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11 Israeli Academy Awards
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**“A BEAUTIFULLY
SOULFUL
TRAGICOMEDY!”**

- Ella Taylor, LA WEEKLY

A comedy about love, laughter and whatever comes after.



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NINA'S TRAGEDIES

האסונות של נינה

A film by SAVI GABIZON

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Winner of 11 Israeli Academy Awards, writer/director Savi Gabizon's serio-comic look at an Israeli teenager's coming-of-age and his attraction to his beautiful but emotionally fragile Aunt Nina flawlessly shifts tones between eccentric whimsy and wistful poignancy. Set over a span of six years in modern Tel Aviv, **Nina's Tragedies** explores the rejuvenating powers of love.

ISRAEL • 2003 • 110 mins • Color • In Hebrew with English subtitles

ACHY OBEJAS



★★★★☆ (out of 4)

Watching “Nina’s Tragedies,” an Israeli film that pocketed 11 of its country’s Oscar-equivalents, is a rare but almost perverse experience.

The whole time you’re thinking, what would Hollywood have done with its youthful protagonist, a 14-year-old who writes down the sexually charged fantasies he has about his aunt? Or, imagine Hollywood explaining that boy’s friendship with a man at least 15 or 20 years his senior with whom he goes on voyeuristic expeditions? Or, wait, how about the guy who looks exactly—I mean exactly—like the aunt’s dead husband who strolls the city naked? Or the fact that the boy’s voyeur pal and the naked guy are involved in an unspoken menage a trois with a funky Eastern European woman?

“Nina’s Tragedies” is full of gentle, labyrinthian turns, sly and sweet. It centers around Nadav (Aviv Elkabets), a nerdy 14-year-old whose parents—she’s a fashion designer, he’s an orthodox Jew who’s dying—separate. Dad (Shmil Ben-Ari) goes off to yeshiva, Mom (Anat Waxsman) wants to have adventures. In the midst of it all, Nadav’s gorgeous aunt Nina (Ayelet July Zurer) is widowed when her husband is blown away by terrorists. Nadav is sent off to comfort her.

Things are complicated almost from the start, when the photographer accompanying the soldiers who’ve come to notify Nina of the death is the one who inadvertently delivers the news. Not just a romantic but a gooey sentimentalist, Avinoam (Alon Aboutboul) comes back for shiva, girlfriend and homemade jam in tow, to give Nina his personal condolences. Of course, Nadav notices that Avinoam and his aunt have some sort of spark, even during this dreadful time. And of course Nina and Avinoam get together.

Avinoam is immediately head over heels, but Nina’s overwhelmed with guilt. She shuts herself off, she imagines she hallucinates her dead husband naked on the city streets. All along, Nadav watches and pines, peeps through her window and keeps her secrets (and that of the naked guy).

The film suggests, even verges on, magic realism, but never crosses the line. That choice is infinitely braver, not only because it then has to deal with explanations—or their absence—and some sort of logic, but also because, in the end, it makes a rather poignant point about everyday life in a city and country where violence is also every day, and the absurdity of death is as common as a kiss.

Director Savi Gabizon miraculously pulls off his mission with aplomb. There’s a lightness to this film that, rather than dumb it down, actually makes it smarter. It assumes we, as an audience, know that life is complicated and not always meant to be explained. It seems to say, “Look at this mystery... its pain and its banal joys.”

“Nina’s Tragedies” is unfortunately titled; better it had been called “Nadav’s Longing,” as it would have captured perfectly the inner ache here, and the pride of feeling it.

NINA’S TRAGEDIES

Written (in Hebrew, with English subtitles) and directed by Savi Gabizon; director of photography, Daviv Gurfinkel; edited by Tali Halter Shenkar; produced by Anat Assoulin. Running time: 110 minutes. This film is not rated.

WITH: Ayelet July Zurer (Nina), Aviv Elkabets (Nadav), Yoram Hataav (Haimon), Shmil Ben-Ari (Amnon), Anat Waxsman (Alona), Alon Aboutboul (Avinoam) and Dov Navon (Menahem).

Available in DVD, VHS and 35mm to universities, museums & other non-theatrical customers. (A performance license is required to show this film...please inquire)

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