)
Director: Gianluigi Calderone. **Tribute to Israel @ 60.**

Based on the true story of Ada Sereni, who became a leader of the Aliyah Bet, helping the underground Jewish Brigade bring survivors to Palestine in 1945. She and her husband, Enzo, had moved to Palestine and founded a kibbutz where their three children were born. Enzo was parachuted into Germany to help save Jews, and was captured and sent to Mathausen. Ada, in her search for him, was asked by the Aliyah Bet to become their point person in Italy. The film shows her travels through Germany and Poland in search of Enzo, and her decision to

accept the request of the Aliyah Bet. She mediated the departure of the ships both with the British and Italian Prime Ministers. Post-screening discussion.

- **Family Heroes (Le Héros de Famille)** (US Premiere, France, 2006, 107 mins, French w/English subtitles)
Director: Thierry Klifa. Producer: Saïd Ben Saïd. Cast: Catherine Deneuve, Miou-Miou, Gérard Lanvin, Emmanuelle Béart, Géraldine Pailhas, Pascal Elbé, Valérie Lemercier, Mathilde Seigner. *Partial nudity.*

The story unfolds with the unexpected death of the cabaret owner of the Blue Parrot (in Nice, France), and his decision to leave his establishment not to his protegee of the past 40 years, Nicky Guazzini, but rather to Nicky's children by different mothers. The result is confusion and pain, followed by secrets revealed and lives turned upside down. (**Presented solely by American Sephardi Federation.**)

- **Sallah Shabati** (Israel, 1964, 110 mins Hebrew w/English subtitles)
Director: Ephraim Kishon.

This comedy, about the chaos of Israeli immigration and resettlement, introduced actor Chaim Topol (*Fiddler on the Roof*) to audiences worldwide. This social satire placed the director, Ephraim Kishon, and producer, Menahem Golan, among the first Israeli filmmakers to achieve international success. This film was nominated for a 1964 Academy Award in the category of Best Foreign Language Film, a first for an Israeli production, but lost to the Italian film, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*.

An Oriental Jewish family moves to a settlement camp in Israel in 1949. The patriarch, a lazy rube, tries several schemes to make money and get housing, but becomes tangled up by slick politicians, government bureaucracy, European and Oriental Jews, the nearby kibbutz, and his marriageable daughter.

Categorized as a Bourekas film, *Sallah Shabati* will be part of the discussion following the screening on this Israeli cinematic genre that has strong similarities to the exploitation films of the US.

- **Souvenirs** (Israel, 2006, 75 mins, Hebrew w/English subtitles)
Directors: Shahar Cohen and Halil Efrat. Music: Shai Bachar. Audience Award winner - New York's Tribeca Film Festival.

Shahar, having completed his studies, is an unemployed filmmaker. His father, Sleiman, a strict 82 year old Yemenite, suggests that Shahar make a film about the Jewish Brigade, in which he served during WW II. Shahar's motivation comes when he realizes that his father may have left some "souvenirs" with local girls while stationed in Amsterdam. He decides to make the film hoping to find his father's lost offspring, and maybe lessen some of the burden of his father's criticism. They set out together on the trail of the Jewish Brigade, beginning in Israel and continuing through Italy, Germany and ending in Holland, with a surprising discovery. With humor and compassion the film exposes a complex father-son relationship and raises universal questions and thoughts about the tension between myths of bravery and reality and between memory and historical truth.

- **Operation Mural** (US Premiere, 2007, 55 mins Israel, Hebrew, English, French w/English subtitles)
Director: Yehuda Kaveh. Producer: Ronit Dor. Tribute to Israel @ 60.

This film is presented in collaboration with the Dorot Division of the New York Public Library and the Institute for Sephardic Studies, CUNY Graduate Center.

Forty-five years after their clandestine mission, three Mossad agents return to Casablanca to retrace their steps in a humanitarian mission whereby 530 Jewish children reached Israel in 1961, under the guise of holidays in Switzerland. A special collective passport system was initiated, and then used with royal consent for the aliyah of 100,000 Jews in "Operation Yakhin" (1962-64). This film vividly documents how "Operation Mural" (16 March – 24 July 1961) succeeded beyond all expectations. The key actors relive their undercover activities: "Mural", code-name of David Gerald Littman – himself unaware that the operation was directed by the Mossad – and his contacts, "Georges" and "Jacques", assisted by a dedicated local group of Jewish youth (the Misgeret). There are many precious testimonies of children and key Mossad figures in Israel, and the Littmans in Switzerland – including a visit to the Home de la Forêt. This film documents a forgotten story, adding a new page to Israel's heroic birth and history.

