



Publicity:

Amanda Macnaughton  
Think Public Relations  
11 East 4th Street, 5F  
New York, NY 10003  
646.498.6549  
amanda@thinkpublicrelations.com

Producer:

Danny Lee  
830 S. Detroit Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90036  
310.200.1222  
danny@calicoarts.com

“This urban essay on a decidedly urban art form embodies the grittiness of the world it captures.” - *LA Weekly*

“Lee follows the subjects with a seamless flow of kinetic energy - weaving together interviews and ideologies - creating an infectious, vibrant documentary.” - *Shaz Bennett, AFI*

“Danny Lee’s **ROCK FRESH** breaks the mold and marks the birth of a new type of documentary. The film is the visual equivalent of a great piece of music. It takes you on a journey that intoxicates the senses.” - *Terry Keefe, Venice Magazine*

“Lee’s collage style of editing offers a unique and breath-taking view of the graffiti arts.” - *Joshua Glazer, URB Magazine*

“This film has everybody talking.” - *John Heath, Rime Magazine*



## Introduction

The world is in dire need of color. **ROCK FRESH** is the remedy: a stunning and ground-breaking documentary film that explores the vast and vibrant world of the graffiti artist.

**ROCK FRESH** follows five of the world’s most prolific artists, shedding light on their extraordinary talent. Likewise, the film reveals the conflict within these young men as they walk that fine line between traditions of a subversive culture and the lure of the dollar from pop culture. Wherein Nike, MTV, Toyota continuously bang down their doors for commissioned work, they ask themselves if they are in fact, selling themselves short. Their stories echo those of great street artists of the past such as Jean Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring. The film captures a magical window in time - a time when these kids become the absolute “toast of the town”.

**ROCK FRESH** sprang from the idea of capturing the enigmatic process of graffiti art. The goal was to construct a forward-thinking and visually advanced documentary that made full use of today’s digital filmmaking tools. The film was shot over a span of three years, beginning with the artists simply painting for the love, to making full blown businesses out of their imaginations. All the while, the traditional graffiti art culture scrutinizing their every move.

**ROCK FRESH** is your seminal film on graffiti art; the textbook on the mindset of today’s graffiti artist. The film was made possible in part with the generous support of Lucasfilm, the Bruce Lee family, Nike, and the Jimi Hendrix family.



## Synopsis

**ROCK FRESH** is an electrifying documentary on the evolution of graffiti art. From the street to the gallery. From walls to clothing. From private to worldwide. Our cameras unmask the mystifying process behind graffiti art like never before. Revealing step-by-step how the colors blend, how the angles sharpen, how the shadows emerge. Lifting the veil from a subculture so clandestine, it took 40 years to get this close.

The artists take their skills to a variety of surfaces - concrete, canvas, metal, cloth, and brick. And to an array of locations - city rooftops, the desert, downtown lofts, the sewers, even the forest. **ROCK FRESH** also reveals artists painfully coming of age. From kids drawing in their sketchbooks, to grown men struggling to make a living off of their art. Struggling between the codes of the underground and the lure of the mainstream.

Journey through the buzzing underground art world - from live graffiti battles and gallery showcases, to underground parties and late night bombing sessions, Hollywood alleyways to Tokyo skyscrapers. Learn what it takes to **ROCK FRESH**.



## ARTISTS:

# Axis



**The Rebel - Axis paints our worst nightmares. World renowned for his hellish images, Axis has access to a primal nerve beyond our wildest imagination. Axis has painted for MTV, Kanye West, Toyota, Urb, and Chad Muska.**

# Clae



**The Surfer - Clae is from the old school. As one of the first graffiti artists on the West Coast, Clae has seen the culture evolve from a hobby in '83 to the commercial beast it is today. Clae brings that old school technique, incorporating the big and bright into every burner. He's ready for a bigger slice of the pie. Clae has painted Royal Elastic, Red Bull, and Universal Studios.**

