

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMERICAN SEPHARDI FEDERATION WITH SEPHARDIC HOUSE
IN ASSOCIATION WITH YESHIVA UNIVERSITY MUSEUM AND MANHATTAN JCC

PRESENT

11TH NY SEPHARDIC JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

FEBRUARY 1 - 8, 2007

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***A NEW DECADE IN THE CINEMATIC EXPLORATION OF SEPHARDIC JEWRY
FOCUSES ON SEPHARDIC VOICES IN ISRAELI CINEMA***

**OPENING NIGHT SCREENING & RECEPTION FEATURING
AWARD WINNING *THREE MOTHERS***

NEW YORK – December 18, 2006 – The American Sephardi Federation with Sephardic House presents the 11th New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival, which takes place February 1 to 8, 2007 at the Center for Jewish History and the Manhattan JCC. The annual cinematic exploration of Sephardic Jewish history, cultures, and traditions returns this season with a week of NY premieres of critically acclaimed and award-winning feature films, documentaries, panel discussions, and events. Opening night screening and reception will feature the award-winning drama based on a true story *Three Mothers*, presented in person by film's director Dina Zvi Riklis.

This year's program will focus on **Sephardic Voices in Israeli Cinema** to pay tribute to the Israeli film industry, which has reinvented itself during the last decade and champions the international scene producing critically acclaimed and commercially viable films that often depict characters and themes contrasting with the common stereotypes about Jewish culture outside the Western world.

“NY Sephardic Jewish Film Festival, dedicated to showcasing international films with distinctly Sephardic themes, strives to move the Sephardic heritage away from exoticism and into mainstream Jewish and American culture,” says ASF Executive Director Francesco Spagnolo.

The festival, curated by one of the leading North American film programmers Alla Verlotsky of Seagull Films, is committed to exhibiting conscientiously assembled, frequently surprising, and invariably thought-provoking international feature films and documentaries with distinctly Sephardic themes. “Our aim is to provide the audience with a broad programming outlook that explores a variety of issues intersecting the Sephardic Jewish experience, as well as create a meaningful dialogue with other ethnic communities to take an interest in Sephardic culture,” Verlotsky adds.

The 2007 slate of films include critically acclaimed and award-winning New York and World premiere feature films and documentaries presented by filmmakers from differing Sephardic global perspectives.

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS:

NY PREMIERE

Three Mothers / Shalosh Imahot

Dir. Dina Zvi – Riklis, Israel, 2006, 106 min.

Hebrew, French & Arabic w/ English subtitles

- Thursday, February 1, 2007 / 7:00PM

- Sunday, February 4, 2007 / 7:00 PM

Winner of the 2006 Jerusalem International Film Festival and nominated for Best Picture, Israeli Academy Awards, *Three Mothers* is the extraordinary saga of a Sephardic family, from King Farouk’s Egypt to modern Israel, spanning three generations. Born in Alexandria, the triplets Rose, Yasmin and Flora lead lives shrouded in secret and deadly deceit. The film stars one of Israel’s most acclaimed performers, Gila Almagor.

NY PREMIERE

Salonika City of Silence / Salonique, ville du silence

Dir. Maurice Amaraggi, Belgium, 2006, 52 min.

French w/ English subtitles

- Saturday, February 3, 2007 / 7:30PM

In his roots journey to Salonika, Maurice Amaraggi explores the port city that once was a thriving cosmopolitan Jewish center, until its Sephardic community was destroyed in the Holocaust. Today’s mix of new immigrants and buildings – including a University, built over a Jewish cemetery of 10,000 graves – hides a rich and dark past. The Sephardic history of Salonika is so completely buried, that even the ghosts do not have anywhere to wander.

Comme T'y Es Belle! / Gorgeous

Dir. Liza Azuelos – France, 2006, 85 min.

French w/ English subtitles

- Saturday, February 3, 2007 / 9:30PM

- Tuesday, February 6, 2007 / 9:00PM

French director Liza Azuelos' debut romantic comedy traces the misadventures of four deliciously sassy and exuberant women living in Paris, bound by friendship and their Moroccan Sephardic heritage. With wit and levity, they deliver insight into the daily struggles of family, friendship and love, masterfully juggling child-raising, endless dieting, complicated love affairs, and illegal immigrant nannies needing work permits. Always beautiful, always funny, always together, they try, above all, to always be themselves.

NY PREMIERE

A Voice Without a Face-Maktub Aleikh

Dir. Assaf Basson, Israel, 2005, 52 min.

Hebrew, Arabic w/ English subtitles

- Sunday, February 4, 2007 / 12 NOON

- Wednesday, February 7, 2007 / 6:30PM

Assaf Basson's personal documentary is a tribute to his father, an Iraqi Jew who led a double life in Israel as a renowned singer of Arabic music and an agent for Israel's intelligence service, the Mossad. Known by his stage name, Magdi, Yitzhak Basson was forbidden to expose his true identity and for years performed only on the radio in order to maintain his anonymity.

