

Cinema Without Borders

11th Brooklyn International Film Festival

By **Tanja Meding**

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Founded in 1998 by Italian filmmaker and Brooklyn resident Marco Ursino, this independent film festival in the borough of Brooklyn is a hidden gem that deserves to be noticed beyond its local audience. Truly dedicated to the independent filmmaking community, it is a great place to discover new and emerging talent from around the world, with most films by first or second time filmmakers.

Now in its 11th year, this year's festival theme and subheading is "CINERGY: a mutually advantageous conjunction where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts", as defined in the festival catalog. Between May 30th and June 8th, a total of 102 films, features, documentaries, shorts, experimental and animation films will be shown in two major venues – the beautiful BROOKLYN HEIGHTS CINEMA, an art house cinema in Brooklyn Heights and the BROOKLYN LYCEUM a former public bath – turned trendy cultural center in Park Slope.

On Friday night the opening ceremony and party took place at the BROOKLYN LYCEUM. Paul Krik's accomplished debut feature, ABEL DANGER, played to a packed auditorium. The film had its world premiere in Rotterdam earlier this year and now celebrates its US premiere at the festival. Starring the enigmatic Elina Lowensohn as a femme fatale in a film noir about some interesting 9/11 conspiracies, this film is beautifully shot by Charlie Libbin and features some intriguing locations in and around Brooklyn and Manhattan.

In addition to main program screenings, the festival also hosts a number of sidebars, including a program of animation, experimental and short films at the Brooklyn Public Library. On Sunday, June 1st, a Kids Film Fest Day will take place, and will include screening films for kids of all ages, followed by a meet and greet with the filmmakers allowing the children to ask the filmmakers about the films they just saw.

Now in its third year, there is also a special screening of short films by women filmmakers from around the world, sponsored by NEW YORK WOMEN IN FILM AND TELEVISION. Part of this diverse and exciting program is FLYING LESSON by Brazilian first time filmmakers Rosane Chamecki and Andrea Lerner, working together with Minnesota based filmmaker Phil Harder. Two women spread their wings and take off on a flight through Brooklyn in this charming short experimental film that won the DANCE ON CAMERA Jury Prize earlier this year. Also featured in this program is the 2008 Academy Award nominated short documentary LA CORONA (THE CROWN), by Isabel Vega and Amanda Michell about a beauty contest in a Columbian women's prison. The contestants in this beauty pageant certainly live up to the ones we see in many television shows. Only here the winner does not get to travel the world, but has to return back to her cell.



Some other notable films featured at the festival are:

CRAWFORD, a documentary by filmmaker David Modigliani about the small town Crawford, Texas, and the socio-political changes it has lived through during George W. Bush's administration.

FIX by Tao Ruspoli, a feature film based on real events in short documentary style fashion tells the story of filmmakers Bella and Milo who have 24 hours to get Milo's brother Leo back into rehab.



Austin Cick's second feature AUGUST starring Josh Harnett, Rip Torn and David Bowie, premiered at Sundance earlier this year. The film is a portrait of Tom Sterling, a dot-com entrepreneur desperately trying to hold his private and professional life together after the 9-11 tragedy.

CARNY by Alison Murray, is a documentary that follows a group of carnies (traveling fairground workers) across the states.

Finally, Hen Lasker's first feature length documentary, SEEDS OF SUMMER, which explores the theme of women in the military and the relationships that are formed in this strict and controlled environment.

By Sunday, June 8, after 10 days filled with independent films, the festival will award a number of prizes totaling over \$70,000 in film services, products, and cash. The main prize of the festival, the GRAND CAMELION, is awarded to the best film. In keeping with the independent nature of the festival, all films entered into the festival, regardless of length and category, are eligible for the grand prize. The best documentary filmmaker is awarded the

DIANE SELIGMAN AWARD - which includes a cash prize of \$ 5,000. Five SPIRIT AWARDS that best represent this year's festival theme are awarded to one film in each category (feature, doc, animation, short and experimental). There are also five audience awards, one for each category.

For more information on the festival, the films and filmmakers, please visit: www.brooklynfest.org

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<http://www.cinemawithoutborders.com/news/130/ARTICLE/1600/2008-06-01.html>

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