

APPENDIX A

KEEPING UP WITH THE STEINS

Dir. Scott Marshall | USA | 2006 | 99 mins | English

This coming of age 'barmitzvah comedy' is a warm and funny satire of some of the more ridiculous excesses of party themes versus religious rites. The Stein's barmitzvah is the epitome of bad taste with a Titanic themed party, complete with a ship, icebergs and even a Kate Winslet lookalike. And how can you follow that? Next is the turn of Benjamin Fiedler who has to choose a rival theme. As the guest list is being compiled Benjamin defies his father's wishes and secretly invites his grandfather, who has been estranged to the family for more than 25 years. Although Adam, Benjamin's father, resents his own father's sudden presence on the scene, it is this new relationship which holds the key to the warm heart of the film and finally gives meaning to Benjamin's understanding of his coming of age ceremony and a new twist to the party. JI

Recommended Certificate: PG

GORGEOUS!(COMME T'Y ES BELLE!)

Dir. Lisa Alessandrin | France/Belgium/Luxembourg/UK | 2006 | 84 mins | French with English subtitles
35mm

Life is fun and light hearted in this Sephardic comedy about affluent and beautiful women in Paris. Isa (Michele Laroque) Alice, Nea and Nina are inseparable friends, balancing work, romance and child rearing. Isa, the owner of a beauty salon and mother of three, falls for a British guy (Andrew Lincoln) who just happens to be a financial guru helping with her business. And where there are young, beautiful, Jewish women they are inevitably followed closely by their Jewish mothers, popping in and out to chase and scold them about their frivolous lives. Love is the theme in this chaotic comedy as these sassy young women interweave their days with laughter, flirtations and warmth. While life is seen from a woman's point of view, the colourful and fast moving situations and the witty one liners are enjoyable for all.

Recommended Certificate: 15

A SLIM PEACE

Dir. Yael Luttwak | UK | 2007 | 60 mins | English/Hebrew/Arabic with English subtitles
DVD

Fresh from a debut at New York's Tribeca Film Festival, this documentary by filmmaker Yael Luttwak is sure to get audiences here talking. Luttwak, a Jewish- American, set herself a bold and often thankless task, forming a weight-loss group in Jerusalem for women whose backgrounds cross the political spectrum: Palestinian, Bedouin and Jewish, including settlers. Attempting to transcend politics by focusing on these women's shared goals was never going to be straightforward, and personal bitterness inevitably encroaches on the hard-earned harmony of the group, but easing the Israeli- Palestinian conflict through dieting was never quite the intention. Luttwak hopes to break through the layers of fear and misunderstanding isolating these women, while offering a much-needed reminder of the irrelevance of our Western obsession with body image. To see the group let down its guard, dancing together in a moment of fun - however temporary - makes a brighter future seem just that little bit closer.

Recommended Certificate: PG

MY MEXICAN SHIVAH

(MORIRSE ESTA EN HEBREO)

**Dir. Alejandro Springall | Mexico | 2006 | 102 mins | Spanish | Hebrew and Yiddish with English subtitles
35mm**

In Polanco, the Jewish quarter of Mexico City, Moishe Tartakovsky, a much loved patriarch, collapses and dies while dancing at a Jewish theatre group celebration. There is an immediate gathering for the funeral in Mexico City. After the burial, an eclectic group of family, friends, and even a Catholic ex-lover, gather for the shivah (the 7 day Jewish mourning ritual). They are wryly observed by a couple of Yiddish speaking 'spirits' who accompanied Moishe in his lifetime and are about to lead his soul on to the next world. Over the course of the next seven days of the shivah, secrets are disclosed; his embittered daughter acts out her grievances and his friends parade their quarrels for all to hear. If you can conceive of a shivah being a setting for humour then this charming and insightful comedy is not to be missed, with a wonderful music score performed by The Klezmatics.

Recommended Certificate: 15

AVIVA MY LOVE (AVIVA AHUVATI)

**Dir. Shemi Zarhin | Israel | 2006 | 107 mins | Hebrew with English subtitles
35mm**

All Aviva wants is to write, and indeed every detail in her mundane life sparks an imaginative tale. But Aviva lives in a working class town in the North of Israel, with an unemployed husband and a demanding family. Aviva keeps her creative passion alive, with endless talent and grace, juggling the pots and pans of her day job as a cook and the ever growing needs of her big family. That is until her loyal sister introduces her to Oded, a well-known novelist who quickly realises Aviva's potential. However, the experienced mentor has his own rather more devious agenda. Winner of six Israeli Academy awards Aviva My Love is another gem from the acclaimed director Shemi Zarhin who touched thousands of hearts in *Bonjour Monsieur Shlomi*. This time Zarhin sheds light on the simple life of a working class family in his home town Tiberias, bringing into life small places and big dreams in the most engaging and pleasing way.

