



# GOLDEN VOICES



2019 – Israel – Comedy – 88 Minutes  
In Hebrew and Russian with English Subtitles

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# LOGLINE

Raya and Victor built a shared career as the Soviet Union's most beloved film dubbers. As the USSR collapses, the couple must immigrate to Israel and start anew by putting their vocal talents to unexpected use in the underground economy.

# SYNOPSIS

Raya (Maria Belkin) and Victor (Vladimir Friedman) built a shared career as the Soviet Union's most beloved film dubbers, translating the work of Federico Fellini and Stanley Kubrick into Russian over the decades. Upon the collapse of the USSR in 1990, the Jewish couple must immigrate to Israel and reinvent themselves to find employment. As they strive to acclimate to their adopted home, opportunities for first-rate vocal performances are few and far between. Raya answers a help wanted ad searching for women with "pleasant voices" and finds herself catering to a lonely Russian community as a phone-sex operator, while Victor falls in with a band of black market film pirates from the VHS underground. A charming comedy about disrupting old dynamics, starting anew, and rediscovering yourself in the most unexpected places. GOLDEN VOICES is also a stirring tribute to the redemptive power of cinema.



# EVGENY RUMAN

DIRECTOR & CO-SCREENWRITER



Evgeny Ruman is an Israeli film director and writer. Born in the former USSR in 1979, Ruman and his family later immigrated to Israel in 1990. He studied Film and TV at TelAviv University where he wrote and directed several short films. Evgeny is the recipient of the Excellence Award from the Israeli Ministry of Culture for contribution to Israeli film (2013), and a recipient of the Stern Award for Immigrant Artists from the Israeli Ministry of Immigration & Absorption (2014). Evgeny is the creator, head scriptwriter, and director of the first Russian language TV series that aired in Israel, *Between the Lines*. His directorial debut feature film, *Igor and the Cranes' Journey* (2012), premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and received awards at the Chicago, Haifa, and Minsk film festivals. His second feature film, *The Man in the Wall* (2015), premiered at the Rotterdam International Film Festival. His third feature film *Ruby Strangelove* was released in 2016. *Golden Voices* is Ruman's latest release.

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# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I came to Israel in 1990 when I was a kid with my family. Going to the cinema was too expensive, so the films I had seen in my first years in Israel were from illegal video libraries for Russian speakers. This is when my love of cinema was born – watching bleak pirate copies that were shot directly from cinema screens and amateurishly dubbed. I was a kid in a strange country and the world of films was the best escape from the harsh reality. Nowadays, being a part of Israeli society and the film industry, I like to look back at the past from a different perspective and turn it into a movie. This film was born from a love of cinema, but while developing the project I discovered it expresses something much bigger than that – the story of grown people that had to reinvent themselves completely in order to start a new life in Israel. The story of my parents.

I see this film as a sad comedy. I believe this story has very touching human moments, as well as very funny and entertaining ones. I want the viewers to experience both fully while watching the film. I certainly would prefer to get the audience to laugh out loud rather than just smile during the most absurd and funniest moments in the film, just as I want them to be deeply engaged in the dramatic storylines and maybe even shed a tear. The story is told in a simple, clean way. Shot in cinemascope wide lenses, the images are rich in details, telling the story visually. In addition to the dialogue and music, we use the point of view of the protagonists – so the audience can have the same experience as Victor and Raya.

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# INTERVIEW WITH SCREENWRITERS

## EVGENY RUMAN & ZIV BERKOVICH

### **GOLDEN VOICES ends with a dedication to your parents. How did their immigrant experience inform the film?**

Evgeny Ruman: Our parents, just as hundreds of thousand immigrants who came to Israel as adults, had to reinvent themselves, professionally and personally. And this is, I think, the main subject of the film and the journey that the protagonists have to accomplish in order to have a future, not only a past.

Ziv Berkovich: Our parents had a great part in the experience we had when we immigrated. Of course, all our memories of that time were partially through them and their experience of immigration. The city we lived in, the school we went to, it was all their decision that shaped our experiences that took form and peaked in our film.

### **Film-dubbing was and remains widespread in Russia. How much of the story of Raya and Victor is based on fact? How did you research this era and this profession?**

Evgeny Ruman: Some of the elements are true, some are fiction, but we didn't invent anything - we researched the subject, eventually allowing ourselves an element of artistic freedom.

