

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Orthodox Jewish contestants pray they'll avoid Donald Trump's wrath

By STEVEN I. WEISS

NEW YORK (JTA) — Viewers of last week's premiere of "The Apprentice" didn't see any yarmulkes, but they did witness the debut of two Orthodox Jews on the reality television series. Daniel Brody, 31, and Lee Bienstock, 22, are both members of the "Gold Rush" team on the show featuring Donald Trump.

The first episode of the show's latest season was aired on February 27. Their appearance on the 16-week show, in which young people try to win a job with the headline-grabbing real-estate mogul through a series of business tryouts, has the Orthodox world abuzz. Discussion about Brody and Bienstock has reached a fever pitch in many areas, with many wondering how their Orthodox Judaism will come into play in the series.

"It's interesting to consider how the show adapted to Dan's Sabbath observance," said blogger Greg Gershman. No mention was made of the contestants' Orthodoxy in the first episode, so no one outside the show — whose cast is committed to iron-clad non-disclosure agreements — knows how, and if at all, their religious identities will be portrayed.

Of particular interest is how the show will portray the High Holidays, given that filming started before Rosh Hashanah and concluded at some point after Sukkot. Rumors persist that a separate kosher George Foreman grill was kept in the luxurious apartment in Trump Tower occupied by

Shopping for a Purim wine

(Purim Parody story cont. from page 5.)

stantial order had been placed by the United States to supply its military with the Cabernet as an accompaniment to canned meats, the order was reversed, and it now appears the Cabernet will be staying home.

Along with an increase in Germany's Jewish population since the collapse of the Berlin Wall, has come a resurgence in kosher wine-making. The 2004 late-harvest Riesling offers sweet but balanced suggestions of bratwurst (the kosher kind), mashed potatoes and Black Forest cake.

Further east, entrepreneurs in the new Russia have entered the kosher wine craft with relish. Unlike Chardonnays from elsewhere, which are white, the Russian version is a deep ruby red, thanks to the imaginative introduction of beets.

vegetables in heavy sauces and latkes. (Save room for dessert!)

For older aficionados who prefer white wines, Mission Zaida Sauternes are a small-harvest, exceptionally mild autumn grape product that makes a perfect "pre-nap afternoon-cap". Centuries of wine-making have made Mission Zaida set in its ways, routinely inflexible, but inexplicably charming. It is best at room temperature, but can be enjoyed chilled if one is wearing a sweater, has closed all the windows and shut off the air-conditioner.

A reminder in closing: while shopping for Purim supplies, don't forget the endless variety of distinctive, new kosher choices, available wherever low-to-mid-quality wines are sold. Make a special point of looking for our unique, home-grown products, many of them advertised in this very newspaper that, if you're enjoying any of the above-mentioned Purim wines, you're reading "sideways" or even upside down by now.

The writer is a Jewish Winnipeg high school language arts teacher, graphic artist and freelancer.



DANIEL BRODY, a contestant on 'The Apprentice' this season. Credit: Virginia Sherwood/NBC.



LEE BIENSTOCK, appearing on 'The Apprentice' this season. Credit: Virginia Sherwood/NBC.

strict separation of its somewhat bitter, thin-bodied reds and exceptionally rich, white vintages. De Boer's Winery in recent years has abandoned this tradition, and mixed all its vintages together in single, large vats for what's proven to be a much more balanced, less offensive blend. Many of South Africa's dry whites are still available, having been exported to Canada, Europe and elsewhere over the past 10 years.

For a flavor that harks back to kosher wines of the past, but are less harmful to diabetics, Chateau de Bubbe's Burgundy offers a balance of sweetness and moderation. Ideal for people who believe that wine, like everything else on the table, should be served at room temperature, Bubbe's Burgundy comes in a crocheted, reusable bag with handles, and the bottle converts to a vase afterward. Gentle on aged palates, this Red River Valley label is best served with fatty chicken,

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this acknowledgment, he's certainly regarded as one of the fine young men in our community," adding "we wish him all the success in the world, and we're particularly proud of the fact that he is a committed Jew."

Though Brody's biography on the NBC Web site details his business experience — including owning the bakery Grandma's Cookie Jar, which serves the community of his alma mater, Yeshiva University — his only identification on the show was as having "two boys in my family." Those boys, Gavriel, 6, and Natan, 4, live with Brody and his wife, Amy, in New Milford, N.J.

Brody was the first teammate chosen on "Gold Rush" and the second overall; when his team's leader was asked by Donald Trump on the show why he'd chosen Brody, the leader replied: "Because he's a dad." In New Milford, Brody and family belong to Keter Torah Synagogue, and Brody regularly attends a class with the rabbi, Shalom Baum. Before the February 27 premiere, the class met at the local pizzeria, E.J.'s, where the community was invited to watch the episode.

Brody has a bit of experience in show business, according to his brother. "He's done stand-up in some of the different nightclubs in New York," Steven said, adding that Brody's also done some work on soap operas.

Steven describes his brother as a sort of jack-of-all-trades who is "successful in whatever he chooses to do." That seems to have included quite a lot, from designing and building his home kitchen to launching a successful kosher cookie-dough line.

But that showmanship wasn't always around. Steven Brody recalled that at Brody's bar mitzvah, he suddenly went missing before it came time for him to ascend to the dais. "Everyone's in shul, shul's about to start, we can't find him," Steven Brody recalled. When his brother eventually was discovered, his family realized he had stage fright. Nevertheless, Daniel Brody eventually came out and read Torah beautifully, his brother said.

