



5<sup>th</sup>  
Annual

HOUSTON  
JEWISH  
film festival



March 17 – March 29, 2009



# Fabulous Fifth Year of Films

Welcome to our Fabulous Fifth Annual Houston Jewish Film Festival. We look forward to sharing a great 13 days of films from across the globe. We have films in English, Hebrew, French and Spanish. Some will make us laugh, some will make us cry, some will make us question. Each will help us grow. Many of these films are presented with context and background along with talk backs so that we can take more away from this experience than mere entertainment.

Putting together a festival with as many moving parts requires the overwhelming generosity of our supporters who have enabled us to present this event and 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.

We look forward to greeting you personally throughout our festival and hearing how you relate to the stories we tell.

See you at the movies!

Sue Goott  
Co-Chair

Mignon Wolf  
Co-Chair

## *New this year...* AUDIENCE CHOICE AWARD

Sponsored by Kenny and Ziggy's

Watch for details and be ready to cast your votes!

## TICKET INFORMATION



Individual Tickets

\$7 JCC Member/Patron of the Arts & MFAH Film Buff

\$9 Public

\$1 discount for students and seniors

Receive two films for FREE with a Festival Pass

\$77 JCC Member/Patron of the Arts & MFAH Film Buff

\$99 Public • \$5 discount for students and seniors

5th Annual Special: Buy 2 tickets, get one free (JCC screenings only)

To purchase a Festival Pass visit:

[www.jcchouston.org](http://www.jcchouston.org)

call: 713-551-7255

To purchase individual tickets:

[www.jcchouston.org](http://www.jcchouston.org) &

[www.mfah.org/film](http://www.mfah.org/film)

*The JCC Box Office will open 30 minutes prior to each screening*

# 2009 Houston Jewish Film Festival Committee

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*Co-Chair*

**Mignon Wolf**  
*Co-Chair*

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**Ralph Kaethner & Brian Hill**  
*Projectionists*

OPENING NIGHT



## THE MONSTER AMONG US

Tuesday, March 17

7:30 PM • JCC

**Directors:** Allen Mondell  
& Cynthia Salzman Mondell  
USA, 2008, 84 min, English  
Documentary

60 years after the Holocaust, a new brand of European anti-Semitism is present. Same purpose, but a different face. It is directly connected to radical Muslim beliefs and actions that spread from the Middle East. It surfaces on college campuses, in the media, on the streets, at political demonstrations, on the internet and

in seemingly innocent social situations. Jews in six different European countries tell of being attacked explicitly and ostracized subtly at work. All this begs the question: Is the past set to repeat itself?

*Directors in attendance. Talk back follows screening.*

join us for a pre-film champagne reception at 7:00 PM

## BLESSED IS THE MATCH: The Life and Death of Hannah Senesh

Wednesday, March 18

7:30 PM • JCC

**Director:** Roberta Grossman  
USA, 2008, 85 min, English  
Documentary

Compelling, surprising, and personal, the amazing story of Hannah Senesh, the



World War II-era poet and diarist who became a paratrooper, resistance fighter, and modern-day Joan of Arc is narrated by Academy Award nominee Joan Allen. This documentary combines archival footage and reenactments to retrace the story of Hannah from her escape from Europe to Palestine, on her perilous mission to rescue Jews during the Holocaust. Winner, Audience Award Washington Jewish Film Festival.

Save Money!

Buy a Film Festival Pass

[www.jcchouston.org](http://www.jcchouston.org)

## SCHMOOZE, SHMEAR, AND SC(H)REENING

Thursday, March 19 • 10:00 AM

Come join some of your film lover friends at 9:00 AM for complimentary coffee and a bagel before the film **NOODLE** (see description below).

### NOODLE

Thursday, March 19 • 10:00 AM • JCC

Sunday, March 22 • 7:45 PM • JCC

**Director:** Ayelet Menahemi

Israel, 2007, 90 min,  
Hebrew with subtitles  
Drama



An enjoyable heartfelt drama is the story of Miri, a flight attendant who finds herself saddled with a small Chinese boy in her home and her normal life routine broken. In attempting to return the child to China to be reunited with his mother, Miri embarks on a remarkable journey full of drama, humor, and self-discovery. Nominated for 10 awards by the Israel Film Society and winner of the Special Grand Prize of the Jury at the 2007 Montreal World Film Festival.