Post-screening discussion with the director and David Littman. Moderator: Professor Jane Gerber, Institute for Sephardic Studies, CUNY Graduate Center.

- **The Jews of Lebanon (le Petite Histoire des Juifs de Liban)** (2006, 77 mins France/Lichtenstein)

Director: Yves Turquier.

In the 1960's, there were nearly 8,000 Jews in Lebanon; today there are less than 60. Through the stories of community members, now scattered all over the world, this film recounts their times of happiness, and then their exile to many countries -- among them the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Brasil, Israel, France, Italy, and Switzerland. The filming of this documentary took place in all of these countries, and tells of their hopes and hardships, and the attempt to vividly preserve the memory of the last Jews of Lebanon. Post-screening discussion with the director.

- ***Aviva My Love (Aviva Ahuvati)*** (Israel, 2006, Hebrew w/English subtitles)
Director: Shemi Zarhin. Producer: Eytan Evan.

The touching story of a hard-working mother in the small northern Israeli town of Tiberias. For years she has kept her remarkable writing skills under wraps, until her sister introduces her to Oded, an accomplished novelist who becomes her mentor. Aviva is on the brink of fulfilling her lifelong dream to become a published author, when she finds that her novelist mentor has other plans for her work. She learns about pursuing one's dream in the face of brutal ambition and family obligations. Winner of six Israeli Academy Awards including Best Film, Best Director, Best Actress and Best Script.

- ***Mortgage*** (Israel, 2006, 55 mins Hebrew w/English subtitles)
Directors: Tal Granit and Sharon Maymon.

A comic drama that examines how far a young couple from Ramle will go in order to save their home. Beny and Esty love each other very much, but one day they find themselves unemployed, and the bank is about to confiscate their apartment if they don't settle their mortgage debt within a month. The two search for creative solutions to obtain the money, while each of them believes that his solution is saner. As the confiscation date approaches, the relationship is marred, but their deep love holds in store a very precious surprise.

- ***Black Over White*** (New York Premiere, Israel, 2007, 50 mins Hebrew, Amharic w/English subtitles)
Director: Tomer Heymann.

The "Idan Raichel Project" is a huge hit in Israel and worldwide for good reason: it envisions a modern, multicultural nation where voices of young and old, Ethiopian and Yemenite, unite in a unique and extraordinary sound. The film takes us on a journey to the group's musical origins in Ethiopia, and to the personal origins of singer Cabra Kasai, who was born on the way from Ethiopia to Israel, but had never before been in the country of her ancestors. This is a story about longing for home, and discovering identity.

- ***The Last Jews of Libya*** (USA, 2007, 75 mins, Hebrew, English, Italian, Arabic w/English subtitles)
Director: Vivienne Roumani-Denn. Producer: Aryeh Bourkoff.

Through the story of her own family, who moved from Benghazi to Boston when she was 12 years old, Vivienne Roumani-Denn tells the story of Libyan Jewry, an ancient Sephardic community that lived on the southern shores of the Mediterranean for hundreds of years. At the end of World War II, there were 36,000 Jews remaining in Libya. Not one remains today; they have scattered to the four corners of the earth. The film takes us back to the period of Ottoman rule, through the Fascist occupation under Mussolini and the subsequent Nazi occupation, and to the Arab nationalism that dealt the final blow to the ancient Jewish community. Rare archival segments (still photographs and film) show Libya during the 20th century, providing the special flavor that permeates this film. Isabella Rossellini's narration makes elegant transitions between the speakers, and casts additional light on their stories. Post-screening discussion with the director.

- ***Ladino - 500 Years Young*** (Israel, 2006, 52mins. Ladino, Spanish, Hebrew w/English subtitles)
Director: Rina Papish.

Yasmin Levy, an electrifying 29-year-old Israeli singer, is following in the footsteps of her father, Yitzhak Levy, a revered singer who dedicated his life to recording and documenting the musical culture of Ladino, the ancient language of the Jews of Spain. Since her father died when she was only one, Yasmin knows him only through his songs, but she has taken it upon herself to immortalize and disseminate the musical legacy that he helped preserve. *Ladino* follows Yasmin on a powerful and exciting singing tour in Israel and Spain. Some Israelis view it as a tragic, diasporic language, but Levy is determined to keep it alive.

Since their expulsion from Spain in 1492, generations of Sephardic Jews succeeded in maintaining the Ladino language, a hybrid of Hebrew, Spanish, Turkish and Greek. Like its Eastern European counterpart Yiddish, Ladino is not merely a language but a culture, kept alive in part by a rich musical tradition of songs and melodies.

