

Toronto Jewish Film Festival

Restored Nuremberg documentary screens at TJFF

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The march of time and water shortages have diminished the importance of citrus in Israel's contemporary high-tech economy. But in the hearts of many Israelis and Palestinians, the Jaffa orange still burns brightly as an emblem of progress and accomplishment.

April 20 at 8:15 p.m. at the Bloor Cinema and April 22 at 9:15 p.m. at the Cineplex Odeon Sheppard Centre

Commissioned by the U.S. military government in Germany and screened in German theatres in 1948 and 1949, *Nuremberg: Its Lesson For Today* was shelved and forgotten, much to the disappointment of its director and writer, Stuart Schulberg. His daughter, Sandra Schulberg, and her

collaborator, Josh Waletzky, have restored this important and compelling documentary.

Narrated in a stentorian tone by the actor Liev Schreiber, the film is a historical account of Adolf Hitler's rise to power, Nazi aggression and war crimes in Europe and one of the greatest courtroom dramas in the annals of modern times. The black-and-white footage is stark and graphic. The first image of a bedraggled woman holding a baby as she emerges from a bomb shelter in a sea of urban rubble is telling.

Shifting to the postwar Nuremberg war-crimes tribunal, the movie pans on American prosecutor Robert Jackson. He declares that civilization cannot ignore Nazi atrocities and denounces Nazism as a toxic mixture of racial hatred and fierce nationalism.

Nuremberg, in some detail, describes Hitler's ideology, ascent and manipulation of public opinion, as well as Germany's rearmament program and territorial conquests before and after World War II. From the Rhineland and Poland to Norway and Holland, German armies ran roughshod over the continent.

While *Nuremberg* exposes Germany's "criminal treatment" of Polish civilians and the murder of Europeans elsewhere, Jews, strangely enough, go unmentioned until nearly an hour into the film. After cataloguing the horrors of Nazi medical experiments, slave labour and the euthanasia program, it finally acknowledges that Jews were the object of Germany's "greatest crime against humanity." Gruesome clips of the death camps, the gas chambers and the Warsaw Ghetto uprising appear on screen.

The strongest segment unfolds as the Nazi criminals give voice to their feelings. Hermann Goring claims he did not know about the Holocaust, but admits that "excesses" took place. Walther Funk allows that "horrendous acts" were committed against Jews. Albert Speer speaks about the folly of following orders blindly. These mea culpas, of course, can't disguise the fact that Germany descended into hell during the Nazi interregnum.

April 18 at 7 p.m. at the Bloor Cinema

The title of *Lone Samaritan*, a film about tradition and alienation by Barak Heymann, is a direct reference to Baruch Tzdaka. He is one of the last remaining followers of the Samaritans, a rapidly shrinking and reclusive religious sect that broke away from Judaism centuries ago and is now based in Holon, Israel, and Mount Gerizim, near the West Bank city of Nablus. *The Lone Samaritan* focuses on Baruch's daughter, Sophie, an Israeli singer and single mother who left the

faith with her three sisters, resulting in his excommunication from this exotic community. Interestingly, however, Sophie would consider returning to the fold under the right conditions.

The Samaritans themselves are portrayed as narrow-minded people who consider apostates "garbage." The Samaritan high priest, a rabbinic-looking wizened old man in robes, comes across as utterly and irrevocably dogmatic.

Usually identified by their red fezzes, the Samaritans pray in synagogues that resemble mosques and gather on Mount Gerizim to slaughter sheep and bake them in smoky pits on High Holidays. Heymann's revealing documentary distils the essence of their lifestyle.

April 21 at 12 p.m. at the Al Green Theatre

Etty Wieseltier's *Achziv, A Place For Love* turns on the Israeli eccentric Eli Avivi, a phlegmatic free spirit who established a bohemian retreat in an abandoned Arab village

in northern Israel several decades ago. Israelis and foreigners who visited Achziv would usually partake of the forbidden fruits of nudity, free love and drugs. This funky film of Avivi's refuge transports a viewer to what is essentially another planet.

April 21 at 3 p.m. at Al Green Theatre.



The poster for the original German screening in 1948.



The Lone Samaritan focuses on Sophie, an Israeli singer who left the reclusive sect.

Honor (Kavod), directed by Haim Bouzaglo, is Israel's version of *The Godfather*. A moody, sporadically violent and entertaining feature film juxtaposing the sacred with the profane, it revolves around two Moroccan Israeli Mafia families that declare war on each other over a bitter dispute concerning a European casino. Thanks to a competent script, able direction and stellar performances, *Honor* acquits itself quite well.

April 18 at 6:15 p.m. at Al Green and April 19 at 6:15 p.m. at Cineplex Odeon Sheppard Centre

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