

Always Modern

MoMA

MoMA



3rd  
Annual

HOUSTON  
JEWISH  
film festival



March 15 – March 25, 2007



# We're Back and Hotter than Ever!

Welcome to the Third Annual Houston Jewish Film Festival! In this collaboration between the Jewish Community Center of Houston and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, we are proud to present to you 13 wonderful new films from around the world. A kaleidoscope of feature films, documentaries, dramas and comedies showing Jewish life in all its complex variety, will be up on the screen. Come and be inspired, educated and entertained!

This year's line-up touches on many universal themes. Families in crisis are center stage in ***Out of Sight*** and ***El Cantor***. For the non-fiction protagonists of ***51 Birch Street*** and ***Journey of Vaan Nguyen***, the quest to understand one's parents and one's past opens unexpected journeys and destinations. Fascinating and complex questions of identity and affiliation are confronted in ***The Green Chariot*** and ***The Tribe***. We feel the impact of the Holocaust and the sense that hope and life will prevail in ***Nina's Home***. The ***Jews of Iran*** gives us rare access and insight into how these strong willed Jews have been able to preserve their Judaism and hopes for the future in a seemingly hostile environment. On the lighter side, we can sit back and enjoy ***From Shtetl to Swing***, a lively documentary of musical metamorphosis from darkest Russia to Harlem, Broadway and beyond. We can meet Toots Shor, the infamous New York saloon keeper in ***Toots*** and double over with laughter in ***Ira and Abby***, a zippy romantic comedy about love and angst in the Big Apple.

We are grateful for the generosity of our supporters who have enabled us to present this event and for the creative collaboration of the staff and the volunteers of both the JCC and the MFAH, who have worked diligently to produce another top-notch Jewish Film Festival.

And now, we need the support of you, our viewers. Buy a ticket! Buy a pass! Bring a friend! Bring a group!

We look forward to seeing you at the movies....

Doreen Joffe  
*Co-Chair*

Sharon Kagan  
*Co-Chair*

## TICKET INFORMATION



Individual Tickets  
\$66 JCC & MFAH Members / MFAH Film Buffs  
\$8 Public  
\$1 discount for seniors and students on individual tickets

Receive two films for FREE with a Festival Pass  
\$66 JCC & MFAH Members / MFAH Film Buffs  
\$88 Public • \$5 off for seniors and students

Advance tickets to MFAH screenings available at  
[www.mfah.org/films](http://www.mfah.org/films)

**To purchase a Festival Pass visit:**

[www.jcchouston.org](http://www.jcchouston.org)  
**call: 713-551-7255**

*The JCC's box office will open 30 minutes prior to each screening*

# 2007 Houston Jewish Film Festival Committee

Doreen Joffe  
*Co-Chair*

Sharon Kagan  
*Co-Chair*

Bobbi Samuels

*Chair, Arts and Culture Steering Committee*

Heidi Balentine  
Joe Blog  
Joy Blog  
Lorraine Brown  
Sid Brown  
Marc Davis

Carrie Douglas  
Sue Goott  
Micki Halevy  
Margo Handwerker  
Barbara Marcus  
Dianna Margolin  
Marna Meyer

Miriam Pacht  
Tamara Savage  
Adrienne Saxe  
Cindy Sax  
Beth Schneider  
Mignon Wolf

## Jewish Community Center of Houston

Nancy Lerner  
*President*

Jerry Wische  
*Executive Vice President*

Stuart Raynor  
*Associate Executive Director*

Jennifer Handy  
*Arts and Culture Program Coordinator*

Jerry Lynch  
*Theatre Manager*

Marilyn Hassid  
*Program Director, Arts and Culture*

Maxine Silberstein  
*Dance Director*

Bettina Stap  
*Graphic Designer*

Bethany Shapiro  
*Arts and Culture Assistant*

Rebecca Dupree  
*Box Office Manager*

Barbara Lindenberg  
*Bookstore Manager*

## The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Marian Luntz  
*Curator*  
*Film and Video*

Tracy Stephenson  
*Assistant Curator*  
*Film and Video*

Ray Gomez  
*Assistant for Community*  
*Outreach and Administration*

### FUNDED BY

The Jewish Community Center of Houston Endowment Fund  
The Jewish Community Center of Houston's Patrons of the Arts