Bienstock, at 22 the youngest member of the cast, has less in his biography, but his friends say what's there is strong. Simone Greenbaum, a student with Bienstock at Cornell, recalled in an interview that on the occasion of a grandparent's yahrzeit, which she'd been hoping to spend with her family, there was "a typical Cornell snow blizzard" with no chance for her flight home to make it.

Bienstock, "without even batting an eye, said, 'I'll take you home,'" Greenbaum recalled, adding that Bienstock explained "You know I'm a second-semester senior, I can afford to miss one or two days of school, but you can't miss this."

The trip didn't harm his grade, though: Bienstock graduated Cornell with a 4.0 grade-point-average, something that he feels he was well-trained for in his years at the Orthodox high school, Long Island's Hebrew Academy of the Five Towns and Rockaway.

Whether other students' grades will be affected by Bienstock's appearances remains to be seen, but Greenbaum and a fellow student, Eli Magid, said that there are plenty of viewing parties at the Cornell campus, where they say Bienstock was popular.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

'Munich,' 'Paradise Now' denied at award ceremony with Jewish gags

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — "Munich" and "Paradise Now," two films that caused subjected to considerable controversy in the American Jewish community and Israel, came up empty-handed at this year's Academy Awards.

Non-controversial was the selection of Rachel Weisz as best supporting actress in "The Constant Gardener," in which she played a passionate activist fighting an international pharmaceutical company. Weisz was born in London, after her father and mother came to England as Jewish refugees in the 1930s, from Hungary and Austria respectively. Weisz is in her third trimester of pregnancy, but in a backstage interview declined a suggestion that she and her fiancée, director Darren Aronofsky, name the baby Oscar.

Host Jon Stewart left no doubt about his ethnic



Toymaker-turned-bombmaker, Robert, played by Mathieu Kassovitz, left, and Mossad agent Avner Kauffman, played by Eric Bana in a scene from Steven Spielberg's "Munich". Credit: Karen Ballard/Universal Studios.

heritage in his opening monologue. After pointing to Steven Spielberg sitting in the audience, Stewart mentioned the director's films

Across the former Soviet Union

L'Chaim to kitsch! Russian Jews flocking to a glitzy musical genre

By YASHA LEVINE

MOSCOW

(JTA) — On

a dark spot-light-lit stage, a man in a long black suit, a yarmulke and a tallit slung over one shoulder fervently sings into a microphone while a dance troupe in similar, but sexier, garb twirls behind him. He's not a cantor. He's not a rabbi. He's not even religious. He is Evgeni Valevich, a performer whose repertoire includes this: a program of Russian Jewish music in the genre called Estrada.

Estrada may be a genre unknown to westerners, but to Russians the term is immediately recognizable. This glitzy stage entertainment was popularized in the Soviet Union during the 1960s and 1970s, and a modernized and glamorized version is still highly popular in contemporary Russia. Its format is simple: a singer in glittering stage costume — sometimes backed up by a dance crew or a music ensemble, sometimes not — performs pop music numbers on a stage with a backdrop similar to the ones shown on the American TV show "American Idol."

The format of Jewish Estrada is identical to the Russia version: a lit-up stage, sparkling costumes, poppy emotional music. The only difference is that the singers choose themes that reflect their Jewish identity.

With his dress, Valevich plays up his Jewishness, although for others the Jewish link can be weak. At "A Night of Jewish Music and Humor" held earlier this month at the 2,500-seat Rossiya concert hall in Moscow, Joseph Kobzon, once recognized as the "People's Artist of the USSR," performed a song in which the main verse ran, "L'chaim to all / Pour more (vodka) into the glass / Raise the glass higher." The keyword designating this song as "Jewish" is, of course, l'chaim. Otherwise this song is Russian through and through.

For many Russian Jews, Judaism is still an exotic form of cultural Jewish expression. Russian, or even Soviet, culture is still closer to heart. And that's where artists like Kobzon come

"Schindler's List" and "Munich," and then cracked, "I speak for all Jews when I say I can't wait for what happens to us next."

"Munich," Spielberg's take on the Israeli hunt for the Palestinian killers of its athletes at the 1972 Olympic Games, struck out on all of its five nominations, including best picture and best director.

The film has been criticized, particularly in Israel, for allegedly drawing a moral equivalence between the terrorists and the pursuing Mossad agents, as well as for historical inaccuracy.

"Paradise Now," an entry in the foreign-language film category, has drawn even more heat from a small but vocal Jewish community segment, which charged that the film "humanized" two suicide bombers on a mission to blow up a Tel Aviv bus.

Last Friday, The Israel Project organization denounced "Paradise Now" at a press conference and presented a petition to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences with 36,000 signatures protesting the nomination. In addition, the film had originally been listed as coming from the non-existent country of "Palestine," though it was made by an Israeli Arab. At Sunday evening's award show, its provenance was given as the "Palestinian territories."

"Paradise Now," which had been considered the frontrunner, as well as the German entry "Sophie Scholl," about an anti-Nazi resistance fighter, lost out to the South African entry "Tsotsi."

Violinist Itzhak Perlman made a surprise appearance, performing music from five movies nominated for their original scores. Pitting Perlman against the Three 6 Mafia rap group, which won for best original song, Stewart suggested that they engage in a "dreydel-off."

Stewart, apparently trying to beat previous Oscar host Billy Crystal in the Jewish gag category, also took note of presenter Ben Stiller, who appeared onstage in a green unitard that covered his body from head to toe. "It's nice to have proof he's really Jewish," Stewart cracked.

In the documentary short subject category, the Oscar went to "A Note of Triumph: The Golden Age of Norman Corwin," celebrating the 95-year old Jewish writer noted for his inspiring radio dramas.

Fashion for passion

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