

ROOFTOP FILMS

PRESS KIT



About Rooftop Films

Rooftop Films is a non-profit organization whose mission is to engage and inspire diverse communities by showing movies and showcasing live music in outdoor locations, producing new films, teaching filmmaking to young people, and renting low-cost equipment to artists and non-profits.

At Rooftop Films, we bring underground movies outdoors.

The annual Summer Series of outdoor screenings is the central organizing element of our work. As our name indicates, our trademark venues are rooftops throughout New York City. Additionally, we screen in public parks, along waterways and other scenic spots. By screening new independent short and feature-length films in spectacular outdoor venues, we attract large audiences to see movies that would otherwise go unseen and have cultivated a large and diverse film-loving community. By bringing films made by emerging and local artists to the

big screen we support important dialogue and foster meaningful connections between neighbors, artists, activists, youth and the urban space we all share.

While there are numerous outdoor film screenings in New York, there are none that showcase the undistributed work of emerging and local artists. Rooftop Films screens insightful and entertaining films created by independent filmmakers, not multimillion-dollar films made by corporations. We are committed to presenting films from communities underrepresented in the film world, particularly films in which people of color and women have held primary production roles. The artists we present include a mix of first-time filmmakers, long-time outsider artists and seasoned film professionals. Rooftop gives voice to artists and issues who might not otherwise be heard. We showcase films made by underrepresented filmmakers and partner with local organizations to organize screenings of these films in new communities.

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PRESS KIT

ARTISTIC VISION AND PURPOSE

The thread that connects all the films Rooftop presents is that rather than focus on grandiose topics or artistic abstractions, we prize films that explore single moments in time and place, stories which offer intimate looks into individual lives and overlooked or misunderstood communities.

At each venue, we select films which will be relevant to the local community, but which will also expose them to new ideas, issues and art forms. We have an ongoing partnership with El Museo Del Barrio to host screenings in East Harlem. At Solar One, an environmental education center, we screen films about politics and the environment—pointing out to the audience that the shows are run on solar power and encouraging them to learn about energy conservation at the venue. The specific issues addressed at our events change from year to year, depending on the films which are submitted to us and the needs articulated by the communities in which we host them.

HISTORY

Rooftop Films came into existence in July of 1997 atop a tenement apartment building on 14th Street in Manhattan. Filmmaker Mark Elijah Rosenberg had just graduated from Vassar College and moved back to his native New York and was looking for an innovative way to get people together for screenings of new short films. Over the ensuing summers, Rooftop's audience and reputation continued to grow, allowing the organization to formalize and subsequently expand programs to include the Filmmakers Fund, Rooftop Education, and more. Rooftop Films provides financial support to emerging artists, showcasing short and feature-length films that may not otherwise be made or seen and creating a vibrant independent filmmaking community that bridges cultural boundaries.

ROOFTOP FILMS PROGRAMS

Through our various exhibition, distribution, production and education programs, Rooftop Films has become one of the most successful and innovative supporters of emerging filmmakers in the country. Our work includes:

The Summer Series: The Rooftop Films' Summer Series is one of the largest film festivals in New York, showing a wide range of local, national and international independent short and feature-length films (along with live music and after-parties), screened in a variety of stunning outdoor locations.

Youth Education: To foster the growth of emerging young filmmakers and community activists Rooftop Films sponsors a film training and media literacy program for low-income youth at Automotive High School in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. In conjunction with public screenings at New Design High School (Lower East Side, Manhattan) and Brooklyn Tech (Fort Greene, Brooklyn), Rooftop will also be presenting educational in-class programs to students at these schools in 2009.

The Rooftop Filmmakers' Fund and Production Collective: Rooftop Films dedicates a portion of ticket sales proceeds and submission fees to the Rooftop Filmmaker's Fund, a grant system which funds new works by filmmakers who have previously screened with us. The goal of the Filmmakers' Fund is to promote "films we don't see enough of," which often means funding films by women and people of color, and personal films about larger social issues. We also maintain film production and exhibition equipment which we share with our filmmakers through the Rooftop Production Collective, and rent at low cost to artists and non-profits.