### SUPPORTERS

Holocaust Museum Houston  
Jewish Herald-Voice  
Jenny Tavor Custom Catering Services

**Continental Airlines**  
*Official Airline of the J.C.C.*

**Marriott**  
HOUSTON WESTCHASE



# OPENING NIGHT FROM SHTETL TO SWING AND BEYOND...

## A LIVE CONCERT BY NEW YORK CITY'S **THE SWAY MACHINERY** Followed by **FROM SHTETL TO SWING**

Thursday, March 15 • 7:00 p.m.  
7:00 p.m. Cocktail Reception  
8:00 p.m. Concert & Film  
Reception & Movie \$18

*The Sway Machinery* will get the evening movin' and groovin' with their unique brand of Jewish soul music that fuses Cantorial music with blues and Afro pop rhythms. Longtime collaborators Jeremiah Lockwood (Balkan Beat Box, Carolina Slim) and Tomer Tzur (Beat the Donkey, Pharaoh's Daughter) have teamed up with friends to present an audacious descent into the depths of Jewish soul music. Calling upon the sounds of Malian guitars, Saharan beats, Afro-pop horns and the B-L-U-E-S, *The Sway Machinery* goes knocking at the gates of prayer with muscles swollen and eyes clenched.



left to right: Stuart Bogie, Tomer Tzur, Jordan McLean, Jeremiah Lockwood, Colin Stetson

## FROM SHTETL TO SWING

**Director:** Fabienne Rousso-Lenoir  
France, USA, 2005, 56 min., English

A fresh look at the history of Jewish music in America. Harvey Fierstein hosts this not-to-be-missed musical joyride, one that begins at the turn of the 20th century when the klezmer strains of new Jewish immigrants encounter African-American melodies and rhythms.

Eddie Cantor, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Fanny Brice, Artie Shaw and the Marx Brothers are but a few of the oversized entertainment greats featured en route.



Reception and movie \$18.00  
Movie only \$6 JCC Member / \$8 Public.  
*Sponsored by June and Leonard Goldberg*

## BE' TAY AVON SENIOR ADULT LUNCH PROGRAM

### FROM SHTETL TO SWING

Friday, March 16 • 1:00 p.m.



### WONDROUS OBLIVION

Friday, March 23 • 1:00 p.m.

Come have lunch and a movie two consecutive weeks with the Be'tay Avon Crowd. On March 16 the movie will be *From Shtetl To Swing* (see description p. 4) and on March 23 the movie will be *Wondrous Oblivion* (see description p. 9). Movies open to all. RSVP for lunch by noon on the Thursday prior to the film screenings at 713-729-3200 ext. 3258.  
Lunch and Movie \$6 JCC Member / \$8 Public

### EL CANTOR

Saturday, March 17 • 7:00 p.m. • MFAH

Sunday, March 18 • 5:00 p.m. • MFAH

**Director:** Joseph Morder

France, 2005, 90 min.

French with English subtitles



Set in the French coastal town of Le Havre – still recovering even today from being bombed during World War II – *El Cantor* is a complex, quietly affecting story about family, loss, and separation. In a performance reminiscent of the recent dramatic roles of Bill Murray, Lou Castel portrays Clovis, a man returning home after years in the United States. He is at turns manic and melancholy, attempting to reconnect with his cousin Willy (Luis Rego) but thwarted by the hesitation of Willy's wife (Françoise Michaud). Unable to escape the legacy of his father and grandfather, both legendary cantors, Clovis slowly acclimates into the community and family he left behind. The cumulative impact of the film's episodic structure is subtle and profound. *Reception to follow Saturday Night's screening.*

### TOOTS

Sunday, March 18 • 3:00 p.m.

and 7:00 p.m. • MFAH

**Director:** Kristi Jacobson

USA, 2006, 85 min., English



Toots, the boisterous saloon owned by Toots Shor (1903-1977), thrived during the 1940s and 1950s in New York's theater district and attracted an extraordinary range of celebrities, from Frank Sinatra and Jackie Gleason to Joe DiMaggio and Jackie Robinson. Directed by Shor's granddaughter, this documentary is a provocative, loving, and unmistakably authentic portrait of the self-made, unapologetic man who became the unlikely den mother to politicians, gangsters, sports heroes, and movie stars. Toots himself provides some of the narration, thanks to an oral history recorded two years before his death, and it is supplemented by a rich array of archival footage and interviews with many famous habitués, including Yogi Berra, Walter Cronkite, Peter Duchin, LeRoy Neiman, and Mike Wallace.