# Kofie



**The Draftsman - the self styled draftsman, Kofie embodies the very cutting edge of graffiti art. Incorporating mixmedia techniques, Kofie creates dazzling masterpieces that transcend all. A rising star in the art world, Kofie has been commissioned to paint all over the world. Kofie has painted for MTV, Expn, Stussy, the Pacific Design Center, Vice, Toyota, Nike and Levi's.**

## ARTISTS:

# Trixter



**The Youngster - "the graffiti writer's writer". Trixter is notorious in the graffiti world. His furious letter styles are second to none. His "burners" incorporate style beyond our imagination. Trixter has painted for Guess, HBO, Nike, Toyota, Miss Sixty, 311, and Macy Gray.**

# Tyer



**The Refreshed - Singled handedly responsible for bringing the painted trucker hats back to life in LA. Tyer created a furor around town with the straight up, fresh graffiti styles on lids. The original. Accept no imitations. Tyer has painted for MTV, Nike, Converse, Pony, Gucci, and Ben Sherman.**

# Biography

## Danny Lee Director/Writer



Director/Writer DANNY LEE is quickly establishing himself as one of the foremost talents of this generation. Armed with a highly stylized eye and a strong knowledge of storytelling, Lee has the rare ability to connect with audiences both thematically and emotionally. Lee began his entertainment career at Shooting Gallery ("Sling Blade", "Croupier") where he was praised for his keen eye for high-concept screenplays. Then, Lee left to work for Lions Gate Films in 2001 where he worked on such films as "Monster's Ball", "Rules of Attraction", "The Wash", "Liberty Stands Still", "Confidence", and "Shattered Glass".

Lee is currently Producer/Director/Writer/Editor on the feature length documentary "Rock Fresh" on the world of graffiti artists, featuring world renowned artists Kofie, Axis, etc.; developing three high-concept feature screenplays; developing "Rock Fresh 2" on the world of breakdancers, featuring world famous b-boys Crumbs, Tails, etc.; and DP/Editor on "Felli Fel Presents" featuring today's biggest hip hop stars. Lee also recently wrapped work as DP/Writer/Editor on the "Hip Hop Story" series, including Dirty South, Coast to Coast, and The Making of a Rap Star; and Co-Producer and Special FX Supervisor on the Guess? 20th Anniversary Video. In addition, Danny has directed/edited an exclusive series of artist interviews (Cypress Hill, Hieroglyphics, etc.) that can be seen at [www.calicoarts.com/vault.html](http://www.calicoarts.com/vault.html).



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## Tips from the top: what to see

The films are what matters most, so Variety asked the pros who put together the AFI Festival to help steer time-strapped festgoers to some of their favorites.



**NANCY COLET, Director of programming**

This is an unusual year in that two of my favorite films are on the same side: a beautiful story with a brilliant performance by Javier Bardem, and "A Very Long Engagement," from Jean-Pierre Jeunet, a master filmmaker with such attention to detail.

**Official selection:** Very strong films include "The Sea Inside," "Revolution of Pigs," "Somersault," "Dark Season," "Aftermath," "Symmetry," "The Woodsman," and "Kontroll."

These filmmakers all have strong visions and have elicited amazing performances from their casts. "Zech Dream," "The Take" and "Cherelle: The Taking of Farid Harsni" are excellent, as are the informative and well-made films.

**Others:** Films I love from more experienced filmmakers are "The Invention of Solitude" and "The Last Days of Disco," both possibly moving films from Latin America that show how the difficult political situations in these countries affect the young boys growing up there, and the epic "Infernal Affairs Trilogy," a real masterpiece.

**SHAZ BENNETT, Senior programmer**

It's like choosing your favorite child, but since I don't have children I'll have to go with "Hotel Rwanda," "Rock Fresh," "Asteroid" and "Somersault." "The Sea Inside," "Yes, Virginia," "The Thin Red Line," "Campfire," "Nore's Mission," "Speak," "Prozen," "Chrysalis," "Far Side of the Moon," "Manduca" and "Manduca" and, of course, "Bad Education" and "Mounted by the Gods."

