

First Person Jewish



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Documentaries have increasingly used the first person, with a number of prominent

filmmakers finding critical and commercial success with this intimate approach. Jewish filmmakers have particularly thrived in this genre, using it to explore disparate definitions of the self in relation to the larger groups of family and community. In *First Person Jewish*, Alisa S. Lebow examines more than a dozen films from Jewish artists to reveal how the postmodern impulse to turn the lens inward intersects provocatively (and at times unwittingly) with historical tropes and stereotypes of the Jew. Focusing her efforts on Jewish filmmakers working on the margins, Lebow analyzes the work of Jonathan Caouette, Chantal Akerman, and Alan Berliner, among others, also including a discussion of her own first person film *Treyf* (1998), made with Cynthia Madansky. The filmmakers in this study, Lebow argues, are confronting a desire to both define and reimagine contemporary Jewishness. Using a multidisciplinary approach to first person films, Lebow shows how this form of self-expression is challenging both autobiography and documentary and, in the process, changing the art of cinema and recording the cultural shifts of our time. Alisa S. Lebow is a filmmaker and lecturer in film and TV studies at Brunel University.

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