

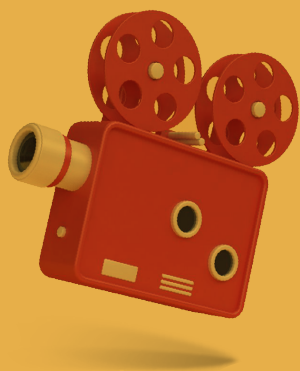
For Jew and You Too.

LET OUR FILMS HEAL YOUR SOUL
NOW *More Than Ever*

22nd Austin Jewish Film Festival | October 31-November 10, 2024 | [AustinJFF.org](https://austinjff.org)



JOIN US FOR AJFF 2024



October 31-November 10

- In-person film festival at the Dell Jewish Community Campus.
- On site parties and post film programs.
- Festival pass gives access to all festival events.
- Combo pass gives access to the festival events AND all AJFF365 programs for 12 months.

The World Has Changed

We all experienced the horrible events of October 7, and we continue to live with the aftermath of that day. Our 2023 festival began less than a month later. It was important for us to continue our mission, but we experienced a number of unexpected challenges, including Israeli filmmakers who were unable to travel (see article on David Deri later in this section) and an impact to audience attendance as community members participated in important rallies scheduled at the same time as our programs.

Since then some Jewish film festivals (JFFs) have experienced other significant challenges such as longtime theater partners unexpectedly not renewing their rental contracts this year and protesters showing up at their festivals without any regard to what films are being shown. Major film distributors are shying away from Jewish and Israel stories.

As a friend recently said, “Some people like silent movies. Some people would prefer that we kept silent.”

We believe the importance of proudly sharing the diversity and beauty of Jewish and Israeli stories has never been more important. If JFFs don’t show these films, they will never reach an audience. Beyond the films that we exhibit, AJFF also plays an important role in representing Jewish and Israeli interests to the wider Austin community in TV, radio, print, and web interviews.

Film creates a unique opportunity for audiences to come together and have an informed, shared experience. This is why AJFF puts so much effort into outreach and seeks to break down barriers between people. We can’t do this without your help, so come to the festival, bring your friends and neighbors, watch these excellent films, mingle in the lobby, and support the festival!

The Importance of Jewish Film Festivals—Not Just a Fun Night Out

Most of the movies AJFF shows would not be available to watch anywhere else. Surprisingly few of these films end up in theatrical distribution or on streaming platforms. And unfortunately, recent trends seem to indicate that there is a declining appetite for Jewish and Israeli stories among network, TV, and theatrical programmers.

A key aspect of a film festival is sitting in a darkened room and having a brief shared experience with others, then being able to discuss that experience. Diverse audiences will interpret the same content differently based on their knowledge, views, and life experiences. Film is an easy, low threat way to expand one’s horizons. The stories we share should all be of interest to non-Jewish audiences too. We use a diverse screening committee to preview films under consideration before we make our selections. This committee includes several non-Jewish members who are very enthusiastic about the movies they watch.

We think that one of the best things you can do is to come to our screenings and bring your friends, especially your non-Jewish ones. Aside from providing them a great entertainment experience, you are also helping expand awareness of issues of importance to the Jewish community.

Traditional Jewish organizations such as synagogues, temples, and JCCs are vital parts of the Jewish cultural landscape. But research shows that a large number of people who self-identify as Jews are not members of these organizations and show little inclination to change that. However, more informal aspects of Jewish culture such as Jewish film festivals provide a vital opportunity for communal inreach and for participants to become more involved with Jewish life.

Jewish film festivals are also a platform for outreach to the broader community. Through our work with partners and with media outlets, AJFF takes its role in representing the Austin Jewish and Israeli communities very seriously. This isn’t always easy. For instance, another organization was committed to presenting a film which we felt was biased and had some serious flaws. We had been invited to be on a panel after the screening, and the easiest thing would have been just to turn down the offer. But we felt it was important that someone be at the event to provide context and a more balanced view of the facts, and so we stepped up.

After October 7th AJFF was presented with a unique opportunity to conduct an interview with a journalist from **The Hollywood Reporter**, a major media outlet. The resulting article was picked up internationally and appeared in locations as far away as India.