## THE JOURNEY OF VAAN NGUYEN

Monday, March 19 • 5:30 p.m. • JCC

**Director:** Duki Dror

Israel, 2005, 84 min.,

Hebrew and Vietnamese with English subtitles



Where is 'home'? Can you 'go back again'? These questions are addressed in the unheard story of Israel's Vietnamese refugee community as told through the experiences of two members of the same family, separated by generations but united by an inherit desire for "home." Hanmoi Nguyen, the family patriarch who fled Vietnam and now lives in the "Land of the Jews" with five Hebrew-speaking daughters, desires to return to his village, reclaim his ancestral land and confront the man who forced him to flee. His daughter alienated from Israeli society, joins her father's journey, hoping to find a new life, and a sense of belonging, in a land she barely knows.

## A GREEN CHARIOT preceded by THE TRIBE

Monday, March 19 • 8:00 p.m. • JCC

Wednesday, March 21 • 5:30 p.m. • JCC

### A GREEN CHARIOT (Markavah Yerukah)

**Director:** Gilad Goldschmidt

Israel, 2005, 48 min., Hebrew with English subtitles

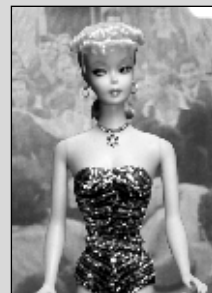


Twenty two year-old Sasha's greatest wish is to become an Israeli. He has become religious, changed his name to Yair and speaks only in Hebrew -- even when he is addressed in Russian. He has completely cut himself off from his Russian past, including his father and his Russian friends. Now, Yair is about to marry his Israeli girlfriend. But when Yair receives a package from his aunt in the Ukraine, his world is shaken. Something inside challenges everything Yair believes about himself and the person he's tried to become. The revelation forces him to confront his religious beliefs and journey back to the Russian identity he has fought to suppress.

## THE TRIBE

**Director:** Tiffany Shlain

USA, 2006, 15 min., English

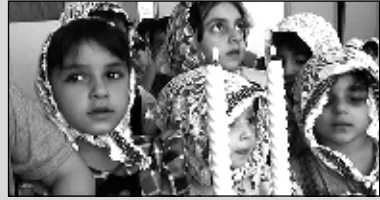


Barbie – like you've never seen her before! What can the most successful doll on the planet show us about being Jewish today? Narrated by Peter Coyote, the film mixes old school narration with a new school visual style. *The Tribe* weaves together archival footage, graphics, animation, Barbie dioramas, and slam poetry to take audiences on an electric ride through the complex history of both the Barbie doll and the Jewish people – from Biblical times to present day. By tracing Barbie's history, the film sheds light on what it means to be an America Jew today.

## JEW OF IRAN

Tuesday, March 20 • 7:00 p.m. • JCC

**Director:** Ramin Farahani  
The Netherlands, 2005, 52 min.



Even though approved by Iranian censors, this film provides a revealing look behind the Muslim curtain. In Tehran, young and old Jews speak about different kinds of discrimination. However, there are also positive aspects, such as a close friendship between two tolerant Muslim and Jewish families. The film also looks at the strong and responsive bond within the Jewish community: A lonely elderly woman from the old Jewish neighborhood of Tehran is treated for free at the Jewish hospital; love and passion that the main characters have developed for the place they live in and a Jewish artist who finds inspiration in Iranian art and Islamic architecture.

