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Correction Appended
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HEADLINE: **Jewish** fest comes of age

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BODY:

Mazel Tov! It's the Bar Mitzvah year, the 13th annual Toronto festival of **Jewish** film.

And, like any 13-year-old, this year's Toronto **Jewish** Film Festival, starting tomorrow and running through May 15, has many aspects both volatile and amusing, is full of promise, and wants to stay up late to party, with midnight screenings of films about the contemporary music scene in Israel.

Jericho's Echo: Punk Rock in the Holy Land, in English and Hebrew with English subtitles, plays at the Bloor Cinema at midnight Saturday with director Liz Nord attending.

But even in a picture about punk rock, politics plays a big role: band members passionately hold differing views about religious laws, mandatory military service, Israeli politics and the choice between a guitar and a gun.

"Israeli movies are always political, no matter what they're about," notes Janice Kaye, who wrote the TJFF program.

The centrepiece of the Festival is the sold-out Canadian premiere on Sunday evening of **Protocols** of Zion, a film that explores conspiracy theories about Jews - including the charge that Jews who worked in the World Trade Center were warned not to work on 9/11 - and the long, tragic shadow of anti-semitism.

Directed by Marc **Levin**, **Protocols** made its debut at Sundance and will open in Toronto in the fall. After the screening, **Levin** will take the

stage, along with Mark Weitzman, coauthor of the book, *Dismantling the Big Lie: **Protocols** of the Elders of Zion*.

When festival director Helen Zukerman co-founded the event 13 years ago, there were 19 films. This year, there are 101 films from 19 countries, programmed by six different curators. "Number one," she says, "we're about good quality film.

"This year, we have films from Portugal, Germany, Italy," she says. "We have *Awake Zion*, about the tie between reggae and Jewish music and the black community." The quirkiest film, she says, is *Perla* - "about a family of Romanian dwarfs."

Zukerman says there are still new stories to be discovered. For example, *Wagner's Confession*, about an ex-Nazi who went to South America and converted to Judaism and no one knew of his background. Or *Edelweiss Pirates*, about German thugs who worked for the Resistance and were honoured by Israel's Yad Vashem. "I never heard about them until I watched the film," says Zukerman.

She acknowledges that "the Jewish community can be very political and the UJA (United Jewish Appeal) gets complaints. "Controversy?" she responds. "We love it!"

Controversy and the politics of the Jewish community are the focus of one of the four Canadian features at the Festival.

Not in My Name, directed by 27-year old Torontonians Igal Hecht, looks at the political split among Jews in the diaspora concerning Israel's policies.

"One of the points we bring out is that the moderate left has been silenced by the extreme left," says Hecht. "I find myself where many Jews are now. I used to be on the left, and would like to be on the moderate left, but unfortunately, I have extremists speaking in my name.

"What I attempted to do was to showcase the problems in our community and also make the Jewish community in North America aware that you can't just silence people on the left. You have to begin a dialogue with them or we're going to become a very polarized community."

You could call his documentary a cry from the middle. Hecht says he

made the film "because I felt it was an engaging story that really hasn't been told" And because he likes to look at "thorny issues nobody wants to discuss."

For a complete TJFF schedule, go to www.tjff.com.

CORRECTION-DATE: May 6, 2005

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Protocols of Zion makes its Canadian premiere at the Toronto Jewish Film Festival at 8 p.m. tomorrow, at the Bloor Cinema. The film will be followed by a discussion with director Marc **Levin**. Advance tickets are available at Sonic Boom, 512 Bloor St. W. See www.tjff.com for more details. A story said the film was sold out. The Star regrets the error.

GRAPHIC: Festival centrepiece is the sold-out Canadian premiere of **Protocols** of Zion, a film that explores conspiracy theories about Jews.

LOAD-DATE: May 9, 2005