Even in times when forces seem to be trying to stifle Jewish representation, AJFF will continue to showcase the best Jewish and Israeli stories and to represent our community to the wider world.



Israeli Filmmaker Deri-Barkai Makes Good on Coming to Austin

David Deri-Barkai was one of two Israeli filmmakers who had to cancel their attendance at our 2023 festival after the events of October 7th.

We were delighted to be able to welcome Deri-Barkai to Austin in February 2024, where he conducted events with AJFF, the Israeli-American Council, and the Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies at UT. Additional support for Deri-Barkai's visit came from the Consulate General of Israel to the Southwest.

Deri-Barkai's latest film, ***A Tale of Four Minorities*** is about four families, each with a special focus on their children, from four minorities in Israel each having an identity crisis which was amplified during the pandemic. The movie is a journey that reveals extremism and disintegration but creates surprising alliances and a fascinating vision of contemporary Israeli society.

In the fall of 2019, David Deri-Barkai began documenting the four families—his secular gay family in Tel Aviv, a Jewish ultra-Orthodox family in Beit Shemesh, a Muslim family in Taibeh, and a religious Zionist family in the Ofra settlement (West Bank). The pandemic that broke out a few months later, along with the lock-downs, fears, and social unrest that followed, created unprecedented family and national pressure. While for some, their belief is a source of strength, others confront doubts.

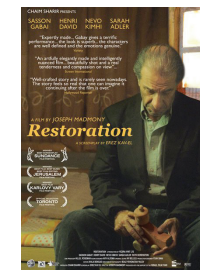
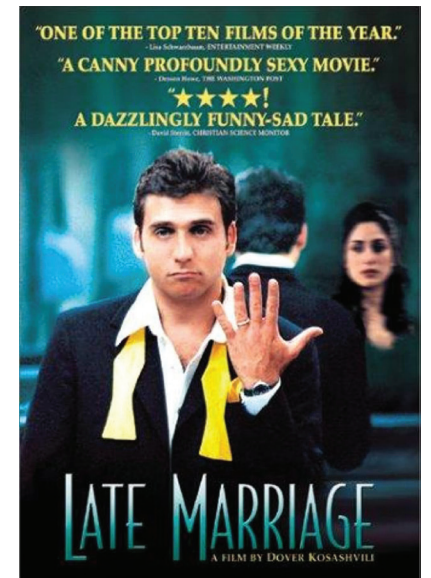
Post-October 7th, the film took on a new context. Deri-Barkai shared the perspective of Israelis dealing with ongoing pain, but he also highlighted important challenges in Israeli society that pre-dated the latest conflict.

Deri-Barkai plans to continue this project with additional interviews every couple of years with his young subjects, allowing audiences to witness how different segments of Israeli society develop into the future.

Israel@75 Film Series



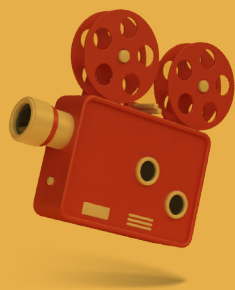
In collaboration with the Israeli American Council and the Consulate General of Israel to the Southwest, and celebrating the 75th year of Israel's independence, AJFF had planned a series of 6 classic films from the history of the state. Due to the events of October 7 we had to curtail some of these screenings, but in the end we were able to show four excellent retrospective films from the country's wide selection of movies. These were shown as part of AJFF365, a collaborative program with Shalom Austin. AJFF365 is our year-round programming, providing films for the rest of the year beyond our annual festival. Patrons can buy tickets to individual films or purchase a 12-month AJFF365 subscription. Furthermore, AJFF supporters receive a certain number of entry tickets, depending on the level of their support. These tickets can be used for festival films or AJFF365 events.



**Festival lineup details
and trailers will be posted to
AustinJFF.org by early October.**

THE FESTIVAL BEGINS ON OCTOBER 31.

GET READY FOR AJFF 2024



We look forward to welcoming you to the 22nd Austin Jewish Film Festival which begins on the evening of Thursday, October 31, then continues on the weekends of November 2-3 and 9-10, all at Shalom Austin.

