

Film festival includes Israeli and Jewish films



"Norman: The Moderate Rise and Tragic Fall of a New York Fixer" starring Richard Gere is one of the Jewish-themed films screening during the Miami Film Festival. Courtesy (Courtesy)



By **Sergio Carmona**

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Festival director said Jewish and Israeli films are popular

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Among the many films screening during Miami-Dade College's 34th annual Miami Film Festival from March 3-12 are Israeli and Jewish ones.

The film festival opens with the Florida premiere of the American-Israeli film, "Norman: The Moderate Rise and Tragic Fall of a New York Fixer." This film, directed by Israeli filmmaker Joseph Cedar, stars Richard Gere as a financial schemer who finds himself in the middle of an international scandal after he becomes a political adviser to the new prime minister of Israel, played by Lior Ashkenazi.

"Ideally Miami Film Festival reflects our community at the same time it reflects what is happening in world cinema," said Jaie Laplante, the film festival's director. "Joseph Cedar has made an outstanding film that addresses the complexity of relationships between Jews in Israel with Jews in the United States, and we see this played out in the news on an ongoing basis. I'm proud that Miami Film Festival can join the conversation with this highly relevant film that speaks to a community and relationships that every South Floridian should be aware of."

Cedar said the film's main character Norman Oppenheimer is a type that has been a mystery to him his whole life.

"He's someone that at once embarrasses me and at the same time for some reason I feel extremely close to and ultimately proud to be close to him," he said. "I think he's a type. There are many people like Norman, or different variations like Norman. Some Normans have slightly better circumstances than Norman Oppenheimer in the film. Some Normans are even more lonely than he is, or more desperate than he is, but all the Normans have one thing in common: they're eager to be part of something important and because they have nothing to show for themselves, they're never let in and they're perceived as a nuisance and this is a story of that man from his point of view."

Laplante said that Jewish and Israeli films are so popular and that they always sell out at the festival. He also commented on other Jewish films screening this year.

"'Take My Nose...Please!' is about a Jewish theater performer who goes through a personal journey deciding what to do about what she calls her 'Jewish nose' – a will-she-or-won't-she plastic surgery comedy/drama. It's a film that takes on larger roles of body comfort and beauty pressures in our society today," he said. "I would also highlight 'The History of Love' based on Nicole Krauss' epic bestseller which is about two young Jewish lovers who survive the Holocaust but lose contact with each other after the war, only to find themselves still searching 70 years later in Brooklyn. It is a film for the romantic in all of us."

Joan Kron, director of "Take My Nose...Please," said regarding what she hopes the audience can take away from this film, "There's this feeling that we should all just accept ourselves and that we should all grow old gracefully, which is fine and these are very nice sentiments, but that ignores the fact that the real world rewards people for looking good."

"Women know they make more money when they're looking better and that there's a benefit to looking beautiful. At the same time if you make an effort to look better, you are criticized, you're made fun of, you're humiliated and that's why there's so much lying going on."

Kron continued that the film says it's okay to care about looking better and more beautiful.

"There are actually changes in personality when you feel better about yourself," she said.

Other Jewish-themed films screening at the festival are "Menashe" and "The Bloom of Yesterday."

Visit miamifilmfestival.com for more information including tickets, times and locations, or call 305-237-3456.

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