Recommended Certificate: PG

BEAUFORT

**Dir. Joseph Cedar | Israel | 2007 | 120 mins | Hebrew with English subtitles
35mm**

How do wars end? This is a less familiar question than the one generally posed and Joseph Cedar (*Campfire; Time of Favour*) is intrigued by the conclusion of the battle that took place around one of the bloodiest mountains in the Middle East, the Beaufort Castle. Cedar is himself a veteran of the first Lebanon war, which informs this story of the poignant retreat in 2000 of a group of young soldiers who must find ways to carry out their mission until the very last minute. As the deceptive quiet of the mountain is shattered by shelling and the day of evacuation approaches, the characters of these men are revealed in their full complexity. Without taking sides, Joseph Cedar's film is an intense, superbly nuanced work that captures the unrelenting tension - and comradeship - experienced by young men in a combat zone. JJ

Winner - Best Director Berlin Film Festival 2007

Recommended Certificate: 15

A HEBREW LESSON(HA'ULPAN)

Dir. David Ofek and Ron Rotem | Israel | 2006 | 123 mins | Hebrew/English/Chinese/Russian/
German/Spanish with English subtitles
DVD

Originally set up to assist Jewish immigrants to gain basic Hebrew language skills, the 'Ulpan' became a central institution in the process of integration into Israeli society. Six decades into the Israeli state the students are no longer passionate Jews fulfilling their desire to emigrate to Israel, nor Jewish refugees escaping persecution. In 2004, in an ulpan in the heart of Tel Aviv, a different and fascinating tapestry of individuals face the difficulties of a new language and a new life. Amongst them Chin, a Chinese migrant worker who married her Israeli employer; Sasha from Russia who came to Israel in a desperate attempt to be nearer to his young daughter, and Annabel, a German woman who fell in love with an Israeli. Through an intimate and sensitive observation of this group of students, this engrossing documentary brings home the immigrant experience in all its complexity with great humour and charm. GG

Recommended Certificate: PG

SWEET MUD(ADAMA MESHUGA'AT)

Dir. Dror Shaul | Israel | 2006 | 90 mins | Hebrew/French with English subtitles
35mm

In a kibbutz in the 1970s, Dvir, a 12 year old boy faces the harsh demands of the collective while struggling to make room for, and bring happiness to, his emotionally unstable mother. Without a father around and living away from his mother in the children's house, Dvir is determined to help his mother find solace and start a new life. Based on the personal memories of writer-director Dror Shaul, this accomplished film cuts through the romantic idea of the kibbutz, focusing on the individual struggle to find love and fulfilment within the rigid rules of this community. One of the most impressive productions of recent Israeli cinema (and selected to represent Israel at the Oscars) the film comes to this - its UK premiere - with a handful of prestigious international awards. With an outstanding cast and great visual beauty, Sweet Mud reveals the complexity of its characters' lives reverberating under the surface of an impressive pastoral landscape. GG

Winner - Berlin Film Festival 2007, Glass Bear
Grand Jury Award - Sundance Film Festival

Recommended Certificate: 15

HIS WIFE'S LOVER

Dir. Sidney M. Goldin | USA | 1931 | 80 mins | Yiddish with English subtitles

Billed as the 'first Jewish musical comedy talking picture'. If you only ever see one Yiddish film then make it this one. Starring the glamorous Ludwig Satz in his only film performance, he revels in role reversals and a frenetic and racy love triangle in this charming Yiddish comedy about an actor who disguises himself as an old man. When actor Eddie Wien (Ludwig Satz) decides to marry, his uncle Oscar Stein warns him that all women are untrustworthy and fickle and bets him that he cannot find one who will stay true to him. To prove him wrong Eddie woos shop girl Golde Blumberg while disguised as repulsive old millionaire 'Herman Weingarten'. Meanwhile he falls helplessly in love with her. The elaborate farce continues with deceptions and mistaken identities. The resulting love story will warm your heart and brings tears of laughter to your eyes. JI

Recommended Certificate: PG