

## Leave No Niche Unturned

### Film fest clusterfuck hits the borough!

By Beth Levin

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CANNES, PARK CITY, VENICE... Brooklyn? An overabundance of film festivals occurs annually, all exhibiting a subjective sampling of the "best" that cinema has to offer. New York City is just a microcosm of that international scene, with what seems like a film festival programmed for every week of every month. The New York Film Festival showcases safe movies from big-name international filmmakers; the Tribeca Film Festival focuses on precious indies; then there are countless screenings and events catering to ethnic sensibilities, peculiar peccadilloes as well as straight-to-DVD

stylings of every niche's greatest auteur.

"Tribeca is a celebrity fest that clogs lower Manhattan," sniffs A.S. Hamrah, the film critic of Dumbo-based N 1 magazine. Well, no need to fret: This month, the cinephile scene can choose from the **Brooklyn International Film Fest** and the inaugural BAMcinemaFEST.

"The Brooklyn film scene is exploding as more and more producers, filmmakers, actors and the like find it an ideal place to live and work," says Florence Almonzini, Program Director at BAMcinematek and the driving force behind the new festival. Not having to leave your neighborhood for a proper film festival, it turns out, can be quite a selling point.

Created to take the place of the Sundance Institute at BAM, a three-year collaboration with the Robert Redford-run festival that brought movies already seen at Sundance to Brooklyn, BAMcinemaFEST features 67 films, including 18 new features, 14 New York premieres and 23 works by local filmmakers.

"It's all about screening great films for our audiences," Almonzini says, emphasizing the way in which festivals can "bundle new films together so they don't get lost in the marketing noise."

**The festival will have to be pretty loud, though, to not be drowned out by the crowd. Running through June 14 in Brooklyn Heights, the Brooklyn International Film Festival is a more traditional, if still stubbornly independent, event. Now in its 12th year, the festival features 140 films from 100 countries. "We try to bring the best films from a certain country and target that particular ethnic group in New York," says festival founder Marco Ursino, pointing out his goal of offering all sorts of Brooklynites a selection of films to which they can relate. This year's ambiguously themed "Open Source" was meant to be more inclusive and the lineup includes an impressive number of documentaries, many never having been screened before in the United States.**

Some may complain that in our age of distraction we have more choices than ever to entertain and educate. But one thing's for sure: There's certainly no need to suffer from the silver-screen blues.

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