Ordinary Palestinians Struggle for Economic Survival
In “9 Star Hotel” On P.O.V., Tuesday, July 22 on PBS

Popular Israeli Film Is Moving Account of Young Men
Who Sneak Across Borders and Dodge Police to Find Work

“9 Star Hotel’ resists casting [the Palestinians] as victims, or their unseen Israeli employers and security forces as demons. Rather, it presents – without rancor and with deep pathos – the irony of dispossessed young men . . . building someone else’s future.” – Ann Hornaday,
The Washington Post

MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET

National Air Date: Tuesday, July 22, 2008 at 10 p.m. on PBS. (Check local listings.) The P.O.V. series (a cinema term for “point of view”), now in its 21st year on PBS, is broadcast June through October, with prime time specials in the fall and winter.

Summary: 9 Star Hotel by Ido Haar
July 22, 2008, 1 hour
9 Star Hotel documents the lives of a group of young Palestinian men working illegally as construction laborers in the Israeli city of Modi’in. Caught between Israeli security laws and a Palestinian Authority they see as having failed them, they work for Israeli contractors by day while hiding from police by night. Like youths everywhere, they pass their idle hours talking about love, marriage and future hopes. Israeli filmmaker Ido Haar has crafted a powerful vérité film that illuminates the plight of young men questioning their own culture while struggling to survive in the midst of bitter conflict.

Filmmaker’s Statement: I grew up in a village on the edge of a pine forest, half way between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. On my way home, I often saw men running frantically across the highway. The fear in their eyes haunted me and I wanted to find out where they are running to, and whom they are running from.

I discovered that the forest — my own backyard — serves as a hideout for thousands of Palestinians looking for work in Israel. I found a secret camp on the other side of the forest, but didn’t find any people. Whenever I came around, they would flee. My persistence made them curious, and eventually they stayed put. Since then, I have been documenting a vibrant community of young men and the impossibly hard and strangely wonderful lives they live.

My camera follows two best friends. Muhammad is the charismatic leader, the one who always has the answers. Ahmed is the childish one, the boy who wants someone to tell
him what to do. I spend nights and days with them, experiencing, as much as an outsider can, a life of fear, uncertainty, madness, and grace; trying to understand how despite their circumstances, which to me seem unlivable — in the open, in the dark, away from home and family — they live and not only survive.

Bio:  
Ido Haar, Director  
Ido Haar was born in 1974 in Jerusalem. His credits include two shorts, “Step by Step” and “Tricks.” His first feature-length documentary, “Melting Siberia,” received a Special Mention at the Jerusalem International Film Festival in 2004.

P.O.V.  
Web:  
9 Star Hotel companion website (www.pbs.org/pov/9starhotel) offers a streaming video version of the entire film, trailers, an interview with filmmaker Ido Haar (video, podcast and text); a list of related Web sites, organizations and books; a downloadable discussion guide and classroom activity; and the following special features:

Book Excerpt  
Context: The Hyperborder in a Globalized World  
The spreading concern for national security has galvanized a renewed focus on border issues around the world, further sharpening autonomous and protective tendencies. In order to explore the various approaches to managing border relations in our globalized world, we present the first chapter of the new book, Hyperborder: The Contemporary U.S.-Mexico Border and its Future to provide examples of border relations ranging from hostile to cooperative, and illustrate the types of issues that can either plague a region or make it prosper.

Outreach:  
P.O.V. is working with public television stations and national and community-based groups across the country to foster community dialogue around the issues presented in 9 Star Hotel. For a list of upcoming screening and discussion events, go to: http://www.amdoc.org/outreach_news.php

P.O.V. also works with nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow to develop a facilitation guide with discussion questions and background information to help event organizers carry out discussions around the film’s content. Cari Ladd has created the lesson plan. Shaun Briley, of the San Diego Public Library, has compiled a multimedia resource list of related fiction and nonfiction books and videos that further explore the issues. The materials are available free of charge at: www.amdoc.org/outreach.

Length: 56:46

Festivals:  
Jerusalem International Film Festival, 2006 - Best Documentary  
Buenos Aires Ninth Festival Internacional de Cine, Independiente Human Rights Film Competition, Argentina, 2007 - Best Film Award  
Munich International Documentary Film Festival, 2007 - Best Documentary Award  
Vancouver International Documentary Film Festival (Canada), 2007 - Best Feature Documentary Award  
Madrid International Documentary Film Festival Spain, 2007- Audience Award  
Shanghai TV Festival, China, 2007 - Social Documentary Golden Award
Festival international de films de Fribourg, Switzerland, 2007 - Special Mention

Sixth Alba International Film Festival, Italy, 2007 - Special Mention

IDFA International Documentary Film Festival, Netherlands, 2006

Göteborg International Film Festival, Sweden, 2007 - Official Selection

DocPoint Helsinki Documentary Film Festival, Finland, 2007 - Official Selection

Melbourne International Film Festival, Australia, 2007 - Official Selection

European film awards; European film academy Documentary 2007 -- Prix Arte, Germany – Nominee

Credits:
Director/writer: Ido Haar
Producers: Edna Kowarsky, Elinor Kowarsky
Cinematographers: Ido Haar, Uri Ackerman
Editors: Era Lapid, Ido Haar

9 Star Hotel is a Koch Lorber Films release of an Eden Production.


P.O.V.: Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 21st season on PBS in 2008, the award-winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running showcase on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. Airing Tuesdays at 10 p.m., June through October, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought more than 250 award-winning documentaries to millions nationwide, and has a Webby Award-winning online series, P.O.V.'s Borders. Since 1988, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information about P.O.V is available at www.pbs.org/pov..

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by PBS, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The Educational Foundation of America, The Fledgling Fund, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, The September 11th Fund, and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s Diverse Voices Project is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston and Thirteen/WNET New York.

DVD REQUESTS: Please note that a broadcast version of this film is available upon request, as the film may be edited to comply with new FCC regulations.