Film Distribution and Television Shows: In order to give people across the country and world access to our distinctive programming, Rooftop Films curates shows of short films on a variety of themes for distribution to museums, theaters, micro cinemas, universities and online. Every summer, we post 100 short films from the festival online at IFC.com. We are currently screening the third season of Rooftop TV, ten 28-minute episodes of short films broadcast in New York and on the internet.

Live Music: Music has always been a part of the Rooftop Films experience, and we take great pride in all the amazing musicians that perform before our films. Highlights have included TV on the Radio, The Mountain Goats, members of Fugazi and Califone, Dirty on Purpose, O'Death and A.R.E. Weapons. This summer we continue our partnership with Sound Fix Records to present the music for the Rooftop Films 2009 Summer Series.

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PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

PREMIERES

We show films that are garnering different levels of exposure—films that will only ever be seen at Rooftop, films that might play in limited release, and films that will be independent hits. Over 1,400 people attended the World Premiere of **Captured** (Ben Solomon, Dan Levin & Jenner Furst), the amazing story of Clayton Patterson, prolific photo documentarian of the turbulent Lower East Side, screened in the heart of the neighborhood. The film is now represented by Cinetic Media and distributed via Amazon Online. Rooftop hosted the NY Premiere of the Academy Award Short-Listed film **In A Dream**, which has its theatrical release in April 2009. We hosted the first-ever public screening of **October Country** (Michael Palmieri & Donal Mosher), now being placed into competition at major US festivals. Rooftop screenings expose large crowds to films they might not otherwise see, raising awareness about these and other films, moving them closer to wider release.

SNEAK PREVIEWS

When an independent film hits theaters, immediately drawing large audiences is crucial to its survival in a crowded market. By screening at Rooftop before playing in theaters, filmmakers generate buzz that spurs box office sales. Rooftop presented **Trouble the Water** (Tia Lessin & Carl Deal), the Academy Award-nominated story of an aspiring rap artist and her streetwise husband, trapped in New Orleans by deadly floodwaters. The free screening in Harlem attracted 800 people and included a live musical performance by the film's subject. We also debuted **The Pleasure of Being Robbed** (Josh Safdie), a magical narrative about a curious kleptomaniac. Both films had successful theatrical runs, boosted by the publicity generated by Rooftop sneak previews.

EMERGING FILMMAKERS SHOWCASE WITH IFP

Rooftop is proud to support emerging directors in many ways, and since 2007 we have partnered with the **Independent Feature Project** to showcase a collection of films from the Rough Cut Labs, programs connecting mentors and projects before they are submitted to festivals. The screenings offer a unique opportunity for our audience to meet the directors and get a sneak peak at these films before they become hot projects, and a rare opportunity for filmmakers to start building awareness about their movies. In conjunction with IFP, we hosted the New York Premiere of **Trinidad** (PJ Raval & Jay Hodges), a documentary about “the sex change capital of the world.” The film received support from the Rooftop Filmmakers' Fund prior to passing through the Labs.

SHORT FILMS

Some of the most daring and intimate films in the world are shorts, and at Rooftop we prize the short as a unique medium unto itself. Our thematic programming displays multiple perspectives on a single topic, as annual screenings of “New York Non-Fiction,” “Home Movies,” and political films (on the 4th of July) all include the personal work Rooftop celebrates. 2008's “Making the Mission” show honored grand gestures and journeys, including the award-winning Rooftop co-funded **Glory at Sea** (Benh Zeitlin). For an evening of “Surreal Sounds and Shorts,” we forged a collaboration with The Premiere Commission and the Museum of Modern Art. Rooftop Films' short film programming is highly acclaimed, and we have created programming for IFC and festivals around the world. Rooftop staff members have been on short film juries at Sundance, Slamdance and SXSW.

FILMMAKERS' FUND

Rooftop Films earmarks \$1 from every ticket sold and every submission fee received for filmmaker grants. The Rooftop Filmmakers' Fund has supported: **Glory At Sea** (Benh Zeitlin), an award-winning short film • **Persona Non Grata** (Fabio Wuizack), which premiered at IDFA and will play at Rooftop in 2009 • **Trinidad** (PJ Raval), winner of the Grand Jury Prize at the Cleveland International Film Festival • Working with Eastern Effects, a film equipment rental house, Rooftop Films supplied a complete lighting and grip package to Lee Isaac Chung for his feature film **Lucky Life**. Chung's previous film, **Munurangabo**, played successfully at Cannes and New Directors/New Films • and many others.