## LOVE IRANIAN-AMERICAN STYLE

Tuesday, March 20 • 8:00 p.m. • JCC

**Director:** Tanaz Eshaghian  
USA, 2005, 62 min.  
English and Farsi with English subtitles



Tanaz Eshaghian is a first-generation Iranian Jew, and self-described “weirdo,” who doesn’t conform to her community’s standards: she’s independent, artistic, and outspoken. Tanaz reluctantly agrees to blind dates with businessmen and dentists, but can’t stomach the idea of a practical marriage with a Persian yuppie. This guided tour through New York and “Irangeles” maintains a wry sense of humor while examining issues of shame and sexual purity.

## Deutser Art Gallery LEGENDS OF THE TANAKH

March 19 – April 20, 2007

An exhibition featuring conceptually brilliant paintings depicting scenarios from the Legends of the Bible based on the experiences of the crypto-Jews of New Mexico.

New Works by Dan RiiS Grife

### OPENING RECEPTION

Thursday, March 22 – 7:00 p.m.  
Presentation by artist

#### Gallery Hours

Monday – Thursday • 10:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.  
Friday & Sunday • 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.



## 51 BIRCH STREET

Wednesday, March 21 • 8:00 p.m. • JCC  
Thursday, March 22 • 5:30 p.m. • JCC

**Director:** Doug Block  
USA, 2005, 90 min., English

A riveting personal documentary that explores a universal human question -- how much about your parents do you really want to know? Documentary filmmaker Doug Block always thought his parents' 54-year marriage was a good one. But when his mother dies unexpectedly and his father swiftly marries his former secretary, he discovers a family history far more complex and troubled than he ever imagined.

## CLOSE TO HOME (Karov LaBayit)

Thursday, March 22 • 10:00 a.m.  
and 8:00 p.m. • JCC

**Director:** Vidi Bilu, Dalia Hager  
Israel, 2005, 94 min.  
Hebrew with English subtitles



Two young Israeli women with completely different temperaments are assigned to patrol the streets of Jerusalem as part of their military service. Even under the strain of politics and borders they live their lives with all the crushes, breakups, and family issues that go with them.

Save Money!  
Buy a  
Film Festival Pass  
[www.jcchouston.org](http://www.jcchouston.org)

## BAGELS, COFFEE & FILM

Thursday, March 22 • 10:00 a.m. • JCC

Join us for a cup of coffee before the film. The film will be *Close to Home* (see description p. 8).

Complimentary Bagels & Coffee available at 9:15 a.m.

### WONDROUS OBLIVION

Friday, March 23 • 1:00 p.m. • JCC

Sunday, March 25 • 3:30 p.m. • JCC

**Director:** Paul Morrison  
England, 2003, 106 min., English

Sports and Judaism mix in 1960's London, and the result is laughter! Eleven-year-old David Wiseman is a good Jewish boy with one big problem: he's in love with the game of cricket, but he's a terrible athlete. In fact, he has been reduced to keeping score for his prep school team, who find him "wondrously oblivious" to his own ineptitude. But David's life, and that of his attractive refugee mother and stubborn Polish father, is about to change radically when, to the dismay of their narrow-minded neighbors, a black Jamaican family moves in next door.

David's budding friendship with Dennis, his new-found cricket mentor (the marvelous Bay Area-based actor Delroy Lindo) and Judy, Dennis's daughter, will test the bounds of tolerance and loyalty for this gentlest of boys. His eyes open to what keeps people apart in matters of race, culture, and religion and the courage it sometimes takes to overcome differences.



### NINA'S HOME (La Maison de Nina)

Saturday, March 24 • 7:00 p.m. • MFAH

Sunday, March 25 • 1:00 p.m. • MFAH

**Director:** Richard Dembo  
France, 2005, 107 min.  
French with English subtitles

In this unforgettable feature film based on actual events, Agnès Jaoui brings irresistible warmth to her role as the real-life Nina, director of a "house of hope," one of the residences established by the French government for Jewish children who survived the war in hiding. When a group of new arrivals -- boys who survived Nazi concentration camps -- clashes with the original residents, Nina does whatever it takes to make a home for all and bring the survivors back from the brink.



