



EAST MEETS WEST: Refugees from Europe mingle at a Shanghai bar. "The Port of Last Resort" features rare archival footage in its chronicle of Jewish emigres who settled in the Chinese city.

VANCOUVER IN BRIEF

THE PORT OF LAST RESORT

(DOCU — AUSTRIAN)

A Pinball Films (Vienna) production, in association with Estraofilm, with the support of Home Box Office. (International sales: Louise Rosen Ltd., Brookline, Mass.) Produced by Joan Grossman, Paul Rosdy. Co-producer, Lukas Stepanik.

Directed, written, edited by Joan Grossman, Paul Rosdy. Camera (color, 16mm), Wolfgang Lehner, (B&W), various; music, John Zorn; sound designer, Vincent Tese. Original title: *Zuflucht in Shanghai*. Reviewed on videocassette, Vancouver, Oct. 10, 1999. (In Vancouver Film Festival.) (German and English soundtrack.) Running time: 80 MIN.

With: Fred Fields, Ernest Heppner, Illo Heppner, Siegmur Simon.

Much-traversed terrain gets a fresh approach in "The Port of Last Resort," a near-comprehensive study of WWII-era Jews who left Europe for Shanghai — the only place that would take them without special visas and with no immigration quotas. Pic has already made Jewish-fest rounds and has an HBO niche; quality of archival footage makes it a must-see at history-minded fests. Score by jazz avant-gardist John Zorn is another good hook.

Pic boasts smooth telling and rare images. Home movies and other documents lend immediacy to the circuitous sagas of the four survivors profiled. As in similarly structured "The Last Days," pic spreads its net to other personalities and larger events, painting a compelling portrait of what one old-timer dubs "the most fascinating city in the world" — an odd amalgam of Asian and Middle-European cultures this world will never see again. Barbara Sukowa and Otto Tausig do some letter-reading, in English, which is elsewhere mixed with subtitled German. — Ken Eisner