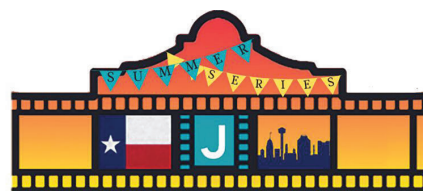
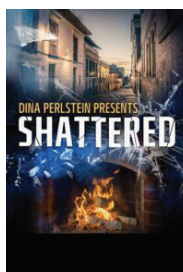
The program lineup will be announced about a month before the festival, and full details on movies, receptions, tickets, passes, etc. will be posted to AustinJFF.org.

To stay informed on all our programming, sign up for the AJFF InFocus e-newsletter by entering your email address in the footer of AustinJFF.org.

Summer Series

For the last several years AJFF has partnered with the San Antonio Jewish Film Festival to present a virtual summer series.

Our summer series allows us to take advantage of our virtual platform to make several excellent films available for the Central Texas community during this period. By running the films virtually, we can accommodate patrons who may be traveling out of town but would still like to be able to keep up with the best in Jewish and Israeli films.



JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL
Barshop JCC of San Antonio

Comedies on Serious Issues



AJFF Director David Finkel leads a Q&A with Canadian screenwriter and actor Shaina Baird-Silver, following a screening of Baird-Silver's comedic musical "Less Than Kosher."

AJFF presents a diverse array of film content from documentaries on serious and lighthearted subjects, dramas of all kinds, and comedy films. While comedic films offer us a well needed laugh, under the surface, most comedies have a serious core to them.

Remembering Gene Wilder, our opening night film in 2023, highlighted the life of the incomparable actor. Wilder's widow wanted a film that highlighted dementia, which ultimately claimed Gene's life, but the filmmakers made a film that is also a love letter to Wilder, one of their favorite actors. Director Ron Frank and screenwriter Glenn Kirschbaum joined us via Zoom to share insights into how the film was made.

Shaina Baird-Silver is a Canadian actress and screenwriter. Her film **Less Than Kosher** is a musical comedy about a young woman who has lost touch with her religion and has a strained relationship with her multi-ethnic family, despite having moved back in with them. Following an unusual sequence of circumstances, she

becomes the shul's temporary chazzan. The film explored important ideas about family and reconnecting with religion, as well as about choosing what is really important in life. Baird-Silver traveled to Austin to present alongside her film; she also participated in services from the bimah at Temple Beth Shalom with Cantor Abby Gostein.

No Name Restaurant is about an ultra-Orthodox American Jew who meets a Bedouin in the Sinai desert as he tries to make it to Alexandria for Passover rituals. When their jeep breaks down they are forced to unite to survive. Lead actor Luzer Twersky and German co-directors Stefan Sarazin and Peter Keller joined us in person to discuss their film with an enthusiastic closing night audience. The movie is a beautiful aspirational story about coexistence in the Middle East. Among amusing anecdotes about the making of the film, the panel also addressed the challenges of filming in the West Bank with an actor dressed as an Orthodox Jew.

A Unique Congress of Films and Books

AJFF loves it when we can find a film that has a connection with a current book. This is harder than it sounds, since most of the time books are written first and any film made about the book only comes out several years later.

However, at our 2023 festival we had a unique experience that resulted in some unusual and very well received programming.

Established author Heather Dune Macadam released the book **999 - The Extraordinary Young Women of the First Official Jewish Transport to Auschwitz** in 2019. Dune Macadam went on to make her first movie, the documentary film **999 - The Forgotten Girls of the Holocaust** based on that book in late 2023. Dune Macadam also released a new non-fiction book, **Star Crossed: A True WWII Romeo and Juliet Love Story in Hitler's Paris** in August 2023. Coincidentally, French director Philippe Le Guay made a new fiction film entitled **The Story of Annette Zelman** about the same story. AJFF had previously worked with Le Guay to show his film **The Man in the Basement**. Dune Macadam's book and Le Guay's film tell the true story of a young Jewish woman in 1942 Paris. She was Jewish. Her fiancé was Catholic. Annette and Jean wanted to get married, but Jean's parents were opposed. In order to break up the couple, Jean's father reported Annette to the Gestapo, which he believed would be the



French director Philippe Le Guay talks to audience members following the screening of his new film "The Story of Annette Zelman."

end of the matter. But ultimately this led to Annette being sent to Auschwitz, and Jean living with her family.

