



# Band on the run



by michael perrot

## THE BAND'S VISIT (M)

**Director:** Eran Kolirin

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

**Screening:** Somerville, February 18-24 and Joondalup Pines, February 25 to March 2.

**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.

No wasting 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.

With lots of laughs, this is not a funny film. Witty, delightful, charming, touching and insightful it is... 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? Its loneliness, half a world away from its faithful friend and supporter, while surrounded by enemies.



**Dina (Ronit Elkabetz) and Lieutenant-Colonel Tewfiq (Sasson Gabai).**

Invited to play at the opening of an Arab Cultural Centre in Israel, the eight members of the Alexandria Ceremonial Police Orchestra arrive in Israel from Egypt but there is no-one at the airport to meet them. After hurriedly re-reading his paperwork their leader, 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 a small town surrounded by desert. While the musicians are lined up at the bus stop, all in their sky blue Sergeant Pepper-like uniforms, the three occupants of the cafe opposite cannot contain their sniggers.

In need of food, the café's manager Dina (Ronit Elkabetz) accepts their Egyptian money.

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.