

# Brooklyn Daily Eagle

## Conspiracies and Thrillers Score at 11th B'klyn International Film Festival

**By Robin Hillman-Herrigan**

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BROOKLYN -- For 10 consecutive years, Brooklyn has hosted a successful and reputable international film festival, held in multiple screening venues around the borough.

When film director Marco Ursino established the festival in 1998, Brooklyn was not yet the desirable cultural hotspot it is now, but he realized that the borough would be an ideal place to host such an event. His vision was to showcase talented local filmmakers while simultaneously exposing residents to the best in new-world film.



This year, Ursino and his staff whittled down more than 2,100 submissions to the final 150, all screened in just 10 days, concluding last Sunday. The films that were finally screened hailed from four continents. He screened the festival in several Brooklyn neighborhoods – Gowanus, Brooklyn Heights, Greenpoint, Park Slope and Bushwick.

### 9/11-Based Conspiracy Film

"I am very proud of the films that came from Brooklyn, especially 'Able Danger,' which we selected as our opening night film, and 'The Collective,'" Ursino said.

"Able Danger" is the creation of Brooklyn-based filmmaker Paul Krik. The film is a 9/11-conspiracy film, shot in black and white and set in Brooklyn. It centers on a real café and bookstore called VoxPop on Cortelyou Road. Krik describes the film as a "fast-talking noir homage to 'The Maltese Falcon.'" A 1940s style femme fatale played by Elina Lowensohn (Schindler's List) and the shy and studious fictionalized version of VoxPop's owner work together to reveal what they believe to be the secret truth behind the events of September 11, 2001.

The film takes an offbeat, comedic approach to a genuine conspiracy theory. The core belief is that "Able Danger" was a government operative and the force behind 9/11, while the terrorist suspects later apprehended for the crime were actually Lee Harvey Oswald-style patsies.

When asked if he saw a parallel between his film and Oliver Stone's "JFK," Krik said that although there are some similarities, the main difference is that in "JFK," Stone dramatized events he believed were true, while "Able Danger" is a fictional story around theories that Krik believes are accurate.

"My hope is that my film has merits as a film whether or not you're a conspiracy theorist," said Krik. "It's a great date movie."

### Religious Cult in Brooklyn

"The Collective," winner of the Audience Choice Award at BIFF, also centers around a conspiracy, but this one is intentionally fictional. Set in Brooklyn and written in a Brooklyn Heights apartment, this film is about the genesis of a cult, according to the directors.

Kelly Overton and Judson Pearce wrote, directed, and produced this film as a team effort, which was easy enough since they are married and live under the same roof. Overton is the star, and Pearce is the cinematographer.



In the film, Overton's character, Tyler, gets a mysterious phone call from her sister Jessica, saying that she is in trouble and needs Tyler's help. Tyler flies to New York to find Jessica missing from her Brooklyn apartment and fired from her job. Jessica's phone has been cut off, and none of her friends will tell Tyler where she is.

Pearce and Overton wanted to make a "Bourne Identity"- type suspense thriller on a low budget." They shot in high definition, focusing on locations like the Brooklyn Heights Promenade, which they found inspiringly beautiful. In fact, "The whole film was inspired by New York," they said.

Pearce and Overton also wanted to explore the changing face of New York architecture. They set part of their story in an Episcopal church because they were intrigued by the concept that sacred places, specifically churches, are being sold and converted into commercial spaces.

In the film, Tyler rides the subway to and from Brooklyn searching for her sister, only to discover that Jessica has joined a new religion loosely based on "The Secret" and Scientology. Converts to the new religion/cult live together in the old gothic church where they throw parties, experiment with drugs and enact spiritual rituals.

Both of these films are the filmmakers' first features, and the Brooklyn International Film Festival proved an excellent opportunity for their first viewing.

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