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## Tony Silver, 72, Documentary Director, Dies

By [MARGALIT FOX](#)

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Tony Silver, an award-winning independent filmmaker whose 1983 documentary, "[Style Wars](#)," was one of the earliest accounts of hip-hop culture, died on Feb. 1 at his home in Los Angeles. He was 72.

Vic DeLucia/The New York Times

The cause was a brain tumor, his wife, Lisa Citron, said. Mr. Silver's death had not been widely reported.

Directed by Mr. Silver, "Style Wars" chronicled the lives of subway graffiti artists in New York City in the early 1980s. In so doing, it documented the emerging culture of hip-hop, the dynamic urban art form of which graffiti (along with rap and break dancing) was one strand. The film's soundtrack had music by early hip-hop artists like the Sugarhill Gang, the Treacherous Three, the Fearless Four, and Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, among others.

In 1984 "Style Wars" won the grand jury prize for documentaries at the United States Film and Video Festival, a forerunner of the [Sundance Film Festival](#).

New York's lavish, brilliantly colored graffiti was a kind of urban heraldry that from the 1970s onward symbolized the city to the rest of the world. It leapt boldly from spray cans onto walls, bridges and — in what practitioners considered their crowning glory — the outsides of subway cars. Some observers saw it as a dazzling form of public expression, others as an unsightly public nuisance.

"Style Wars," produced by Mr. Silver and Henry Chalfant, explored the long-simmering tensions between these camps. The first camp included the graffiti artists themselves, or graffiti writers, as they preferred to be called: young men with monikers like Crash, Demon, Dondi, Kid 167 and Mare 139. The second included Mayor [Edward I. Koch](#), a sworn foe of subway graffiti.

Originally broadcast on [PBS](#), "Style Wars" developed a cult following over the years and was widely circulated in bootleg copies. In 2003 Mr. Silver and Mr. Chalfant produced a companion film, "Style Wars: Revisited," which documented the lives of the original graffiti writers 20 years later. (A two-DVD set comprising both films is available online from [stylewars.com](#).)

David Anthony Silver was born in Manhattan on April 15, 1935, and studied at [Columbia University](#). For many years he was a successful maker of trailers and other promotional materials for movies and television; his credits include the trailer for [Oliver Stone](#)'s film "[Platoon](#)" (1986), which won a Clio Award in 1987.

Mr. Silver's first marriage, to Helen Silver, ended in divorce, as did his second, to Joan Shigekawa. Besides his wife, Ms. Citron, whom he married in 2000, Mr. Silver is survived by a daughter from his first marriage, Nini Silver of Milton, Mass.; a daughter from his second marriage, Mariko Silver of Scottsdale, Ariz.; a stepdaughter, Meghan Tate of Bellingham, Wash.; a sister, Jeanne Silver Frankl of Amagansett, N.Y.; and three grandchildren.

His other documentaries include "Arisman: Facing the Audience" (2002), about the iconoclastic New York artist Marshall Arisman.