

LEAVING AMERICA TO RETURN TO AN OLD WORLD OF ROSE-COLORED MEMORY /

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Body

The immigrants stand on the deck of the ship in New York harbor, raptly contemplating the Manhattan skyline and all the dreams it represents. Countless films have used the image, but the difference in *Auf Wiedersehen Amerika* is that these immigrants are going, not coming.

And that makes a very big difference in Jan Schutte's droll and delightful comedy, which hinges on the discovery that you can't go home again if you are not sure where your home is. For Isaak, an accountant from Vienna, and Moshe and Genovefa, his married friends from Poland, this revelation involves experiences that are by turns painful and hilarious.

The movie upends the conventions and cliches of abandoning one's roots and starting over in the New World with slyly subversive humor and some knowing insights. The three main characters live in Brighton Beach, an enclave that makes it possible to cling to the old country and its languages and customs. English makes only perfunctory appearances in the babel of languages on the streets.

And, as *Auf Wiedersehen* brings out in some richly crafted scenes, the refusal to integrate into mainstream America encourages a habit of looking back at Eastern Europe through glasses that are very rose-colored. In effect, it can strand the unwary between two cultures and countries in a way that is jolting and unnerving.

The trio decides to undertake the journey to Poland for different reasons. Isaak's boss runs a scam out of a garment sweatshop, and when the police raid the place, he fears being wrongly blamed for cooking the books. By the time he reaches Poland, Isaak has elevated his lowly fugitive status to public enemy No. 1, and tells the unimpressed natives that the entire FBI is after him.

Genovefa, who is Christian, wants to see her old village and the priest she once served as a housekeeper. Moshe, her reluctant companion in just about every aspect of their marriage, declines to make the side trip and pursues his own hustling agenda.

Auf Wiedersehen moves fluently between these interlocking stories, and it is particularly touching when Genovefa has to deal with the reality of the village today and her misty-eyed memories of growing up there. "Before," she muses sadly, "America was over there and this was home. But now everything has changed." The nature of that change is subtly charted by *Auf Wiedersehen*, a film that says finding a future in America involves letting go of the past.

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AUF WIEDERSEHEN AMERIKA * * *

Produced by Novoskop Film, directed by Jan Schutte, written by Jan Schutte and Thomas Strittmatter, photography by Thomas Mauch, music by Claus Bantzer, distributed by Pyramid International. In Polish with subtitles.

Running time: 1:26

Isaak - Otto Tausig

Moshe - Jakov Bodo

Genovefa - Zofia Merle

Zofia - Christa Berndl

Parent's guide: No MPAA rating (nothing offensive)

Showing at: Gershman YM & YWHA, Broad and Pine Streets, Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.

Notes

REVIEW: FILM

Classification

Language: ENGLISH**Subject:** IMMIGRATION (89%); FILM (78%); FILM DIRECTORS (73%); MOVIE RATINGS (73%); SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE FORCES (72%); GARMENT WORKERS (50%); SWEATSHOPS (50%)**Company:** NEW WORLD LIBRARY (56%); NEW WORLD WINES (56%); NEW WORLD SOFTWARE (56%)**Industry:** CONTENT RATINGS (78%); FILM DIRECTORS (73%); MOVIE RATINGS (73%); GARMENT WORKERS (50%)**Geographic:** NEW YORK, NY, USA (78%); NEW YORK, USA (78%); UNITED STATES (93%); POLAND (88%); EUROPE (79%); EASTERN EUROPE (57%)**Load-Date:** October 21, 2002