

Film Review: Individualism in ‘Menashe’ Challenges the Tribe

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 15, 2017 - 11:13am

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CHICAGO – We all belong to something, be it a family, workplace, congregation or (expansively) a tribe. But within all that belonging is a sometimes nagging feeling of being an outsider. There is not a human being in existence that hasn't felt that way, and a new film expresses that feeling in “Menashe.”



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

The title is a character, a Hasidic Orthodox Jewish man whose wife had died, and due to tribal/religious tradition has lost the right to care for his son. He is the outsider in a very strict religious order, with a dogma that affects virtually every element of his difficult life. In another world, that type of individual would simply walk away, but within this closed society Menashe fights to exist and express, often taking matters destructively into his own hands. The film is unique, funny, sad and wise, plus gives audience outsiders a glimpse into a tribal world that is often viewed as weird and impenetrable, but is actually made of up of another tribe that we all recognize... human beings.

The introduction of Menashe (Menashe Lustig, whose life was loosely based on the main character) exposes a broken man in the most concentrated Hasidic district in America... Borough Park, Brooklyn. He has been widowed for a year and by Hasidic tradition can no longer care for his son (Ruben Niborski), who he adores. He works a lousy job as a clerk in a grocery, and doesn't want to start the process for remarriage, which is arranged by matchmakers.

He is constantly fighting battles with Eizik (Yoel Weisshaus), his wife's brother-in-law, who is his son's current caregiver, and he is fighting the traditions that plagued the Orthodox sect of Judaism that he practices. With the first anniversary of his wife's death looming, he insists on providing the memorial dinner, providing a spark he hasn't had in awhile.

“Menashe” continued its nationwide release in Chicago on August 11th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Menashe Lustig, Meyer Schwartz, Yoel Weisshaus and Ruben Niborski. Written by Joshua Z Weinstein, Alex Lipschultz and Musa Syeed. Directed by Joshua Z Weinstein. Rated “PG”



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The Title Character (Menashe Lustig) and his Son (Rueben Niborski) in ‘Menashe’
Photo credit: A24

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