

BBC presenter Reggie Yates will not be hosting the Christmas edition of *Top of The Pops* this year following his alleged antisemitic comments on a podcast last month.

The Radio 1 host and TV presenter had come under fire after saying that it was great to see music artists not managed by “some random fat Jewish guy from north west London”.

The 34-year-old said this week: “On a recent podcast, during a discussion about grime artists, I made some ill-considered remarks which have hurt many people.

“I can clearly see the words I used reinforced offensive stereotypes and that there is no context which would justify such remarks.

“My comments are no reflection on how I truly feel and I would like to apologise unreservedly to the Jewish community, people in the music industry and anyone else I have affected.

“This has been and continues to be a huge learning experience for me and on reflection I have taken the decision to step down from hosting *Top Of The Pops* this year.”

His remarks were condemned by the Campaign Against Antisemitism and the Community Security Trust, who

Yates' whine bar – while rapper lands BBC in more hot water

said they reinforced antisemitic stereotypes.

A BBC spokesperson said: “We take these issues very seriously and Reggie is in no doubt about the BBC’s view of his comments.”

Meanwhile, the BBC are in more hot water after a rap artist performed a track on a popular Radio 1 show containing the lyric “Power to victims of this globalised kosher nostra”.

Lowkey — a patron of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign — also ranted against “zombies and Zionists” during his live appearance on the station’s Charlie Sloth show on Saturday night.

But, when Lowkey had finished his rap, the host hailed the content of the song.

He said: “I feel like I’ve just been to university for five years”.

A source from Radio 1 said that the phrase was actually “cosa nostra” not “kosher nostra”.

Schwimmer to film in Israel

FRIENDS star David Schwimmer is in talks to appear in an Israeli film about sexual harassment.

Israeli-American writer and director Sigal Avin said she and Schwimmer may team up for a short film about the sexual assault case of Israeli actor Moshe Ivgy.

The duo have worked together already on the American version of Avin’s short film series *That’s Harassment*.

Avin created a series of clips called *Zeh Matrid*, depicting sexual harassment. She translated them into English earlier this year and filmed them with a variety of Hollywood stars, including Schwimmer.

Ivgy was accused last year by at least six women of sexual assault and harassment. In August, police recommended he be indicted on four accounts of sexual assault, though media reports have indicated he will take a plea deal and avoid an indictment.

“We decided that to film the video, David will come to Israel and, according

to the screenplay, will walk in the street and sexually harass a woman, and then do other terrible crimes – kill, steal, hit someone with his car,” said Avin.

“When he gets to the court the judge will say ‘Hi! You’re David Schwimmer!’ And he’ll acquit him, and at the end of the film he’ll leave the court and a crowd of fans will be cheering him on.

“And the film will be called *Celebrity Discount*.”

Meanwhile, Israeli film *Foxtrot* has won the award for best foreign language film from the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures.

Of the past five winners, three have gone on to win the Oscar for best foreign language film.

NBR’s Spotlight Award went jointly to *Wonder Woman*’s Israeli star Gal Gadot and the film’s director Patty Jenkins.

The NBR’s top award, for best film, went to the yet-to-be-released Steven Spielberg film *The Post*.

BY HANNAH BROWN

“It is really scary, having your film out,” said Matan Yair, the director of the new Israeli film, *Scaffolding*, which won the Haggi Prize for Best Israeli Feature Film at the Jerusalem Film Festival in the summer.

“Everybody’s a critic. Sometimes it’s difficult, handling this kind of pressure,” said Yair, who based the film on his experiences as a high school literature teacher, working with a challenging class.

“But scary as this moment may be, it’s what he has been working toward for years. He studied directing and screenwriting at the Sam Spiegel School for Film and Television and Tel Aviv University and has previously made short films and a documentary.

“I started teaching to earn money for my family,” said Yair, who is married and the father of two young children. “But making films is what I always wanted to do.”

Scaffolding, which had its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival, tells the story of a troubled but charismatic teenager

who is torn between his funny but often brutal father, who wants him to go into the family scaffolding business, and a literature teacher who inspires and confuses him in equal measure.

The hero, who is named Asher Lax, is played by one of Yair’s former students, who happens to be named – Asher Lax.

This has led to the perception that the story is very much Lax’s biography and that he is playing himself rather than acting, which Yair firmly denied.

“There were many scenes he had to act that he had never lived through,” said Yair.

In one key scene, for example, “he had to shout at the teacher’s wife, he had to talk about his emotions. I was very confident he could deliver.

“The first task of the director is

Holocaust book will be used as teaching aid in US schools

BY DOREEN WACHMANN

TORONTO University lecturer in Hebrew and Yiddish literature, Sharon Hart-Green, has just published her first novel, entitled *Come Back for Me*.

