



Jewish film fest is a local treasure

Lawrence Toppman

Posted: Friday, Feb. 20, 2009

The fifth annual Charlotte Jewish Film Festival, which starts Tuesday with a sold-out screening of “Knowledge is the Beginning,” aims to increase understanding between both sides in the Arab-Israeli struggle.

Sadly, this topic will still be current when Sasha Obama is president. But it reminds us that the festival, brought to us by Levine Jewish Community Center and the Charlotte Chapter of Hadassah, has unique value for this city.

Films run through March 8 at eight venues; get details and ticket prices at www.charlottejewishfilm.com. (If you want to reserve a seat to “Knowledge,” a documentary about an orchestra uniting young Arab and Jewish musicians, you can still see it March 2.)

Programmers skillfully balance documentaries and features. You can see “Operation Mural: Casablanca,” about the smuggling of 530 Jewish Moroccan kids to Israel under the guise of a holiday in Switzerland, and “Beau Jest,” in which a girl dating a goy invents a Jewish doctor boyfriend to deceive her mom. And the shorts include the Oscar-winning parody “West Bank Story,” about competing fast-food restaurants – one Jewish, one Arabic.

If I were limited to one movie, it might be “The Little Traitor,” a child's-eye view of the British occupation of Palestine before the creation of Israel in 1948. Or it could be “Circumcise Me,” about a real-life stand-up comedian who's the Israeli son of an ex-nun. Nowhere else locally will you find a range of films like this!