### LETTERS TO JENNY

(*Cartas para Jenny*)

Thursday, March 19 • 7:30 PM • JCC

Friday, March 20 • 1:00 PM • JCC

**Director:** Diego Musiak

Argentina, Israel, Spain, 2007, 96 min,  
Spanish, Hebrew with subtitles  
Drama



An unapologetically sentimental mother-daughter experience, *Letters to Jenny* will surely elicit tears and tender emotion. Having lost her mother, Laura, to a terminal illness, Jenny enters her teenage years after a bittersweet Bat Mitzvah. A series of letters from her late mother are her only comfort in times of major crisis. A feisty lead performance from Argentine actress Gimena Accardi fuels this picturesque rite-of-passage tale that tugs deeply at the ties that bind in surprising new ways.

Receive **FREE** admission to most  
MFAH films by  
becoming a *Film Buff*.  
To order a *Film Buffs Membership*  
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## A SECRET (Un Secret)

Saturday, March 21 • 7:00 PM • MFAH

**Director:** Claude Miller

France, 2007, 105 min, French with subtitles  
Drama

"Adapted from Philippe Grimbert's best-selling novel, *A Secret* is a story of passion and guilt in troubled times, which unfolds as a young teenager uncovers the truth about his parents' past. He finds out that before the war, his father Maxime (Patrick Bruel) was married to Hannah (Ludivine Sagnier) when he fell madly in love with Tania (Cecile de France). As a young Jewish couple living in Nazi-occupied France, Maxime and Tania had to make difficult choices to survive the war and the Holocaust. *A Secret* 'is a fine drama that stands as Gallic vet Claude Miller's best in at least a decade.' - *Variety* ." - Museum of Fine Arts Boston

*A reception in the Museum galleries follows the film. Generous support has been provided by the Consulate General of France in Houston. This screening is part of Le mois de la Francophonie.*

*Director Claude Miller has been invited to attend*

## CHILDREN OF THE SUN

Sunday, March 22 • 1:00 PM • MFAH

Saturday, March 28 • 9:00 PM • MFAH

**Director:** Ran Tal

Israel, USA, 2007, 90 min, Hebrew with subtitles  
Documentary



What was life really like growing up in a kibbutz? This honest and engrossing documentary sets aside sentimentality to tell the story of the journey of *Children of the Sun*, the children of the first kibbutzim in Israel. Told by the children many years later with rare footage filmed at the kibbutzim over 40 years, you will leave with a frank understanding of their unique upbringing, challenges and education.

## LEMON TREE (Etz Limon)

Sunday, March 22 • 3:00 PM • MFAH

*Pre-release screening courtesy of IFC Films*

**Director:** Eran Riklis

Israel, 2008, 106 min, Hebrew and Arabic with subtitles  
Drama



Based on a true story, *Lemon Tree* turns a minor political situation into a touching and memorable analogy for a country divided. A Palestinian widow living in Zur Hasharon on the Israel-West Bank border finds her family's century-old lemon grove threatened when the Israeli defense minister moves in next door. Controversy escalates as to whether the fruit trees present a security risk, and the widow takes her case all the way to the Supreme Court. The film features a stunning central performance by Palestinian actress Hiam Abbass (*The Syrian Bride*). This is one of the most acclaimed Israeli films of 2008. Audience Award Winner, Berlin Film Festival.

## THE TREE OF LIFE

Sunday, March 22 • 5:00 PM • MFAH

Sunday, March 29 • 3:00 PM • MFAH

**Director:** Hava Volterra  
Israel, 2008, 76 min, English and  
Italian with subtitles  
Documentary



From modern Los Angeles to the centuries old Italy, the history of the Jews is beautifully interwoven into the director's personal story. Middle aged Hava tries to come to terms with her father's death by traveling to Italy, the land of his birth, to trace the roots of the family tree. Both utterly hilarious and gripping, *The Tree of Life* is a fresh look at Jewish history.

## BLOODLINES

Monday, March 23

7:30 PM • JCC

**Director:** Cynthia Connup  
Australia, 2008, 52 min, English  
Documentary



*Courtesy of Women Make Movies, www.wmm.com*

Two remarkable women -- Bettina Goering, the grandniece of Nazi war criminal Herman Goering and Australian painter Ruth Rich, daughter of Holocaust survivors -- meet for a series of extraordinary encounters. As they journey toward an authentic reconciliation, Bettina must face not only Ruth's rage over her family's suffering but also her own guilt and fear that evil runs in the blood.