After a lot of work, AJFF was able to arrange a special pre-premiere screening of **999**, which was the first time it had been shown to an audience not directly involved in making the movie. In addition to Dune Macadam, two of the film's producers traveled to Austin for the event. The film is an important story not just about the Holocaust, but also about a significant women's story, a subject matter often overlooked in Holocaust documentaries. Following the film, Dune Macadam was interviewed by Sharyn Vane, who writes a monthly column for the Austin American Statesman reviewing books and family-related features. The event was a huge success with the audience giving it the highest rating of any film in AJFF history. Dune Macadam signed copies of her books following the Q&A.

AJFF also brought Philippe Le Guay to Austin with assistance from the French government. Following the screening of **The Story of Annette Zelman**, both Le Guay and Dune Macadam conducted a Q&A with the audience. They met in person for the first time at our festival.



Author and filmmaker Heather Dune Macadam signs copies of her books for AJFF audience members following a special advance screening of "999 - The Forgotten Girls of the Holocaust".



Actors Stephen Fry (Edek), and Lena Dunham (Ruth) in Julia Von Heinz's 2024 film "Treasure".

Treasure

Many studio films go straight to the big screen and do not play at Jewish film festivals. With some films AJFF is able to arrange a special Sneak Peek screening before they have their theater debut. One recent example is the film **Treasure**, a 2024 tragicomedy directed by Julia von Heinz. Based on the 1999 novel **Too Many Men** by Lily Brett, the film stars Lena Dunham, Stephen Fry, and Zbigniew Zamachowski. Set in 1990, it tells the story of an American journalist, Ruth, who travels to Poland with her father, Edek, to visit his childhood places. But Edek, a Holocaust survivor, resists reliving his trauma and sabotages the trip creating unintentionally funny situations.

AJFF director David Finkel usually attends the European Film Market (EFM) in Berlin each year, which is held as part of the Berlin Film Festival. The EFM is essentially a trade show for new European and Israeli films, and by attending the market, AJFF is able to find the latest relevant films and make connections with producers and filmmakers that serve the festival well. Finkel attended the world premiere of **Treasure** in Berlin which featured the director, novel author, and main film stars in attendance. Following the screening, he spent several months working with the US distributor to enable a showing for the AJFF audience. Other recent Sneak Peek events have included the films **Golda** and **The Fabelmans**.

Colleyville

In the safe haven of Colleyville, Texas, on January 15, 2022, Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker and three others found themselves hostages when a stranger disrupted a typical Saturday morning service at Congregation Beth Israel Synagogue in the Dallas suburbs. Award-winning filmmaker and long time friend of AJFF, Dani Menkin has revealed this gripping real-life drama that unfolded throughout an 11-hour standoff, testing the hostages' resilience and courage in unimaginable ways. While full of tension and impending danger, the film also includes light-hearted moments too.

AJFF plans to include **Colleyville** in our lineup for this year's festival, but we were honored in February 2024 to have Menkin bring to Austin two of the survivors and an FBI special agent in charge who were all there that day. The Austin events helped with the film's completion and included early clips of the movie.



AJFF patrons watch advanced clips of Dani Menkin's new film "Colleyville" in a private setting in February 2024.

Partnerships

AJFF is proud to partner with many organizations on a wide variety of issues. One of the great things about film is that there is content on just about every imaginable subject. Partnership events enable us to present more compelling programs to our audience and to highlight the excellent work our partners do in the community. A recent example was showing the nature documentary **Kinneret** followed by a discussion between AJFF President Dr. David Goldblatt and Jonathan Silverstein, board president of the American Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel. One element of close partnership that AJFF has developed over the years is with our Austin based niche film festivals, especially those focused on the Hispanic, queer, Asian-American, and South Asian communities. Behind the scenes we have been able to share resources and best practices with each other and come together to present programs of diverse content such as short films and filmmaker presentations on different subjects. The group

Dramas and Antisemitism

The Nazis commissioned films such as **Jew Süss** (1940) as viciously effective forms of propaganda. But modern films are able to simultaneously entertain audiences and shine a light on antisemitism. These films have almost become a genre unto themselves. Just a few recent examples of such movies include the following:

The crime drama **The Replacement** (2022) is loosely based on a true story from a Spanish seaside town in 1982. A young police detective moves from Madrid to take a post in a relaxed seaside village, but as he investigates the mysterious circumstances of his predecessor's death, the evidence leads him to a German community of WWII Nazis living in open exile.

