



PRESS CONTACT: CHERYL J. LEWIN ASSOCIATES/312.654.9955

**THE 2009 CHICAGO FESTIVAL OF ISRAELI CINEMA CELEBRATES AND SUPPORTS
ISRAEL'S DIVERSE AND INTERNATIONALLY AWARD-WINNING FILM INDUSTRY
WITH 26 FEATURES AND DOCUMENTARIES INCLUDING FIVE U.S PREMIERES**

The 2009 Chicago Festival of Israeli Cinema (CFIC), an independent, not-for profit organization applauding, celebrating and supporting Israel's culture and Israel's internationally award-winning film industry, is presenting 26 features and documentaries, including five U.S. premieres, October 29 through November 8, at AMC 600 North Michigan Avenue in Chicago and the Wilmette Theatre.

The Chicago Festival of Israeli Cinema is proud to present films that have reaped artistic and critical praise around the world. The CFIC is showing films which have taken prizes not only in Jerusalem and Haifa, but also in Beijing, Tribeca, Moscow, San Francisco, Mostra de Valencia, and Turkey. Frédéric Boyer, artistic director of the Cannes Directors' Fortnight, a festival that showcases up-and-coming talent, describes Israeli film as "fresh, sincere, and highly professional." The critical acclaim derives not only from the technical standards but also from a film industry which reflects the dreams, disillusionments, and diversity of Israeli culture and society.

The subject matter and treatments of these films are as diverse as the country itself. 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 (Jewish, Christian and Moslem); of individual costs of national conflict; of a mystical joining of past and present; of the silent world of the deaf; of leaving an old home and adjusting to a new homeland; and of discovering the joys of baseball. The stories are of those Israelis 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 films, in Hebrew, Arabic, Amharic, Russian, Spanish, French, and English, reflect the heterogeneous ethnic and religious makeup of the nation.

No less diverse are the Israeli filmmakers. In 2008 the festival highlighted films by Arab Israeli artists Sayed Kashua and Ibtisam Mara'ana, who was a special festival guest. The 2009 CFIC is showing two films about the Jewish-Ethiopian-Israeli experience. Shmuel Beru, the director of one of the films, "Zrubavel," was born in a village in Ethiopia. He was only eight years old when famine struck and he and his family were rescued and brought to Israel along with 15,000 other Ethiopians.

The Chicago Festival of Israeli Cinema takes great pride in presenting films from and about a country which champions the right of self expression for women and men, for the devout of all faiths and for the secular, for all ethnic minorities, and for all sexual orientations. Israeli films are celebrated around the world not because they follow a restricted ideology, but because they are so very different from each other, reflecting a diverse society as it creatively grapples with and celebrates universal issues. Israeli films are hailed by worldwide audiences and critics who value brilliant filmmaking and hold strong the fundamental individual human right of creative expression.

The website for the CFIC is www.chicagofestivalofisraelicinema.org.

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