*To be preceded by*

## TORTE BLUMA

**Director:** Benjamin Ross  
USA, 2005, 18 min, English  
Drama



A sobering film inspired by a real-life episode in the life of Franz Stangl, the German commandant at Treblinka, and the Jewish prisoner who cooks his meals.

Save Money!

5th Annual Special: Buy 2 tickets, get 1 free

*(JCC screenings only)*

[www.jcchouston.org](http://www.jcchouston.org)

## FOUL GESTURE (Tnu'a Meguna)

Tuesday, March 24 • 7:30 PM • JCC

**Director:** Itshak Grad

Israel, 2006, 95 min, Hebrew with subtitles  
Drama



An offensive hand gesture on Holocaust Memorial Day sets in motion a tragic series of events in *Foul Gesture*, a gripping Israeli revenge drama. Passive Michael Kleinhouse (Gal Zaid) is out of work and wilting under the weight of mounting debt and a crumbling marriage. Entangled in a road rage incident involving his wife Tamar (Keren Mor) and a mysterious driver, Michael becomes agitated with corrupt police who seem powerless to act. He seeks justice on his own terms against the errant motorist, a well-connected gangster. *Foul Gesture* serves as a darkly comic commentary on the archetypal macho Israeli man. Winner of Best Film honors at the 2006 Haifa International Film Festival and nominated for five awards of the Israeli Film Academy.

*To be preceded by a comedy not at all sub-prime*

## MORTGAGE (Mishcanta)

Director: Sharon Maymon & Tal Granit

Israel, 2006, 52 min, Hebrew with subtitles  
Comedy



They say all you need is love, but that doesn't pay the bills. Beny (Eli Finish) and Esty (Hilla Sorjon-Fischer) love each other very much but they are unfortunate. One day, they find themselves unemployed, and if that's not enough, the bank is about to confiscate their apartment if they don't settle their mortgage debt within a month. The two search for creative solutions to obtain the money, while each of them believes that his solution is saner. A comic drama that examines how far a young couple from Ramle will go in order to save their house from confiscation.

come early for "finger" foods

## FUGITIVE PIECES

Wednesday, March 25 • 1:00 PM • JCC

Director: Jeremy Podeswa

Israel, 2008, 104 min, English, Greek, Yiddish,  
German with subtitles  
Drama, Rated R



Based on the acclaimed debut novel from poet Anne Michaels, this stirring tale centers on Jakob Beer, a Jewish immigrant haunted by the murder of his family at the hands of the Nazis during World War II. After witnessing the massacre of members of his family, seven-year-old Jakob does not know the fate of his beloved sister Bella - a mystery that will haunt him for the rest of his life. As Jakob grows into a man, he becomes progressively more consumed by his family's tragedy and his long for Bella, which colors all his relationships. A truly remarkable and unforgettable story, featuring stellar performances from Rade Serbedzija, Rosamund Pike and Ayelet Zurer (*Nina's Tragedies*).

## STRANGERS (Zarim)

Wednesday, March 25 • 7:30 PM • JCC

**Directors:** Erez Tadmor & Guy Nativ  
Israel, 2007, 85 min, Arabic, English,  
French, Hebrew, with subtitles  
Drama



An accidental meeting sparks an improbable romance linking an Israeli kibbutznik and a Palestinian woman in this critically-acclaimed exploration of nationality and the heart. Eyal and Rana (superb improvisation by actors Liron Levo and Lubna Azabal) meet serendipitously on their way to the World Cup soccer finals in Berlin after their bags are mistakenly swapped. A quick magnetic glance on a subway soon becomes an unbreakable bond, even as war in their homeland tests loyalties. Innovatively filmed with handheld cameras and unscripted performances, *Strangers* presents a strikingly realistic treatment of a complex relationship in which politics and personalities collide. Winner of the Grand Jury Prize in the World Cinema Competition at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival.

## DANGEROUS ACTS (Mesukenet)

Thursday, March 26 • 7:30 PM • JCC

Director: Shemi Zarhin  
Israel, 2007, 97 min, Hebrew with subtitles  
Drama



Gripping, dark and suspenseful, while at times flat out funny. Three years ago Tzvia (Gila Almagor), a star in the Israeli theater scene, lost her family in a terrible accident. When a truck crashed into a car driven by her husband. Three years after the tragedy, the truck driver is released from jail. He appears at Tzvia's house with the sole purpose of asking her for forgiveness. The meeting between the two is highly charged with a multitude of conflicting emotions and soon develops into a wrenching - sadistically symbiotic - and manipulative relationship. Winner of eight awards by the Israeli Film Academy.