But today's descendants of Ladino speakers are fast losing touch with Ladino; even in Israel, where approximately 200,000 people still speak or understand some Ladino, this rich and beautiful culture is in danger of becoming extinct.

- ***Leaving Paradise: The Jews of Jamaica*** (U.S. Premiere, Jamaica, 2007)
Director: Melanie Levy. Producer: Chandra Simon.

A lively and colourful look at the little know Jewish Community In Kingston, Jamaica . They have existed on the island for over 350 years, and possess one of the only five extant synagogues in the world with a white sand floor. Key characters make for a unique, and vibrant cast and drive the film as they discuss their efforts to keep the community alive despite economic and cultural challenges.

- ***Adieu Meres (Goodbye Mothers)*** (North American Premiere, France, 2007, French w/English subtitles)
Director: Mohammed Ismael.

A new film by director Mohamed Ismail discusses the relationship of two Moroccan families – one Jewish, the other Muslim – during a time of social upheaval in the 1960s. The film, shot mostly in Casablanca and Tetouan, depicts the situation of Moroccan Jews during the period known as the "Black Years of Emigration," when there was a pervading sense of hesitation between two conflicting desires: remaining in Morocco or uprooting themselves to emigrate.

- ***Nuba of Gold and Light*** (2007, Morocco and France)
Director: Izza Genini.

TICKET INFORMATION

Opening Night: \$45 General Admission for film, performance and reception; Opening Night Friend: \$100 (includes all General Admission benefits + exclusive pre-screening VIP reception with the artist at 6:30pm); Closing Night Film & Reception: \$35/\$30 for ASF and YUMuseum members. All other films: \$11 General Public/\$9 ASF and YUMuseum members, seniors and students; Festival Pass (for 5 films of choice): \$45/\$40 for ASF & YUMuseum members. Reservations for specific screenings must be made at time of purchase. Tickets can be purchased in advance online at www.ticketweb.com, through the Center for Jewish History Box Office, 15 West 16th Street. Sunday through Thursday 11am - 5pm; and one hour prior to screenings, or by calling 917.606.8200.

Festival Venues

American Sephardi Federation/Sephardic House at the Center for Jewish History
15 West 16th Street (between Fifth and Sixth Avenues)

The JCC in Manhattan
334 Amsterdam Avenue at West 76th Street

For Further Information on the New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival please visit:
<http://www.americansephardifederation.org>

Presenting Sponsors: New York State Council on the Arts, Office of Cultural Affairs, Consulate General of Israel in New York, The JCC in Manhattan.

Many films from the 12th New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival will be presented at other festivals around the country including:

The 11th CAJE/Miami Jewish Film Festival **January 19-27, 2008**

January 20th at 6pm

- ***Cabal á Kaboul*** (U.S. Premiere, Belgium, 2007, 87 mins, Farsi w/ English subtitles)
January 20th at 8:30pm
- ***Secret Passage*** (UK-Luxembourg, 2004, 94 mins. English)

Sephardic Community Center - Brooklyn, NY **Saturday, February 2 at 8pm**

- ***Baghdad Bandstand*** (Israel, 2002, 70 mins Hebrew w/English subtitles)

Sunday, February 3 at 7pm

Souvenirs (Israel, 2006, 75 mins Hebrew w/English subtitles)

American Sephardi Federation/Sephardic House

ASF/SH is a national organization whose mission is to preserve and support the rich cultural traditions, spirit and history of all Sephardic communities as an integral part of Jewish experience and heritage. In addition to the New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival, ASF's activities include maintaining the only public Sephardic Library and Archives in the U.S., rich educational and cultural public programs, publishing books on Sephardic history and culture, *The Sephardi Report*, a journal featuring content from scholarly events, lectures and exhibitions, and the Broome and Allen Scholarship Fund for Sephardic studies and scholars.

Yeshiva University Museum

Since its founding in 1973, Yeshiva University Museum's changing exhibits have celebrated the culturally diverse intellectual and artistic achievements of 3,000 years of Jewish experience. The Museum provides a window into Jewish culture around the world and throughout history through its acclaimed multi-disciplinary exhibitions and award-winning publications. By educating audiences of all ages with dynamic interpretations of Jewish life, past and present, along with wide-ranging cultural offerings and programs, the Museum attracts young and old, Jewish and non-Jewish audiences.

Centro Primo Levi

Centro Primo Levi (CPL) was founded in New York in 2001, to promote research and cultivate awareness of the history, culture and traditions of the Jews of Italy. An offspring of the Genoa-based organization Centro Culturale Primo Levi, CPL's main projects include the creation of the Digital Library for Italian Jewish Studies and the development of public programs and seminars.

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