Covering the 32nd Cleveland Annual International Film Festival this year in terms of women did have to mean covering films made by men. These three were just too important to overlook because men directed them, especially in terms of the image of Jewish women.

Reviewer: Batya Weinbaum, Center for Distance Learning, Empire State College-SUNY, Saratoga Springs, NY, USA

*Swing State*
USA 2008, 90 minutes. Directed by Jason Zone Fisher, John Intrator, H. Spencer Young.

*Swing State* was made in Ohio by the son of the current Jewish Lieutenant Governor of Ohio, Lee Fisher. Jason Zone Fisher was fourteen when he first started filming his family during his father’s gubernatorial races, and twenty-four by the time he was sitting up there on stage with his two friends from Syracuse University film school acknowledging the supportive role of his family and having his mother speak up from the back row in the audience. Especially in the election year when we have been able to see a major candidate speak for herself, and not just support her husband’s dream, watching this film will be important in reinforcing the importance of feminist involvement in Hillary’s campaign and in the ground floor of democratic politics at least even if Obama has won the nomination by the time this article reaches print.

Since many of us are only treated to the negative ins and outs of the Obama/Clinton competition, it was very interesting to me to see an inside look on how negative politics are engineered on the campaign trail. And to understand the tremendous role of standing up and fighting against the kind of corruption we saw in Blackwell who basically promised and delivered the 04 presidency to Bush.

*Jerusalem Is Proud to Present*
Israel 2007 82 minutes. Directed by Nitzan Gilady.

Again directed by a man, this film is too important to miss as it also presents a starkly different image of women than we get through, say, *The Nation*, with a recent advertisement showing the faces of three prominent empowered mainstream Israeli women, as if this were somehow representative of Israel in general. And ad which admittedly *Ms Magazine* refused to print, and about which there was much controversy spearheaded by the editor of *Bridges*.

This film, rather, shows the patient and long term organizing efforts of many normally invisible people in Jerusalem’s LGBT community to bring World Pride to Jerusalem in 2006. Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders united to block the event, bringing posters to the walls of Jerusalem, death threats to the organizers, nasty debate to *Knesset* and Jerusalem City Council, and petitions to the streets as well as regular protest demonstrations on street corners.
and eventually a riot in which police cars were overthrown and burned as the religious men following the rabbis paraded goats through the streets in protest of the bestiality they claimed was being brought to desecrate the Holy City.

We see the gentle persistence of lesbian organizers going through with the details of trying to reach a compromise with the police, the testiness of the mother of a gay Jewish man who was stabbed by a religious fanatic in another gay parade who does not want him to get hurt, the equally testy persistence of a religious woman continuing unabashedly with her petitioning against the gay gathering, the proud mother of the lesbian who continues her organizing, the sadness of the Palestinian dag queen who has to flee his country for his survival.

All those in attendance left the theater very depressed because the right wing religious had gotten their way; the march did not happen, except in a contained stadium under armed protection. At least they got the protection, and at least of those outside Jerusalem became appreciative of the freedom we have.

The Galilee Eskimos


A film directed by a man but important not to miss, in terms of gender, and particularly in terms of images of Jewish women, this film relates the imaginative tale of the founding generation of a kibbutz abandoned by the subsequent generations, literally, the elderly founding members wake up to find that everyone but the Chinese worker has moved out on them, and a milk cow. While the recent advertisement in The Nation placed by the American Jewish Congress depicts Dorit Beinisch, President, Supreme Court of Israel; Tzipi Livni, Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs; and Dalia Itzik, Speaker of the Knesset, with the title “This Is Israel,” the women depicted in this film made by a son of some of the founders of the kibbutz movement deserve recognition as part of Israel too.

The women in the film take a part in trying to save the day, resisting the move of the developers who are buying the foreclosed land from the bank. They develop schemes equally with the men. One is urged to call one of her rich old lovers which she does. When she asks for millions, he agrees, only to have the phone taken away from him by a nurse who says the client cannot take phone calls and has Alzheimer’s disease.

The women conduct formal business at final meetings, flirt with old flings, finally connect with lovers they always wanted to, and sing “The International” in the kitchen with the Chinese help, as the kitchen is still not a place often frequented by their own men.

One of the women decides to leave and take the offer to be put up nicely in an old age home, only to return to her friends because she missed them. We are treated to footage of the original days of the movement, including glimpses into the children’s sleeping quarters, and the common showers. The good old days are remembered; the men seem silly as they try to fight to protect their turf from real estate developers with weapons from old wars and the...
women get active in a new cooperative industry, the farming of worms to sell to fishermen, until hopes are dashed.

Sadly, they all take the van off to the old age home in the end, after one of the men commits suicide. But we have seen them struggle to hold on to the cooperative dream of egalitarian living, right up until the end. A must see, for anyone interested in community studies as well as aging and sexuality which the film thoroughly explores.