## OUT OF SIGHT (Lemarit Ain)

Saturday, March 24 • 9:30 p.m. • MFAH

**Director:** Daniel Syrkin  
Israel, 2006, 86 min.  
Hebrew with English subtitles



Ya'ara (Tali Sharon), the young heroine of this gripping psychological mystery, is lovely, brilliant, brusquely independent, and yet totally blind. Her lack of vision no way hampers her from investigating the shocking suicide of her cousin and inseparable childhood best friend, boldly dragging to light what the sighted around her choose not to 'see.'  
Director Daniel Syrkin won the Israeli equivalent of the Academy Award for this film.

## IRA AND ABBY

**Closing Night at the JCC**

Sunday, March 25 • 7:30 p.m. • JCC

**Director:** Robert Cary  
USA, 2006, 100 min., English



A laugh-out-loud, smart, romantic comedy! When neurotic and indecisive Ira (Chris Messina from *Six Feet Under*) meets loveable and free-spirited Abby (Jennifer Westfeldt from *Kissing Jessica Stein*), it isn't long before their relationship becomes a family affair. Winner of the Audience Award for Best Feature at the 2006 LA Film Festival, the film's all-star cast also includes Fred Willard, Frances Conroy, Judith Light, Robert Klein, and *Seinfeld's* Jason Alexander.  
*Reception to follow the film screening.*

Receive **FREE** admission to most  
MFAH films by  
becoming a *Film Buff*.  
To order a *Film Buffs Membership*  
for yourself or as a gift  
call 713-639-7531.

# 3rd Annual Houston Jewish Film Festival at a Glance

## MARCH 15 – MARCH 25, 2007

DATE	TIME	FILMS	LOCATION
Thursday, March 15	8:00 p.m.	From Shtetl to Swing	JCC, Kaplan Theatre*
Friday, March 16	1:00 p.m.	From Shtetl to Swing	JCC, Kaplan Theatre
Saturday, March 17	7:00 p.m.	El Cantor	MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater
Sunday, March 18	3:00 p.m. 5:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m.	Toots El Cantor Toots	MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater
Monday, March 19	5:30 p.m. 8:00 p.m.	Journey of Vaan Nguyen The Tribe/A Green Chariot	JCC, Kaplan Theatre JCC, Kaplan Theatre
Tuesday, March 20	7:00 p.m. 8:00 p.m.	Jews of Iran Love Iranian-American Style	JCC, Kaplan Theatre JCC, Kaplan Theatre
Wednesday, March 21	5:30 p.m. 8:00 p.m.	The Tribe/A Green Chariot 51 Birch Street	JCC, Kaplan Theatre JCC, Kaplan Theatre
Thursday, March 22	10:00 a.m. 5:30 p.m. 8:00 p.m.	Close To Home 51 Birch Street Close To Home	JCC, Kaplan Theatre JCC, Kaplan Theatre JCC, Kaplan Theatre
Friday, March 23	1:00 p.m.	Wondrous Oblivion	JCC Kaplan Theatre
Saturday, March 24	7:00 p.m. 9:30 p.m.	Nina's Home Out of Sight	MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater
Sunday, March 25	1:00 p.m. 3:30 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Nina's Home Wondrous Oblivion Ira and Abby	MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater JCC, Kaplan Theatre JCC, Kaplan Theatre

\*The Kaplan Theatre is located in the Jewish Community Center's I.W. Marks Theatre Center



The Jewish Community Center of Houston  
5601 South Braeswood • Houston, TX 77096  
713-729-3200 • [www.JccHouston.org](http://www.JccHouston.org)



The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
1001 Bissonnet Street • Houston, TX 77005  
713-639-7515 • [www.mfah.org/films](http://www.mfah.org/films)

Let "Essence" Put "Spring" Into Your Gift Giving



**\$5 OFF**

any purchase of \$18 or more  
713-729-3200 ext. 3218

Valid for in-store use only. Limit one to a customer per visit. No copies. Not valid with any other offer. Coupon must be surrendered at the time of the purchase. Not valid on purchase of gift cards. Coupon expires 3/30/07.



Jewish Community Center  
5601 South Braeswood  
Houston, TX 77096-3907



March 15-25, 2007

Nonprofit Org.  
U. S. Postage  
PAID  
Houston, Texas  
Permit No. 6217