



# A delight from a desert dry

Kolirin's first feature film gets to grips with bewilderment and loneliness

by **Michael Perrot**

**D**RY humour in the desert – *The Band's Visit* (*Bikur Ha-Tizmoret*) is much more.

Submitted by Israel as its Best Foreign Film Oscar nominee, the academy disqualified it because more than half of it is in English.

Writer and first-time features director Eran Kolirin is an economical writer, a film-maker to watch out for.

There's no words when a silence, an expression or a touch can say more – a scene in a skating rink is completely silent, but creates the biggest laugh.

But this is no comedy.

Witty, delightful, charming, touching and insightful –

absolutely.

With no agenda, ideology, sentimentality or politics, it is a film about people and their doubts, naivety, regrets, bewilderment and loneliness.

Is this how Kolirin sees Israel?

Invited to play at the opening of an Arab Cultural Centre in Israel, the eight members of the Alexandria Ceremonial Police Orchestra arrive from Egypt, but there is no one at the airport to meet them.

Lieutenant-Colonel Tewfiq (Sasson Gabai) gets the youngest member of the band Khaled (Saleh Bakri), an English speaker, to find out where they are supposed to be going.

After a lengthy bus ride, they arrive in small town surrounded by desert. Lined up at the bus stop, all in their sky blue Sergeant Pepper-like uniforms, they bring sniggers from the three occupants of the cafe opposite.

They also discover they are in the wrong place and there won't be another bus until tomorrow.

Dina can accommodate two of them, so Tewfiq nominates himself and Khaled as punishment for landing them here. The rest bunk with Itzik's (Rubi Moscovich) family, which creates some minor conflicts and cultural tensions. Next morning sees them off to their event.



**The eight members of the band at a bus stop in a place they shouldn't be.**  
**THE BAND'S VISIT (M)**

**Directed by:** Eran Kolirin

**Starring:** Sasson Gabai, Ronit Elkabetz, Saleh Bakri, Khalifa Natour, Shlomi Avraham and Rubi Moscovich.

**Screening:** Joondalup Pines, February 25 to March 2.