The Man in the Basement (2021) is based on a true story from contemporary Paris. After a Jewish couple sells their basement to a former history teacher, they discover his secret life as an antisemitic conspiracy theorist. Now living illegally in their basement, the couple struggles to rescind the sale and evict the teacher, a process complicated by French law. The former teacher befriends their naive teenage daughter and starts to exert influence on her.

Farewell Mister Haffmann (2022) is a French drama set in occupied Paris, 1941. Sending his family to the south of France to avoid the Nazis, jeweler Joseph Haffmann plans to join them shortly, but has to tie up some loose ends with his employee François who will pretend to own Haffmann's store while he is away. But circumstances move faster than anyone could predict, and Haffmann finds himself in hiding in the basement of his own store as Mercier begins to exploit him in a nightmare of a Faustian bargain. There are many films that begin in a similar manner, but this movie's ending is surprising and deliciously satisfying.

Jewish and non-Jewish audiences are likely to see these entertaining films differently, which is an important aspect of why we aim for diverse audiences. Seeing such stories through each other's eyes and being able to talk about that viewpoint is a vital aspect of our mission to break down barriers and help introduce the best in Jewish and Israeli films to Jewish and non-Jewish audiences alike.



AJFF Director David Finkel and representatives of Indie Meme, Cine Las Americas, the Austin Asian-American Film Festival, aGLIFF, and the UT Moody College of Communication after a film festival panel presentation to students and faculty at the University of Texas in March, 2024

has also presented to SXSW (and is applying to do so again in 2025), and in other forums, such as a recent panel presentation on film festivals to a group of students and faculty at the UT Moody College of Communication, another partner of AJFF.

Are you involved with an organization that could benefit from a partnership with AJFF? Contact us at info@AustinJFF.org.

Dolphin Boy



AJFF Director David Finkel moderates a panel with director Dani Menkin, JFS Clinical Director Amanda Mills, and mental health advocate Valerie Milburn following a screening of Menkin's "Dolphin Boy".

While AJFF is proud of all our programs, we take a special pleasure when we are able to leverage our resources to run events aimed at increasing the social good within our community. When filmmaker Dani Menkin was in Austin for events related to his new project **Colleyville**, we took the opportunity to team up with Shalom Austin's Jewish Family Service to show one of Menkin's older movies, **Dolphin Boy**. This truly extraordinary documentary is about Morad, a teenager living in an Arab neighborhood in Israel who became catatonic after a cruel beating by his classmates. Faced with the prospect of institutionalizing his son, Morad's father sells everything, leaves his job and family, and moves to Dolphin Reef on the Red Sea in a last ditch effort to help his son recover, which slowly occurs over a several year period. After screening the film we ran a panel program highlighting mental health awareness with Menkin, JFS's Clinical Director, and a local mental health advocate.

Get Involved

We need you! First and foremost, come to the festival films and bring your friends. We show extraordinary movies you are unlikely to see anywhere else. Don't miss this unique opportunity to experience the best in Jewish and Israeli cinema.

You can buy individual tickets or a festival pass that includes all films and parties at the festival in a single purchase. Or buy a Combo Pass which includes all the same benefits as the festival pass but adds twelve months of access to AJFF365, our year-round film programming. Consider becoming a supporter of AJFF by clicking the "Support AJFF" option on our website. Supporters get a sizable tax deduction for their contribution and valuable ticketing benefits that can be shared with family and friends, usable at the festival or our AJFF365 programs. Want to volunteer? Email volunteer@AustinJFF.org Check AustinJFF.org for the latest information.

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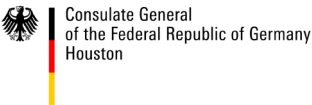
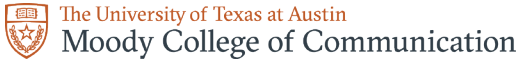
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