

## FILM CLIPS

Friday, July 29, 2005

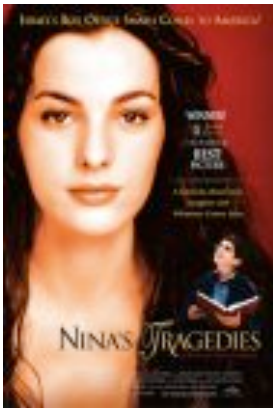
### 'Nina's Tragedies' (Asonot Shel Nina, Ha-)



Drama comedy. Directed, written and co-produced by Savi Gavison. Starring Ayelet July Zurer, Aviv Elkabets, Yoram Hatav, Shmil Ben-Ari, Anat Waxsman, Alon Aboutboul and Dov Navon. (Not rated. 110 minutes. In Hebrew with English subtitles. At the Opera Plaza.)

A teenager's coming-of-age story set in an Israel where sex and relationships are more important than anything else, "Nina's Tragedies" continues the run of recent Israeli films that are mostly apolitical -- and mostly worth shouting about.

"Nina's Tragedies" straddles the line between dark comedy and deep drama. The Nina in the movie's title is the beautiful aunt (Ayelet July Zurer) of the film's 14-year-old narrator, Nadav (Aviv Elkabets). Nadav is in love with Nina. Every chance he gets, he follows her and stares at her through her bedroom windows. Nina is unaware of her nephew's infatuation. She has too many things swirling around her life, most notably the tragic death of her husband and the sudden emergence of a suitor named Avinoam (Alon Aboutboul). With no one to confide in, except for an older Peeping Tom who shares his desire to look into Nina's window, Nadav keeps a detailed diary of his sexual desires and his escapades following his aunt.



Director Savi Gabivon weaves in layers of family subplots that keep intersecting and producing small twists. For example, Nadav's father, Amnon (Shmil Ben-Ari), with whom he has a rocky relationship, is brought to school one day because an administrator has found Nadav's diary and dislikes the sexual provocation in it. Amnon, who is surrounded by fellow Hassidim, lives separately from Nadav's mother, a cranky woman who takes in lovers without apparent concern for the effect these relationships have on her teenage son. Nadav seems the only one in the film without intimate connections, so it's not surprising he projects all his feelings

(including jealousy) onto Nina.

It's easy to see why "Nina's Tragedies" won 11 Israeli Academy Awards. The dry humor is disarming. The ensemble cast is engaging and interesting to watch. And the main plot, as it were (will Nadav and Nina find respective happiness?), is suspenseful. What's as remarkable is the music. Asaf Amdursky, one of Israel's most accomplished young DJs and musicians, composed all the music in "Nina's Tragedies." Sad, emotional and beautiful, it enters the bloodstream of nearly every scene, turning some of them (like the one of a rainy funeral) into sweet poetry.

-- Advisory: Occasional harsh language, scenes showing sex, and shots of a nude man and woman.

-- Jonathan Curiel

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/07/29/DDGRNDUJC41.DTL#nina>