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Disability film festival in Jerusalem

By RUTH EGLASH
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Over 50 films to be screened at Cinematheque.

It might be one of the least accessible locations in the capital, but for the next three days the Jerusalem Cinematheque has been transformed to accommodate those with a variety of disabilities planning to attend the country's first-ever film festival focusing on the disabled.

"Most of the films we are screening show people with disabilities who are looking to find their place in society, whether it is in their studies, in their family, in the workplace or something else," producer Moshe Yona, who is presenting the film festival under the auspices of the nonprofit organization Shekel, told The Jerusalem Post on Tuesday.

More than 50 full-length feature films will be screened at the festival, Yona said, "Showing that people with disabilities are creative and want to be part of the world around them."

While films such as *What's Eating Gilbert Grape* (1993), starring Johnny Depp as a confused teen who cares for his mentally retarded, autistic brother (Leonardo DiCaprio) and *Shine* (1996), the Oscar-winning true story from Australia of mentally ill pianist David Helfgott, as well as a range of documentaries, features and shorts, will show the world from the viewpoint of someone with a disability, it is the physical work and the NIS 100,000 that went into making the Cinematheque accessible that is most astounding.

According to Yona, organizers worked hard with the municipality and the Cinematheque to ensure the premises were not only made wheel-chair accessible – a new entrance to the movie house was opened up via Liberty Bell Park – but also that state-of-the-art technology was installed to allow those with sight and hearing difficulties to enjoy the festival.

"We had to rip out a row of chairs in the main auditorium so that those in wheelchairs will be able to sit more comfortably," Yona explained. "We also worked hard with a team of volunteers who will be on hand at the festival to help out those with disabilities."

The festival will bestow a special award for film to a disabled artist. In addition, six international producers will attend the screenings of their films and six international academics will give presentations on related topics.

Titled "Reframing Reality," the festival is sponsored by the Jerusalem Foundation, the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services, the Foreign Ministry, the US Embassy and the Jerusalem Municipality, among others.

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