NY PREMIERE

Kululush

Dir. Adler Nati, Israel, 2006, 80 min

Hebrew w/ English subtitles

- Sunday, February 4, 2007 / 2:00PM

- Monday, February 5, 2007 / 6:30PM

Set deep in an Iraqi-Jewish neighborhood of Tel Aviv, *Kululush* is the story of two brothers, Avi and Ronnen, who play out the tension between responsibility to tribe and self, against the background of the pillars of modern Israeli society: family, café, synagogue, and soccer field. Avi's world shifts when his brother returns from Europe, a middle-aged shadow of the one-time soccer star.

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

Until Tomorrow Comes

Dir. David Deri, Israel, 2004, 65 min.

Hebrew w/ English subtitles

- Sunday, February 4, 2007 / 7:30PM at The JCC in Manhattan

The film vividly depicts the realities of intergenerational conflicts in a dramatic and tender portrayal of a week-in-the-life of a beauty owner in the South of Israel, facing the decline of her aging mother, the unraveling marital crisis of her daughter, and an unexpected courtship threatening her cherished solitude.

NY PREMIERE

Something Sweet / Mashenu Matok

Dir. Dan Turgeman, Israel, 2005, 97 min.

Hebrew w/ English subtitles

- Monday, February 5, 2007 / 8:30PM

- Wednesday, February 7, 2007 / 8:30PM

A heat warming romantic tale of inopportune love, *Something Sweet* is a frothy mélange centered on a love triangle between a beautiful Jewish-Moroccan pastry chef, her soon to be married younger sister, and the sister's handsome fiancé from London. Set against the backdrop of a small village in Northern Israel, mysterious superstitions, Moroccan ethnic music and sweet delicacies are intricately knotted into the triangle love affair and the tightly woven relationships.

Jews of Iran / Joden uit Iran

Dir. Ramin Farahani, Netherland, 2005, 52 min.

Persian w/ English subtitles

- Tuesday, February 6, 2007 / 6:30PM at the Center for Jewish History

- Thursday, February 8, 2007 / 7:30PM at The JCC in Manhattan

A Muslim-Iranian director, Ramin Farahani, turns the camera on his Jewish compatriots. His revealing documentary takes a voyeuristic look behind the veil that covers Iran, showing what remains of Iranian Jewry after the dramatic events of the 1979 revolution and the current marginalization. The film provides rare access into a community that is still thriving, despite the hard circumstances, in Shiraz, Isfahan, and Tehran.

NY PREMIERE

Shalom Asmara

Dir: Marco Cavallarin and Marco Mensa, Italy/Eritrea, 2006, 30 min.
Italian w/ English subtitles

- Tuesday, February 6, 2007 / 6:30PM

Shalom Asmara documents the untold story of the Jews of Eritrea, in Eastern Africa. At the turn of the 20th century, Jews from the southern Arabian Peninsula and the coasts of the Mediterranean settled in Asmara, then under Italian rule. They once formed a strong local community, but by 1975 few of them were left. Today, their story is preserved with jealous nostalgia by the elders and by followers of other religions.

THE AMERICAN SEPHADI FEDERATION with SEPHARDIC HOUSE is dedicated to promoting and preserving the spiritual, historical, cultural and social traditions of all Sephardic communities as an integral part of Jewish heritage. Founded in 1973, ASF affiliated with Sephardic House (established in 1978) to diversify and expand cultural activities and to advocate for Sephardic Communities around the world in order to foster strong lines of communication between them and the American Sephardic community. ASF with Sephardic House celebrates the uniqueness of the Sephardic culture through educational programs, archival preservation, its annual International Sephardic Film Festival, publications and exhibitions.

Since it's founding in 1973, **YESHIVA UNIVERSITY MUSEUM's** changing exhibits have celebrated the culturally diverse intellectual and artistic achievements of 3,000 years of the 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.

SEAGULL FILMS

Seagull Films is one of the leading North American programming / distribution company exclusively specialized in Jewish, Russian, formerly Soviet cinema.

Ticket Information

A full schedule of festival films, locations, and activities can be obtained by calling the American Sephardi Federation at 212-294-8350 or at www.americansephardifederation.org.

Tickets can be purchased through the Center for Jewish History Box Office at 917-606-8200 – boxoffice@cjh.org or online at www.ticketweb.com. Tickets \$10 general, \$8 members/affiliates, students and seniors. \$40 Festival Subscription Pass*

*Valid for 5 screenings of choice excluding Opening Night (reservation required at purchase)

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF SCREENING TIMES/LOCATIONS, PRESS MATERIAL, AND IMAGES,
please contact Anna Samuel PR at 718.336.45.35 or anna@annasamuel.com.