

Young Turks

By Adam Rathe

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As the summer blockbuster season heats up with familiar faces — we're looking at you, Indiana Jones and Carrie Bradshaw — local cinophiles will have the chance to check out some truly original movies as the Brooklyn International Film Festival lights up screens across the borough for its 11th year.

Showcasing 17 feature films, 31 shorts, documentaries, kid flicks, experimental films and animation, the festival's theme is "Cinergy," which, according to festival executive director Marco Ursino, is just as much about the films as it is about the culture surrounding them.

"In a world that is disconnected, politically and socially," said Ursino, "we are trying to create a perfect environment where everyone can have a civil conversation."

The festival will open on Friday, May 30 with the U.S. premiere of "Able Danger," by Ditmas Park-based director Paul Krik. His film is a noir-style take on 9-11 conspiracy theories — with a main character inspired by Sander Hicks, owner of Krik's local book store, Vox Pop — and, of course, it features international lust and danger.

"I think it's amazing, I feel honored and ecstatic," said Kris. "It's the perfect opening for a Brooklyn film — I couldn't ask for more."

Following the screening, a party — featuring free beer, courtesy of Stella Artois, and hors d'oeuvres — will offer ample opportunities to discuss the provocative flick.

A late-night bash is an apt way to kick off the series, according to Ursino, since this year's participants all have one thing in common.

"It's geared towards a younger filmmaker," he said. "We went with young filmmakers as a way to say we want some fresh energy — or maybe we're just getting old. It's going to be a young, exciting crowd."

And where are there more youthful and exciting people than right here in Brooklyn?

"Everyone I know, all the young artists and creative people, live in Brooklyn now," said Judson Morgan, a filmmaker whose Brooklyn Heights-based film, "The Collective," is screening on May 31. "What's exciting for us is to play in this amazing part of New York — that's where all of the creative juices are flowing. Because it's in Brooklyn, it has a cache that most other film festivals don't have."

No one can argue with that. According to Ursino, the festival had 2,099 submissions from 96 countries this year — a huge number for a series that is only screening 102 films, including the May 31 East Coast premiere of "August," a new thriller starring Josh Hartnett and David Bowie. Local filmmakers are well represented, too.

"Our movie was shot entirely in Brooklyn, and we really made Brooklyn a character in the film as much as the [actors] and everything else," said Dan Eberle, the Windsor Terrace resident whose film, "The Local," will have its world premiere on June 3. "We were very much looking forward to opening the film here at some point, and it's quite appropriate that we're showing this movie at Brooklyn's premier film festival."

Eberle's film was shot in Red Hook, Kensington and Flatbush, but thanks to a bit of movie magic, he said that some views were rendered unrecognizable.

"The movie takes place in an alternate reality, and Brooklyn looks like it's never looked before," he said. "Brooklyn looks like a hell-scape, which, of course, it is not. And it's been exciting to see the reactions when we screen the movie for people who live around here."

While Eberle gave the borough a gritty makeover, some filmmakers were happy with the scenery just the way they found it.

"I grew up in Park Slope and The Brooklyn Paper was something I always saw around, and it was part of my life," said Kevan Tucker, a director whose first feature film, "The Unidentified," was filmed in part in The Brooklyn Paper's DUMBO newsroom, will have its world premiere at the fest on June 1. "Like The Brooklyn Paper, the film festival was something I grew up with — it was an integral part of my film education. While we submitted to a lot of festivals, this one seemed very appropriate to be our world premiere."

The Brooklyn International Film Festival runs May 30 to June 8 at the Brooklyn Lyceum (227 Fourth Ave. at President Street in Park Slope) and the Brooklyn Heights Cinema (70 Henry St. at Orange Street in Brooklyn Heights). Tickets to individual screenings are \$10. Opening night begins at 7:30 pm at the Brooklyn Lyceum. For information, call (718) 388-4306 or visit www.wbff.org.

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Just Josh-ing: Among the films featured in 2008's Brooklyn International Film Festival are "August" (above), starring Josh Hartnett and David Bowie; "The Local" (center), by Windsor Terrace director-star Dan Eberle; and "The Collective" (bottom).