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Rooftop Films at a Glance

SUMMER SERIES DATES:

May 15 – September 20, 2009

*Every Friday and Saturday night
(plus select weekdays)*

PRICE:

\$9 (Includes live music, film and most shows have after-parties with free drinks)

WEBSITE: www.rooftopfilms.com

EMAIL: info@rooftopfilms.com

PHONE: 718.417.7362

STAFF:

Mark Elijah Rosenberg - Artistic Director

Daniel Nuxoll - Program Director

Genevieve DeLaurier - Managing Director

Lauren Faria - Development Director

Danielle Kourtesis - Music and Outreach Manager

Daisy Rosario - Festival Manager

Christopher O'Brien - Technical Manager

Chantel Hirter - Festival Coordinator

40+ shows, screened over 16 weeks | Over 25,000 audience members expected throughout the 2009 Summer Series

VENUES:

The Roof of The Old American Can Factory

232 Third Street, Gowanus, Brooklyn

www.xoprojects.com

The Roof of The Open Road Rooftop

above New Design High School

350 Grand Street, Lower East Side, Manhattan

www.newdesignhigh.com

The Roof of Brooklyn Technical High School

29 Fort Greene Place, Downtown Brooklyn

www.bths.edu

The Lawn of Automotive High School

50 Bedford Avenue, Williamsburg, Brooklyn

www.autohs.com

The Roof of El Museo Del Barrio

1230 Fifth Avenue at 104th Street, East Harlem

www.elmuseo.org

The Pier at Solar One

Energy, Arts and Education Center

Along the East River at 23rd Street, Manhattan

www.solar1.org

Public Parks:

The Myrtle Avenue Hill in Fort Greene Park

Fort Greene, Brooklyn

www.fortgreenepark.org

Southpoint Park

The Southern Tip of Roosevelt Island

www.rioc.com

Historic Harlem Parks

Harlem Meer (Central Park), Marcus Garvey Park,

Jackie Robinson Park, Morningside Park and

St. Nicholas Park

www.historicharlemparks.org

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Testimonials

“Rooftop fits into that rare and precious category of film festival that really knows how to treat the filmmaker right.”
– Lynn Shelton, *My Effortless Brilliance* (Director)

“The screening atmosphere is one-of-a-kind: the attendance is huge, the audience is amazing, and the overall vibe is just as perfect as screenings can go. Once we showed the film a lot of doors opened for us in the film world, and continue to. Without this festival we wouldn’t have the opportunities we now have to get our film out there.”
– Michael Palmieri, *October Country* (Co-Director)

“Only in New York . . . It’s one of the things that I appreciate most about the city,”
– Joy Doumis, quoted in *The New York Times*

“For filmmakers this a wonderful way for their films to be seen in a unique venue, with high quality projection, doing a service for the community, and hanging with great people.”
– Peter Gilbert, *At the Death House Door* (Director)

“I can’t praise the folks at Rooftop enough for putting on such a top notch series with cool music, beautiful screening locations, and a great program. Check ‘em out!”
– James Israel, *IndieWire*

“Rooftop Films is hands down the best thing to happen to NY summers since a/c.”
– Tammy Hart, *Sound Fix Records*

“I remember standing on the roof with my producer—we were off to the side from where the audience was watching the movie, and we were looking out at the Manhattan skyline and listening to the audience reactions, and we were talking about how easy it is to feel jaded in New York, but how simply awesome this experience was.”
– Greg Takoudes, *Up With Me* (Director)

“Just as in real estate, moviemaking is all about location, location, location—in terms of where you shoot and where you show. No group takes the aesthetic value of a screening’s surroundings more seriously than the folks at Rooftop Films.”
– *Movie Maker Magazine*

“When the Director of *Glory at Sea* got in a terrible car accident, Rooftop were the first ones to make sure that they used all resources available to them to help raise money for the huge medical bills. The treatment from the Rooftop staff is literally unparalleled with that of any other festival. We had a packed audience who were really a wonderful audience.”
– Josh Penn, *Glory at Sea!* (Producer)