



2009 CHICAGO FESTIVAL OF ISRAELI CINEMA OCTOBER 29 – NOVEMBER 8, 2009

847.675.FEST (3378)

www.chicagofestivalofisraelicinema.org

PR CONTACT: Cheryl Jacobs Lewin / Cheryl J. Lewin Assoc.
1560 N. Sandburg Terrace / Ste. 3215

Chicago, IL 60610

312.654.9955

cjlpr@yahoo.com

THE 2009 CHICAGO FESTIVAL OF ISRAELI CINEMA THE LARGEST SHOWCASE OF ISRAELI CINEMA IN THE MIDWEST OCTOBER 29, 2009 – NOVEMBER 8, 2009

APPLAUDING, CELEBRATING AND SUPPORTING ISRAEL'S CINEMA AND CULTURE

**26 FILMS IN LINE-UP INCLUDING FIVE U.S. PREMIERES,
NEW AND AWARD WINNING FEATURES AND DOCUMENTARIES**

The 2009 Chicago Festival of Israeli Cinema, applauding, celebrating and supporting Israel, its culture and cinema, will present 26 films, five of which are U.S. premieres, in this year's 11-day festival, including new and award-winning features and documentaries. The 2009 CFIC opens Thursday evening, Oct. 29 at AMC LOEWS 600 NORTH MICHIGAN, 600 N. Michigan Chicago (a new city venue for the CFIC) where it will run through Sunday evening, Nov. 1. On Monday, Nov. 2, the CFIC will move to The Wilmette Theatre, 1122 Central, Wilmette, where it will run from Monday evening, Nov. 2 through Sunday evening Nov. 8, with films playing on two screens. All Hebrew and non-English language films are subtitled in English. Films will not be shown on the two Fridays during the festival.

Opening night tickets, including post-film reception provided by Garden Fresh Market (dietary laws observed) are \$36, available now through the CFIC office, 847.675.FEST (3378). Tickets for all films at AMC Loews 600 North Michigan (other than opening night) are \$10, available now at the theater box office and www.fandango.com. Tickets for films at the Wilmette Theatre are \$10, available now at the theatre box office and www.wilmettetheatre.com. Group discount tickets, for groups of 20+ and information about sponsorship opportunities are available through the Festival office. For information on film synopses, guests speakers and to view trailers go to www.chicagofestivalofisraelicinema.org.

The CFIC celebrates the multifaceted sides of Israel with stories far from the news headlines - of Jews "lost" and "found" in the Amazon; of young men conflicted by their admiration of and disappointment in their fathers; of the heroism of ordinary women (a midwife, a rabbi's daughter, a librarian, a mother and daughter); of a family in mourning; of a mystical joining of past and present; of leaving an old home and adjusting to a new; and of discovering the joys of baseball. The stories are of those whose cultural roots are all over the world – Israel, America, Ethiopia, Russia, Morocco, Peru, Serbia, Hungary, Poland and France as well as stories of those who risked their lives to help establish the modern day State of Israel, of hope, of changing fate, of survival, of loss and of love.

The Chicago Festival of Israeli Cinema joins the world in applauding Israeli cinema. The CFIC is proud to present films that dazzled audiences at international film festivals from Cannes, Tokyo, South Africa, Hong Kong, Pusan, Sao Paulo, Tribeca, Toronto, Berlin, Turkey, Rio de Janeiro, to Israel and more than fifty other world centers. In addition to 27 Israeli Academy and Jerusalem International Film Festival prizes and 18 nominations, this year's selections have won awards at festivals in Houston, Boston, Warsaw, Paris, Beijing, Mostra de Valencia, Sicily and Israel, to name a few.

Committee members for the 2009 CFIC are Ophira Ben-Arieh, Beverly Braverman, Cheryl Jacobs Lewin, Alon Pintel, Dr. Lya Dym Rosenblum, Dr. Louis Rosenblum, Peggy Shapiro, Zahava Wein and Dror Zetouni.