Ziv Berkovich: Around 11 years ago, I met a dubbing couple and it sparked my imagination about my own experience with the black market videotape stores. Of course, they had nothing to do with piracy but it did inspire me to think about my experience and how they helped introduce me to films. And then of course it all blended with the immigration tales of our families.



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**The film has an infectious sense of cinephilia--not just a love of the movies themselves, but the experience of anticipating them, chasing them down. When did you start watching movies? Did you see them theatrically, or through black market VHS tapes like we see in **GOLDEN VOICES**?**

**Evgeny Ruman:** In Israel it was definitely the black market tapes. Going to the cinema was too expensive for new immigrants. Also, it was subtitled in Hebrew, a language we didn't process well enough for several years. Our love for movies was born then, watching the bleak, shaky copies poorly filmed from a cinema screen and extremely poorly dubbed.

**Ziv Berkovich:** When we came to Israel, the country wasn't ready to take in that amount of people from all ages. As a young child, I had no resources to watch film or even to participate in any activities as the whole program was in Hebrew, a language I didn't learn yet, so a black market started. I remember myself going to a small videotape store and taking the films that were currently in the theaters. It was filmed from the crowd, bad quality, bad sound, bad dubbing (I guess) but even so, I fell in love with cinema.



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**So much of the critical conversation around cinema focuses on actors, directors, and writers. *GOLDEN VOICES* is refreshing in its sensitivity towards the less glamorous end of the business, the folks with workaday industry jobs. In the world of your film, dubbers are recognized by a mass audience as if they're auteurs in their own right. Is that Victor's personal delusion, or a reflection of their stature in this period?**

Evgeny Ruman: That's probably Victor's delusion, which is a reflection of him as a character, trying to prove himself and the world that he's doing something meaningful.

**Victor's veneration of Federico Fellini is touching. How popular were Fellini's films among Soviet Jews in this era? His films are so rooted in Catholicism, even if it's treated irreverently.**

Evgeny Ruman: He was one of a few foreign directors who was pretty well known, and some of his films were accessible for the public. As one scene in the film tells, *8 1/2* won the Moscow Film Festival. I think for most of the Soviet cinephiles then he was considered to be the greatest name in cinema those days.

**Raya finds a job as a phone sex operator, but she's offering much more to her clients than sex. She's helping them navigate an unfamiliar society. It also seems like a novelty for some of her clients. How did the Israel attitude towards sex and intimacy compare to the status quo in the USSR?**

Evgeny Ruman: It's a big difference, of course. There's a famous phrase from some TV show that became very catchy in USSR: "In Soviet Union, there's no sex." In Israel, the attitude was like it is in most Western countries, much more open and exposed. I think for most of the former Soviet citizens it was quite a shock.

Ziv Berkovich: For Israeli audience it is totally open and frank, I think for the USSR people who came here it was a bit of a shock, mostly to know and acknowledge that those stories might've happened.

# INTERVIEW WITH SCREENWRITERS

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**In the US, the collapse of the Soviet Union was treated as a triumphant moment for capitalism and democracy. Was it perceived more ambivalently in Israel in 1990?**

Evgeny Ruman: Hard to say... I just arrived in 1990 and I was a kid. But I think the Israeli attitude was pretty similar to the American one.

Ziv Berkovich: I was 6 years old so it's hard for me to answer from my own experience.

**GOLDEN VOICES is a small, intimate movie about a couple, but there were many ex-Soviet emigres like Raya and Victor. How did the mass migration of Russian Jews in the early 1990s impact Israeli society as a whole? The scale of the migration, relative to the Israeli population, was pretty staggering.**

Evgeny Ruman: It made a huge difference and gave Israel a great boost in all areas, except the arts maybe. The number of Russian-speaking Israeli artists who are well known and established is very small.

Ziv Berkovich: The ex-Soviet immigrants created a new and different order in Israel. Thousands of people came at once to a small country and changed the demographic and economic shape of society. People from the academy, from arts, and culture came and had a huge urge to start their lives here.



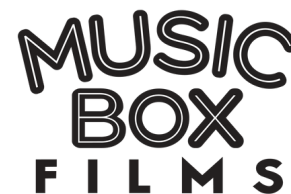
# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Israel was founded in 1948 as a Jewish homeland in the aftermath of World War II. Beginning in 1950, Israel's **Law of Return** codified this Zionist aspiration, allowing Jews from anywhere in the world to immigrate to Israel and become Israeli citizens. This process of migration from the greater Jewish diaspora to the state of Israel is known as **aliyah**.

