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By SARA STEWART

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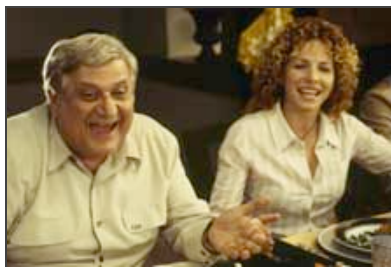
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PASS THE GLO-STICKS: Michael Lerner plays a dosed dad in "When Do We Eat?"

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April 2, 2006 -- At a rave-worthy Seder, a tab of Ecstasy gets Passover rolling

WHILE casting the Passover Seder comedy "When Do We Eat?," director Sal Litvak had an unlikely source of inspiration: "The Godfather."

"It was important to us that the family be authentic," says Litvak, who co-wrote the film's screenplay with wife Nina Davidovich.

"In UCLA film school, our mentor was Francis Ford Coppola. He said their mantra when making 'The Godfather' was, 'Smell the spaghetti.' So our mantra became,

'Smell the matzoh balls.'"

Litvak and Davidovich sought Jewish actors to play the Stuckmans, a big, dysfunctional family gathering for a Seder - the traditional holiday meal of Passover - despite numerous rifts.

The already harried event goes further awry when Mr. Stuckman's teenage son, a class-cutting druggie, slips an Ecstasy tablet into dad's cup of antacid - resulting in Technicolor visions of singing rabbis, and a much more generous view of his family.

Litvak's first cast member was a surprise. For the Stuckman's matriarch, Litvak's producer brought in actress Lesley Ann Warren, best known for her WASP-y blonde characters in "Victor/Victoria" and "Clue."



"I'm Jewish," says the 59-year-old actress, "though I don't practice anymore."

With Warren on board, the rest of the cast - all Jewish, except for a lone Christian character - came together for a surprisingly tough shoot. Turns out when you make an indie film about a single holiday meal, reality mirrors art.

"When you put people together in a room for 12 to 14 hours a day, it's really interesting," Warren says. "It was very similar to some of the issues in the movie."

Other cast members put it more bluntly. "Three weeks in a tent - it drives you nuts!" says veteran actor Michael Lerner, who plays the father. "It was easy for me to feel that way about the actors playing my kids."

The film depicts a Jewish holiday, but Warren says it easily could be Easter or Thanksgiving.

"When you get family members together for a holiday, you have this expectation that it's all going to be so fabulous - and sometimes, it ain't," she says with a laugh. "Sometimes somebody is crying, somebody's got

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resentment. People bring their issues to the table, so to speak."

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