

Festival New York, Underground



THE CITY WILL BE
LITTLE MORE DANGEROUS
COME THIS MARCH.

The 2nd Annual
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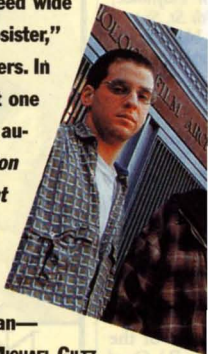
**NEW YORK
UNDERGROUND
FILM & VIDEO
FESTIVAL**

Features
Documentary
Shorts
Animation
Multimedia
and more

March 23 - March 26

Controversy, and plenty of it, appears to be the M.O. for the **New York Underground Film Festival**, held March 22–26 at Anthology Film Archives (see “Museums, Societies, Etc.”). Andrew Gurland and Todd Phillips, a couple of smart-ass 24-year-old film-school grads, founded the festival last year. And for all the pair’s antiestablishment prattle, they’ve clearly taken some cues from the big leagues. Like Miramax, the Disney-owned *Über*-independent that never met a fracas it couldn’t milk for publicity,

these boys live to provoke. Last year, they sparked attention by screening the NAMBLA documentary *Chicken Hawk*. And this year, the hot buttons recur: They’ve scheduled the festival to go head-to-head with Lincoln Center and MoMA’s New Directors/New Films series. And they reportedly tangled with Miramax over the screening of *Who Do You Think You’re Fooling?*, a short that claims Quentin Tarantino cribbed from an obscure Hong Kong film for sections of *Reservoir Dogs*. (Gurland and Phillips pulled it from a press screening at the last minute, saying it was overshadowing the other films in the series; *Variety* says Miramax strong-armed them into lying low; Miramax isn’t talking.) In person, the guys are ragingly impolitic. They slag Slamdance, an alternative festival to Sundance, for trying to get aligned with its more established counterpart. They mock the New York Film Festival’s showcasing of Miramax’s *Bullets Over Broadway* and other movies already guaranteed wide exposure. “We don’t want to be Richard Peña’s ugly stepsister,” snorts Phillips, referring to one of that festival’s organizers. In fact, the two are so self-consciously “alternative” that one would hate them entirely had they not put together an authentically engaging lineup, including *Mod Fuck Explosion* and *Memoirs of a Madman*; shorts like *The Straight Agenda* (a parody of the right-wing video *The Gay Agenda*); and a tribute to the master of good bad taste, John Waters. After premiering in New York, the series goes on a 40-city tour that—if things go according to plan—will be dogged by controversy at every stop.



MICHAEL GILTZ