Major support for the 2009 CFIC is provided by The Consulate General of Israel to the Midwest and Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. Special support is provided by The Chicago Sun-Times.

The Festival's opening night film is SHIVA – THE SEVEN DAYS, one of Israel's biggest box office hits in 2008 and winner of multiple awards in Israel and Europe, including "Best Film" at the 2008 Jerusalem Film Festival. Boasting an impressive cast of some of Israel's most lauded actors, acclaimed Israeli actress Ronit Elkabetz teams up with her brother Shlomi Elkabetz to direct a fascinating portrait of a Moroccan Jewish family in Israel as they gather to mourn the sudden death of their brother. Opening night includes a post film reception (dietary laws observed) at the theater.

FULL LENGTH FEATURES

The CFIC is presenting a total of 11 full-length feature films including three U.S. premieres. Award-winning actress JOAN ALLEN (Steppenwolf Theatre ensemble member) narrates BLESSED IS THE MATCH - THE LIFE AND DEATH OF HANNAH SENESH, the first documentary/feature about Hannah Senesh, the World War II era poet and diarist who became a paratrooper, resistance fighter and modern-day Joan of Arc. The controversial feature film, BRURIAH has it all: betrayal, death, G-d, sex, and an ending filmgoers discuss long after the lights come up. ELI & BEN is a touching story of a twelve-year-old who rebonds with his father following criminal charges against the father. FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS stars one of France's most popular actors and one of Israel's adored actresses in this comedy/drama about a father's "life of crime" told through the eyes and words of his 11-year-old son. JERUSALEM SYNDROME, a U.S. premiere, is a funny and farcical lampooning of Israel's multicultural society made by two French-Israeli filmmakers. Another Israeli box office sensation in 2008, LOST ISLANDS, winner of four Israeli Academy Awards and nominated for 10 more, is a family drama in which twin brothers, opposites in most ways, fall in love with the same girl and struggle with their own aspirations and family loyalty. MRS. MOSCOWITZ AND THE CATS, a beautiful and sensitive story about the loneliness, fear and limitations of growing old alone is having its U.S. premiere at CFIC. SEVEN MINUTES IN HEAVEN is an award-winning "memory" film about woman who survives a bus bombing in Israel. Another U.S. premiere, VALENTINA'S MOTHER, a U.S. premiere, is the complex story of the relationship between a Holocaust survivor living alone in Israel and a young Polish migrant worker she hires as her home care provider. ZRUBAVEL, showing the struggle between the customs of the older generation from Ethiopia and the younger generation's desire to assimilate within Israeli culture, was made by Israel's first Ethiopian-born director who, at the age of 8, walked across the Sudanese desert to immigrate to Israel as part of the United Jewish Appeal sponsored Operation Moses.

