



Director Paul Mazursky travels from 'Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice' to the grave of a Ukrainian rabbi dead for nearly 200 years

Hollywood to Uman

WHAT A LONG STRANGE TRIP



Director Paul Mazursky on the set of "Yippee."

Paul Mazursky filmography:

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| "Yippee" (2006) | "Willie and Phil" (1980) |
| "Faithful" (1996) | "An Unmarried Woman" (1978) |
| "The Pickle" (1993) | "Next Stop, Greenwich Village" (1976) |
| "Scenes from a Mall" (1991) | "Harry and Tonto" (1974) |
| "Enemies: A Love Story" (1989) | "Blume in Love" (1973) |
| "Moon Over Parador" (1988) | "Alex in Wonderland" (1970) |
| "Down and Out in Beverly Hills" (1986) | "Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice" (1969) |
| "Moscow on the Hudson" (1984) | "Last Year at Malibu" (1962) |
| "Tempest" (1982) | |

BY JUDITH SALKIN
THE DESERT SUN

Right off the bat Paul Mazursky tells you he's a secular Jew, not an observant nor a religious fanatic. So why would he join in a worldwide migration to a tiny village in the Ukraine to celebrate Rosh Hashanah with 25,000 rabidly religious Jews? "Curiosity," he says.

The master filmmaker, who also brought "Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice" and "Down and Out in Beverly Hills" to the screen, documented the trek in "Yippee — A Journey to Jewish Joy." The film screens twice at the Palm Springs International Film Festival — at 4:30 p.m. today at the Annenberg Theater and at 12:30 p.m. Monday at Regal Palm Springs.

Mazursky is narrator and star of the film, but for a guy with such charisma, he doesn't hog the screen.

The genesis for the journey to the small Ukrainian town of Uman, where thousands of Hasidim gather to daven (pray) at the burial place of the revered Rabbi Nachman, was Mazursky's relationship with his optometrist, David Miretsky.

"I've known David for three years and he kept talking about this place," he says.

Throughout the film, Mazursky is mildly mystified but ever curious by the gathering of Jewish men and the fact



COURTESY PHOTOS

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that at Rosh Hashanah, this is a 99 percent male affair. "The women come at other times, but not at Rosh Hashanah," he says.

We are also introduced to a small cast of characters whom Mazursky interviews about the journey and the reason the men make it.

Before the journey, he interviews Miretsky, Moroccan rocker Schmuely Levy and Rabbi Ezriel Tauber about why they make the journey. In Uman, he talks to locals who welcome the pilgrims and catches up not only with Miretsky and Tauber, but also with British neurosurgeon Julian Unger, who tells us the history behind why Reb Nachman is buried in Uman. Seeing the banks of a lake lined with bobbing men in the throes of religious devotion is fascinating. As for the experience, Mazursky says it hasn't changed him or his views on Judaism.

"It taught me more about tolerance," he says. "And I met some wonderful people, people who fed us and took us into their hearts. I'd love to show this to Mel Gibson. But I'm not crazy about this stuff. Would I go back? I'd like to do a film about the women, but I don't know if they'd let me."