**MAITALE MCMENAMY, documentary programmer/festival manager**

"Seoul Train," "Yodanis," "The Other Side of the Street," "Let's Rock Again!" and "Veritol."

**Take** and "The Other Side of the Street," "Let's Rock Again!" and "Musica Cubana" AHS, because they're loads of fun, "A League of Ordinary Gentlemen" and "The Art and Crimes of Ron English."

And for great music: "Art's

Rock Again!," "Musica Cubana" and "The Soma Song." —compiled by Amy Dawson

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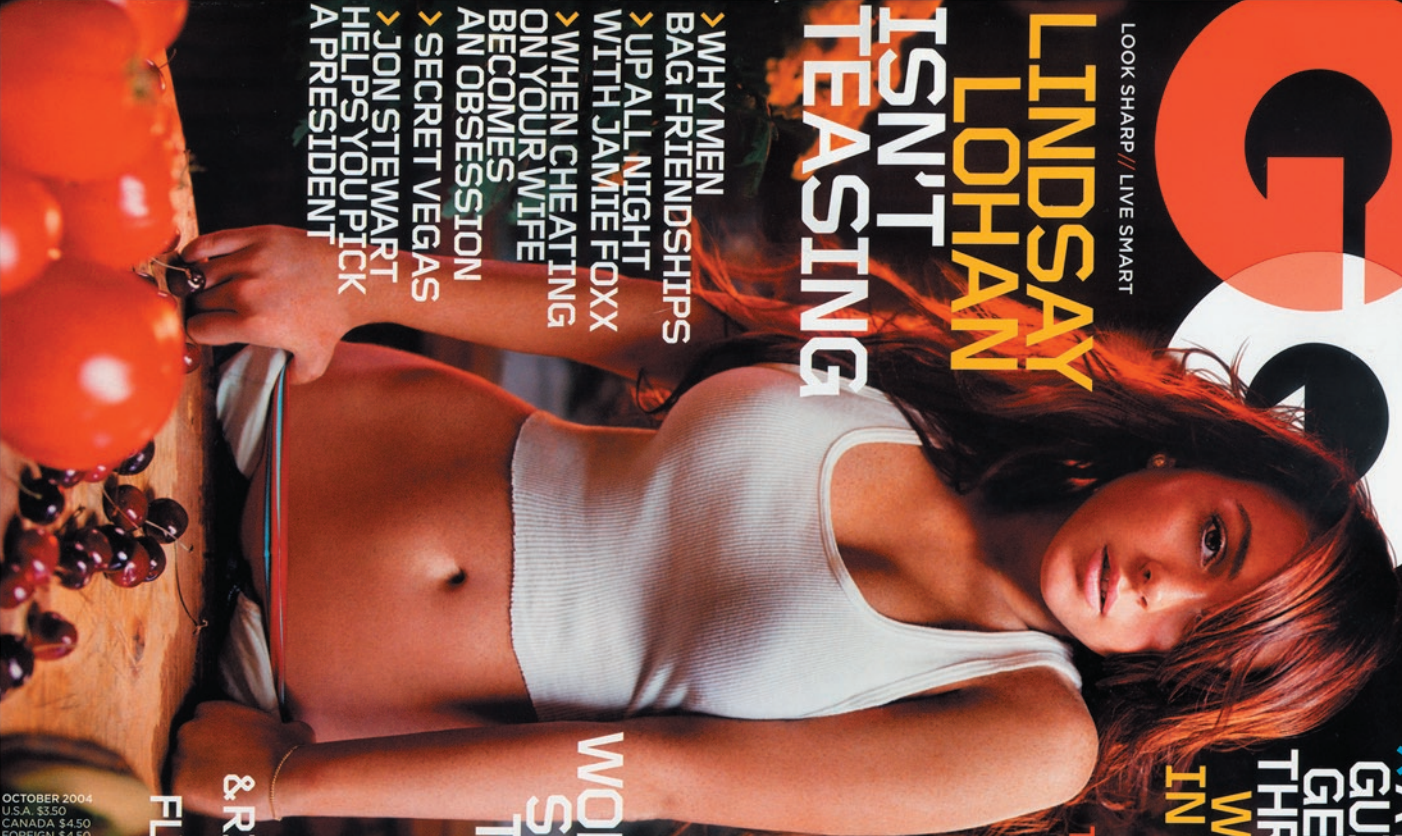