## BE' TAY AVON SENIOR ADULT LUNCH PROGRAM

### BEAU JEST

Friday, March 27 • 1:00 PM

Come have lunch and a movie with the Be'tay Avon Crowd. The movie will be **Beau Jest** (see description on next page). Lunch and Movie \$7 JCC member / \$9 Public. RSVP required for lunch. To RSVP, call Nomi Barancik at ext. 3258.



## LOVE COMES LATELY

Saturday, March 28 • 7:00 PM • MFAH

Sunday, March 29 • 1:00 PM • MFAH

**Director:** Jan Schutte

Germany, Austria, USA, 2007, 86 min

Drama



Based on the short stories "Alone", "The Briefcase", and "Old Love" by the Yiddish

writer and Nobel Prize-winner Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Love Comes Lately* is the story of Max Kohn (Otto Tausig), a seventy-something Austrian émigré writer who is still in demand on the literary circuit. Aging yet vibrant, Max and his fictitious alter egos get mixed up with manuscripts, murder, and a bevy of alluring women (portrayed by Tova Feldshuh, Barbara Hershey, Elizabeth Pena, and Rhea Perlman.).

CLOSING NIGHT



## BEAU JEST

Sunday, March 29

7:30 PM • JCC

**Director:** James Sherman

USA, 2008, 98 min

Comedy

A story about falling in love ..... with a little white lie, starring a modern comedy cast including Robyn Cohen, Willie

Garson (*Sex in the City*), Lainie Kazan, and Seymour Cassel. What do you do when you know your Jewish parents won't approve of your non-Jewish boyfriend? Lie to them and hire an actor to impersonate a good-looking Jewish surgeon, of course! Hilarity ensues when a nice Jewish girl invents a boyfriend and takes him home for Shabbat dinner. All he knows about Judaism he learned from *Fiddler on the Roof*. Can they survive the evening?

Dessert reception following film

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\*As of print deadline

# 5th Annual Houston Jewish Film Festival at a Glance

## MARCH 17 – MARCH 29, 2009

DATE	TIME	FILMS	LOCATION
Tuesday, March 17	7:30 PM	The Monster Among Us	JCC, Kaplan Theatre*
Wednesday, March 18	7:30 PM	Blessed is the Match	JCC, Kaplan Theatre
Thursday, March 19	10:00 AM 7:30 PM	Noodle Letters to Jenny	JCC, Kaplan Theatre JCC, Kaplan Theatre
Friday, March 20	1:00 PM	Letters to Jenny	JCC, Kaplan Theatre
Saturday, March 21	7:00 PM	A Secret	MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater
Sunday, March 22	1:00 PM 3:00 PM 5:00 PM 7:45 PM	Children of the Sun Lemon Tree Tree of Life Noodle	MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater JCC, Kaplan Theatre
Monday, March 23	7:30 PM	Torte Bluma/Bloodlines	JCC, Kaplan Theatre
Tuesday, March 24	7:30 PM	Mortgage/Foul Gesture	JCC, Kaplan Theatre
Wednesday, March 25	1:00 PM 7:30 PM	Fugitive Pieces Strangers	JCC, Kaplan Theatre JCC, Kaplan Theatre
Thursday, March 26	7:30 PM	Dangerous Acts	JCC, Kaplan Theatre
Friday, March 27	1:00 PM	Beau Jest	JCC Kaplan Theatre
Saturday, March 28	7:00 PM 9:00 PM	Love Comes Lately Children of the Sun	MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater
Sunday, March 29	1:00 PM 3:00 PM 7:30 PM	Love Comes Lately The Tree of Life Beau Jest	MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater MFAH, Brown Auditorium Theater JCC, Kaplan Theatre

\*The Kaplan Theatre is located in the Jewish Community Center IW Marks Theatre Center  
Due to circumstances beyond our control programs are subject to change.

### Don't want to hassle with parking? Take METRORail to the Museum!

METRO's Light Rail delivers you to the Museum's doorstep!  
The Museum District stop is conveniently located between  
the Audrey Jones Beck Building and the Visitors Center.  
Visit [www.ridemetro.org](http://www.ridemetro.org) for more information.



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