



## Arts

### Salvador Litvak '87

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You've never seen a Passover quite like the one depicted in Salvador Litvak's '87 new movie, "When Do We Eat?" Things take a turn for the bizarre in Litvak's film when the rebellious offspring of a dysfunctional patriarch spike his seder wine with ecstasy and LSD. Outrageous hallucinations, manic behavior, and—unexpectedly—intergenerational reconciliation ensue. In Litvak's words, "This ain't your bubbe's Jewish comedy."

THE HARVARD CRIMSON: What was the inspiration for "When Do We Eat?"

SALVADOR LITVAK: In Hollywood you can make a living without ever getting a movie into theaters, and after several years of that I became frustrated. I decided to tackle a small project, a dinner party movie. I was going set it during Thanksgiving, but I am an observant Jew, and I realized that there are no Passover movies.

THC: Were you concerned that your film would not have appeal for non-Jewish audiences?

SL: I wasn't concerned about that. I believe that too many movies speak to nobody's experience because they try to speak to everybody's experience. You get at the universal through the specific. "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" and "Monsoon Wedding" were influences on "When Do We Eat?" Those movies are about the particularities of their respective cultures, but their themes are universal.

THC: How has your film been received?

SL: When we showed the film at Jewish festivals maybe 20 members of an audience of 200 were very upset by it. They were angered that our movie shows Jews behaving badly. They angry audience members were usually from the older generation that believed Jews should keep their noses down, shut up, and try not to get beaten or killed.

THC: Do you encounter any difficulties getting your film made?

SL: It's a known fact that Jews created Hollywood and that Jews still occupy many of the top positions. What that translates into is incredible difficulty getting a film about the Jewish experience made. It's part of the "keep your nose down" philosophy. This movie is part of the new wave of Jewish pride—like black pride or gay pride.

THC: Does your film offer a unique view of Jews or Judaism?

SL: I think that the movie explodes certain stereotypes about Jews: the men are not nebbishes and the women are sexy. As for Judaism, one of the central ideas of the movie comes from the Hassidic and cabalistic traditions. The notion that Passover is not only about this pharaoh who enslaved us 3000 years ago, but pharaoh is present in each and every one of us today. Pharaoh is whatever bad or destructive habit that prevents a person from becoming the man or woman that they would like to be.

THC: How would you pitch this movie to a Harvard student?

SL: Sex, drugs, and matzah ball soup. It ain't your bubbie's Jewish comedy. It's quite outrageous, but with a tremendous layer of depth beneath the surface.

—Bernard L. Parham