It is the story of Hungarian Holocaust survivor Artur Mandelkorn’s quest to find his lost sister Manya, to whom he promised to return when they were parted during the atrocities.

The story spans decades and continents as Artur makes aliya and later discovers his Canadian links. The plot eventually takes an unexpected turn.

Although no immediate members of Sharon’s Canadian family were affected by the Holocaust, Sharon grew up among survivors in her Toronto suburb.

“A lot of them were able to go on and live very productive lives,” she said. “In most Holocaust literature, you usually just see all the pain and suffering and do not hear about those who, on some level, had been able to transcend their pain and live productive lives, have children and marry.”

“Some returned to religion and some did not. I was looking for stories about why some people were able to endure suffering better than others.”

Come Back for Me, which is



JUDAISM’S POWER: Sharon Hart-Green

published by the New Jewish Press, is to be distributed to schools in America as an educational resource for teaching Holocaust studies.

The book is not just about dealing with Holocaust trauma, but also about the redemptive power of Judaism, the state of Israel and human relations.

Sharon explained: “The title, *Come Back for Me*, resonates on different levels in the book. The State of Israel is portrayed as a kind of redemptive force in the life of the Jewish people and characters come back to their Jewish identity.”

She added: “Most Jewish writers seem to write about all

their problems with Judaism as opposed to feeling drawn back to it.”

Like the characters in her book, Sharon had her own Jewish religious voyage of discovery.

She told me: “I came from a fairly traditional home, but I really didn’t look at Judaism as containing any great wisdom or substance. I was searching in all the wrong places. I was not drawn back to Judaism until I was in my late teens.

“In my college years, I was very involved with the artistic world. But I became disillusioned with it. I was looking for something that had more meaning. Really, it was staring me in the face.

“Then I started readings books by Martin Buber and Shmuel Yosef Agnon and realised that there were these treasures within Judaism that drew me towards them. I ended up becoming fascinated with Jewish literature and teaching it academically.”

Both Sharon and her husband, Kenneth Hart Green, who lectures in Jewish philosophy at Toronto University, now identify as modern Orthodox.

Although *Come Back for Me* is Sharon’s first work of fiction, she has published two academic books, *Not a Simple Story*, on the works of Agnon, and *Bridging the Divide*, which is a translation of the Hebrew poems of Hava Pinchas-Cohen.

She said: “I have been teaching literature for a long time. I was always very creative and involved in the art and music worlds. I was always seeking creative outlet. I felt compelled to write something of my own, rather than just teaching everyone else.”

THE History Channel will premiere *Surviving Auschwitz: Prisoner 84303* on Holocaust Memorial Day, January 27 (9pm).

The film sees Holocaust survivor Zigi Shipper opening up to former Sky Sports News presenter Olivia Wayne about his time at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Teacher Matan is top of the class with acclaimed film depicting life of charismatic Israeli teenager

bring out the wave of emotions the character is going through . . . I used the way he speaks, the way he moves, which is so mesmerising. The audience is drawn to him. Yes, the story is based on his life and built around him. But he was acting.”

Lax’s performance impressed the judges at the Jerusalem Film Festival so much that they awarded him the prize for best actor.

Asked why Yair chose to use the actor’s real name for the character, he gives two reasons. One has to do with his artistic judgement, the other with the reality of making a film on a shoestring budget in Israel.

Asher remained Asher, “because I liked the ‘reish’ and ‘shin’ in the name, the rough and the delicate sounds,” he said, referring to the Hebrew letters.

Lax remained Lax because the scenes at the scaffolding business were filmed at the actor’s father’s business, “and it says ‘Lax’ everywhere. We couldn’t afford to put up all new signs.”

Anchored by Lax’s performance, and featuring equally excellent work by Ami Smolartchik, who won an Ophir best supporting actor award for his portrayal of Rami, the teacher, and Yaacov Cohen, who plays Milo, Asher’s father, *Scaffolding* is not a conventionally inspiring teacher-student movie.

Learning about literature doesn’t provide a neat answer to Asher’s problems.

“The movie raises questions without any answers. It explores Asher’s courage to confront his father . . . and also how the teacher gives him something to think about, but betrays him in a way.”

Yair admits that there is a lot of him in the complex character of the teacher.

“Emotionally, the teacher is based on me, in different periods of my life,” he said.

Yair has also written a novel that tells a similar story to film, although the book is told from the perspectives of different characters.

While Yair is at work on a new screenplay, if you need to get in touch with him in the morning, he’ll be in the classroom, teaching. He’s still working with the tough kids, the troublemakers.

“These kids always have character, they always have a story . . . when they pass their *bagrut* (matriculation exam) in literature with a 70 or an 80, and they are from houses with no books, you feel like it is a victory against the system.”