

Refusenik

[four stars]

Dir. Laura Bialis. 2007. N/R. 117mins. Documentary.

A comprehensive look at a largely forgotten chapter in grassroots activism, this doc has enough heart to engage even nonhistorians. *Refusenik* chronicles the efforts of a group of Cold War Soviet Jews who, under the oppressive legacy of czarist Russia and Stalin's anti-Semitic policies, were punished for petitioning to emigrate to Israel. Director Laura Bialis interviews many of the surviving dissidents and their Western sympathizers, and features surreptitiously shot footage from the era. Visually and intellectually brisk, the movie is as lively as its subjects' gumption is humbling. (Opens Fri; Quad.)

—*Mark Holcomb*