

Claude Lanzmann

Documentary filmmaker Claude Lanzmann's examinations of Israel and its people are among the more compelling accomplishments of recent cinema. *Shoah* (1985), his nine-hour film about the Holocaust, snapped up virtually every award in sight and—like *Hoop Dreams*—was bruited about as a possible Best Picture nominee for an Academy Award. Before that came *Why Israel* (1973), a portrait of the young country that debuted at the New York Film Festival only hours after the start of the Yom Kippur War. And now Lanzmann has completed the trilogy of films with the U.S. theatrical premiere of *TSAHAL*, an engrossing five-hour exami-



nation of the Israeli Defense Forces that screens at Lincoln Center from January 27 to February 2. While *TSAHAL* inevitably lacks the moral weight of *Shoah*, it's an impressive and engrossing work. Lanzmann (at right in photo) studies the military through endless, probing questions of rank-and-file soldiers, officers, and the Israelis and Arabs they deal with. As in *Shoah*, Lanzmann avoids explicitly posing the big questions, simply

asking a veteran how he felt during a particular battle or an air-force recruit how he believes he did in that day's training mission. And Lanzmann finds more insight in a shot of an old soldier tramping through a cemetery than he would in any lurid war footage.

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