In practice, however, Jews were not always free to emigrate from their home countries, even if Israeli was willing to accept them under the Law of Return. The **Soviet Union** routinely denied exit visas to Russian Jews and often penalized those who sought such visas, severely limiting opportunities for aliyah.

Beginning in 1989, with the Soviet Union in terminal decline, Mikhail Gorbachev liberalized the emigration process for Russian Jews. Although some Russian Jews chose to immigrate elsewhere, including the US, the majority of émigrés opted to become Israeli citizens. The aliyah was slow at first: in 1989 only 12,117 Russian Jews opted to immigrate to Israel, but the number jumped to 185,227 in 1990. As many Russian Jews immigrated to Israel in that single year as had moved there over the past two decades. Over the next fifteen years, Israel absorbed roughly 970,000 Russian Jews from the former USSR.

The scale of Russian immigration in this period, relative to Israel's population, is striking and has no comparable analog in recent American history. In 1990, the country's population comprised 4.7 million Israelis and approximately 2 million Palestinians. Jews from the former Soviet Union soon became a powerful constituency in Israeli politics, forming new parties such as **Yisrael BaAliyah** and **Yisrael Beiteinu**. The influx of Russian Jews had a significant impact on Israeli culture and politics.

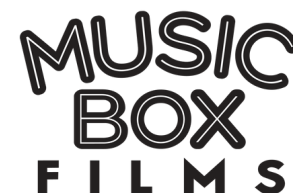




# FILMOGRAPHY

## EVGENY RUMAN

2019 *GOLDEN VOICES* | FEATURE  
2016 *RUBY STRANGELOVE* | FEATURE  
2015 *THE MAN IN THE WALL* | FEATURE  
2012 *IGOR & THE CRANES' JOURNEY* | FEATURE  
2010 *LENIN IN OCTOBER* | TV FILM  
2009 *BETWEEN THE LINES* | TV SERIES  
2006 *NES (MIRACLE)* | SHORT FILM



# CAST

Raya Frenkel	Maria Belkin
Victor Frenkel	Vladimir Friedman
Dvora	Evelin Hagoel
Shaul	Uri Klauzner
Irina	Nadia Kucher
Shurik	Vitali Voskoboinikov
Gera	Alexander Senderovich
Nadia	Elizabeth Kon



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# CREW

DIRECTOR Evgeny Ruman  
SCRIPT Evgeny Ruman, Ziv Berkovich  
EDITOR Evgeny Ruman  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Ziv Berkovich  
CASTING BY Sandra Guttmann  
ART DIRECTION BY Rona Doron  
COSTUME DESIGN BY Carmit Buzaglo  
MAKEUP DEPARTMENT Dani Cohen  
VISUAL EFFECTS BY Michael Goorevich  
SOUND DESIGNER AND RE-RECORDING MIXER Asher Goldschmidt  
ORIGINAL MUSIC Avarham Pirchi, Chilik Michaeli, Tami Leon,  
PRODUCERS Eitan Evan, Moshe Edery, Leon Edery  
PRODUCED BY United Channels Movies, Evanstone Films





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## ABOUT MUSIC BOX FILMS

Music Box Films is the award-winning North American distributor of acclaimed international, independent, and documentary feature films. Recent releases include Pablo Larrain's *Emilia*, François Ozon's *Summer of 85*, and Haifaa Al-Mansour's *The Perfect Candidate*. Upcoming releases include Sebastien Lifshitz's *Little Girl*, Evgeny Ruman's *Golden Voices*, and Albert Birney and Kentucker Audley's *Strawberry Mansion*. Since 2007, Music Box Films has positioned itself as a prestige label for renowned films like *Ida* (Academy Award winner for Best Foreign Film), *Meru* (from Oscar-winning filmmakers Jimmy Chin and E. Chai Vaserhelyi), and as the North American home for acclaimed foreign films like Christian Petzold's *Transit*, the popular Swedish comedy *A Man Called Ove* and the original *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* starring Noomi Rapace. Music Box Films, along with their OTT platform Music Box Direct, are independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates the Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premier venue for independent and foreign films. For more information, visit [www.musicboxfilms.com](http://www.musicboxfilms.com).





