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MOVIE REVIEWS



Table talk: Lesley Ann Warren and Michael Lerner

WHEN DO WE EAT?
Salvador Litvak, 2006

Our rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

- REVIEW
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REVIEW







Soul food

The shtick flies fast and furious in Salvador Litvak's comedy of family dysfunction, which unfolds over the course of a fractious Passover seder held at the luxurious home of Christmas-ornament mogul Ira Stuckman (Michael Lerner). Yes, a Jew who got rich selling Santa baubles to Christians — that's the kind of movie this is, a riot of ethnic cliches convinced it has enough heart and sloppy, life-affirming warmth to offset the schmaltz. And for all its excesses, it isn't entirely wrong. Ira prides himself on conducting the world's fastest seder, speed-dialing in the holy ritual so the family can get down to the business of bickering over dinner. But this year is different. Ira's quietly unhappy wife, Peggy (Lesley Ann Warren), has erected a humdinger of a seder tent in the yard, hoping to appease their piously judgmental son, Ethan (Max Greenfield), a onetime Wall Street hotshot who rediscovered his Hasidic roots right around the time he lost his fortune. Still smarting over Ira's long-past indiscretion with a coworker, she's contemplating a fling with studly Israeli tent-builder Rafi (Mark Ivanir), while Ethan still lusts in his heart for his first cousin once removed, Hollywood publicist Vanessa (Mili Avital), whose cell-phone ring is the "Hallelujah Chorus." Younger brother Zeke (Ben Feldman) is a pothead, big sister Nikki (Shiri Appleby) is a sex surrogate, and adopted son, Lionel (Adam Lamberg), is autistic and in thrall to the number 7. Ira's Holocaust-obsessed father (Jack Klugman) has never forgiven his son for abandoning the family hat business to sell tchotchkes to the goyim, while Jennifer (Meredith Scott Lynn), Ira's daughter from his first marriage, has never forgiven him for abandoning her and her mother to live in an *apartment* while her half siblings grew up in suburban splendor. Jennifer brings Grace (Cynda Williams), who is not only incontrovertible proof that Jennifer is a lesbian, but black and Christian as well. As a lamb roasts on a spit outside, the family shenanigans begin in earnest, starting with the tab of Ecstasy Zeke slips into Ira's antacid. With Passover-themed entertainment in short supply, Litvak's broad comedy has novelty on its side, and though the script never rises above sitcom-style one-liners and sight gags, strong performances invest both the jokes and the syrupy moments of forgiveness and reconciliation with no small measure of, yes, heart.

— Maitland McDonagh

Country of Origin:
 U.S.

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Genre:
Comedy

Color or b/w:
Color

Production Co(s):
Sneak Preview Entertainment; When Do We Eat? Inc.

Released By:
THINKFilm

MPAA Rating:
R

Parental Rating:
Cautionary; some scenes objectionable

Running Time:
86

CAST

[Michael Lerner](#)
Ira Stuckman

[Lesley Ann Warren](#)
Peggy Stuckman

[Jack Klugman](#)
Artur

[Meredith Scott Lynn](#)
Jennifer

[Shiri Appleby](#)
Nikki

[Mili Avital](#)
Vanessa

[Ben Feldman](#)
Zeke

[Adam Lamberg](#)
Lionel

[Max Greenfield](#)
Ethan

[Cynda Williams](#)
Grace

[Mark Ivanir](#)
Rafi

[Dan Bucatinsky](#)
High Strung Client

[Oscar Nunez](#)
Santa Designer

[Vickilyn Reynolds](#)
Talk Show Host

[Victoria Justice](#)
Young Nikki

[Kane Richotte](#)
Young Ethan

[Arman Manyan](#)
Ira as Young Boy

[Jeremy Glazer](#)
Young Artur

[Cantor Avshalom Katz](#)
Cantor 1

[Cantor Chaim "Erik" Goldberger](#)
Cantor 2

[Yehuda Solomon](#)
Cantor 3

[Lucca Fletcher](#)
David

[Tania Godfrey](#)
Ira's Mother

[Candace Zuchowski](#)

CREDITS

Producer
[Salvador Litvak](#)
[Steven J. Wolfe](#)

Exec. Producer
[Horatio C. Kemeny](#)

Co-Producer
[Amy Salko Robertson](#)

Director
[Salvador Litvak](#)

Writer
[Nina Davidovich](#)
[Salvador Litvak](#)

Editor
[Richard Halsey](#)

Musical Composer
[Mark Adler](#)

Production Designer
[Bernt Capra](#)

Costumes
[Carin Jacobs](#)

Stunts
[Robert Goodwin](#)

Cinematographer
[M. David Mullen](#)

- [Ira's Sister](#)
- [Brandon Waters](#)
- [Ira's Brother](#)
- [Caleb Anderson](#)
- [Ira as a Toddler](#)
- [Rabbi Shlomo "Schwartzie" Schwartz](#)
- [Moses](#)
- [Beth Ann Warren](#)
- [Young Peggy](#)
- [Jeff D'Agostino](#)
- [Shaffer](#)
- [Josh Weinstein](#)
- [Ira as Young Man](#)

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