DOCUMENTARIES

The CFIC is presenting 11 wide-ranging documentaries, including two U.S. premieres. THE FIRE WITHIN is the story of a unique Jewish community in the Amazonian rainforest where, for more than 100 years, Jewish traditions have mixed with Amazonian culture and where recently many of the residents have sought rabbinical assistance to help them "return" to Jewish tradition, religion and to the land of Israel. THE GREEN DUMPSTER MYSTERY is an extraordinary "docu-detective" film, which evokes the now-extinguished lives of an extended family seared by the Holocaust and modern Israeli tragedies. HOLY LAND HARDBALL is the story of the dreamers, planners, players and managers who tried to create Israel's first professional baseball league in the summer of 2007, drawing people to a sport Israel never had in 5,767 years. Three of the managers are Jewish major leaguers, all with Chicago connections - Ken Holtzman and Art Shamsky from the Chicago Cubs and Ron Blomberg, who played with the Chicago White Sox. THE ISRAELI DOC CHALLENGE, a U.S. premiere, celebrating the centennial anniversary of Tel Aviv, was part of the 2009 International Documentary Challenge. THE NAME MY MOTHER GAVE ME, an uplifting and moving documentary, follows a group of Ethiopian and Russian-born Israeli adolescents whose pre-army leadership-training program culminates in a life-changing journey trip to Ethiopia, turning a group of initially dissimilar young men into brothers. RABBI FIRER: A REASON TO QUESTION is the fascinating story of Rabbi Elimelech Firer, a volunteer medical adviser for 30 years, who, with a single phone call, often to world-renowned experts in their fields, can change the way patients are treated. His determination, up-to-date knowledge, and unique diagnostic abilities are both admired and criticized by those within the medical establishment. THE RABBI'S DAUGHTER AND THE MIDWIFE, having its U.S. premiere at CFIC, is an inspiring documentary about two amazing women confronting religious constraints to effect social change with bold, brave, feminine ingenuity and resourcefulness. SNAPSHOTS, part of Israel@60 events, returns to seven never-to-be-forgotten images in Israel's history from 1949 to 1997 and reconstructs the images. In VOICES FROM EL-SAYED, a Bedouin father's decision to change his deaf son's fate by accepting the offer of Jewish Israeli doctors for a Cochlear Implant will change the Bedouin village of El-Sayed forever. THE WOMAN FROM SARAJEVO is the dramatic story of the Sarajevo Moslem Hardaga family, whose rescue of the Sarajevo Jewish Kabilio family during the Holocaust cost the lives of the Hardaga father and son. Years later, the rescued Jews helped their Moslem friends escape the Yugoslavian Civil War and find safe haven in Israel. THE WOMAN FROM THE BUBBLE is Lee Dan, the woman in "the small bubble on the TV screen" translating programs into sign language. The film goes into the bubble and enters the world of the deaf, telling the story of people like Dan, who are between worlds, the majority and the minority, between silence and sound.

FEATURE FILMS - SHORT

One of the short feature films, PINCHAS, about a 9-year-old boy and his conflicts between his mother and newly found religious friends, was a finalist for a student Oscar® from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. Another short feature, MELTDOWN, about a 12-year-old girl who dreamed of becoming a champion skater in Russia, is based on director and screenwriter Kathy Rivkin's own experiences as a new Russian immigrant.

TELEVISION SERIES

Two of Israel's most popular TV series will be shown over multiple evenings. SRUGIM, which just won four Israeli Television Academy Awards, including "Best Series, " portrays a vibrant, young and exciting community of religious singles in Jerusalem dealing with issues and conflicts of everyday life in contemporary Israel. A TOUCH AWAY, a slice of contemporary Tel Aviv life spun into a marvelous multifamily drama, is being developed for US cable TV audiences by HBO.

Scheduled special guests/speakers at the CFIC include Ella Alterman, the writer and director of THE WOMAN FROM SARAJEVO, Eli Tal-Ei, the writer and director of THE NAME MY MOTHER GAVE ME and Rabbi Alex Felch of Congregation B'nai Tikvah in Deerfield, Illinois, one of the rabbis who assisted the Jews of the Amazon in their "return" in the documentary THE FIRE WITHIN.

Screening host organizations and individuals include AIPAC –The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (SEVEN MINUTES IN HEAVEN), American Technion Society (MRS. MOSCOWITZ AND THE CATS), City PAC (SEVEN MINUTES IN HEAVEN), Columbia College Chicago/School of Media Arts (THE ISRAELI DOC CHALLENGE, MELTDOWN and PINCHAS), Friends of the Israel Defense Forces (SEVEN MINUTES IN HEAVEN), Robert Mazer, board member of the Chicago White Sox (HOLY LAND HARDBALL), To Protect Our Heritage PAC (THE FIRE WITHIN), Shaare Zedek Medical Center of Jerusalem, Midwest US Region (THE RABBI'S DAUGHTER AND THE MIDWIFE and THE WOMAN FROM SARAJEVO), Pintel Financial (SHIVA – THE SEVEN DAYS) Sidney N. Shure Kehilla (SRUGIM) and WITASWAN - Women in the Audience Supporting Women Artists Now (VALENTINA'S MOTHER).

Films, schedule and guests are subject to change.

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9/21/09