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## ALL ACCESS

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### ROCKED FRESH WITH SCION

On June 28, the legendary Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood served as the backdrop for GG and Scion's exclusive industry screening of *Danny Lee's Rock Fresh*. More than 850 guests turned out to view the film—a documentary about the world of graffiti artists—and enjoy the rockin' after-party where break dancers busted a move. **S. Gano** drinks quenched the crowd, and **DJs Mark Luv, DJ Hien, Pool Nailed Life, and singer Aloe Blacc** provided the grooves. For more information about the film please visit [www.rockfreshfilm.com](http://www.rockfreshfilm.com).



Top to bottom: 1) Robert Melnik and Danny Lee; 2) Pool Nailed Life; 3) S. Gano; Elements Productions; 4) Gene Lee, Kofie, Axis



## TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY FOXX CONTINUED

oxygen to enjoy the view for long, and after that the only way forward is also downward.

"It's not going to last forever," he confesses. "I look at it like lions in the jungle. They rule maybe eight, maybe eleven years, if they're lucky. Then a young lion comes up. I look at Burt Reynolds, and I go, 'I loved Burt Reynolds—back in the day.' 'What are you doing now? And what's with the hair?' And you've got to understand that is going to be something you are going to have to deal with, because it can't last forever."

I imagine that a few years ago Jamie

## THE CHEATER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 317

pursuit. The anonymity of it all is like a cloak that allows him to be aggressive, to talk dirty, to be dominant. He awaits each e-mail with anticipation, thrilling to the well-crafted sentence, the perfect paragraph. Some of the women write terse notes. Others write long fantasies or confessions. One wrote him about lingerie shopping and gang bangs.

Less than half the woman he corresponds with ever meet him for sex. But online, even rejection doesn't sting nearly as much as it does in real life. There is something detached about the whole process—these women are ghosts, e-mail addresses, numbers on a screen—they aren't real until he meets them.

One day last year, a married woman wrote him five paragraphs. "They were beautifully written and personal without being overly emotional. She was recently separated, interested in casual sex, and told him she hadn't had good sex in several years. She seemed perfect.

Meeting her for lunch at a Midtown restaurant, he found her to be even better than he'd expected. Pretty, blond, intelligent, 32; she made him laugh, made him want to talk to her. He told her he was happily married. But she said she didn't care—she wasn't looking for a new relationship. The next time they met, he took her to a seedy hotel in the East 40s, where they had good hard sex, and then she took the train home to the suburbs. He never saw her again.

It hurt a bit. "She was looking for the same thing I was...I thought," he says. "Why didn't she want him? At first she didn't say. But ultimately, he realized she'd wanted someone wilder. A guy with leather pants, a guy who didn't seem so

Foxx would have said all this like a comedy routine. Today he lets the words slip out differently, in the way that has been good to him in recent times: a little wryly, maybe, but with sincerity and as if the reason he is saying these words is because, coming out of his mouth, they sound true.

"We're all going to be: 'I remember that guy from something or other,' and here's my toupee, and I'm a little fat, but I'm still young," he tells me. "Eventually, we're all going to be Burt Reynolds."

CHRIS HEATH is a *Q* writer-at-large.

nice, so safe, so much like her husband, maybe. "I would have really enjoyed that relationship," he says somewhat wistfully. "I thought we could have had a really nice thing." But whatever small bit of rejection he felt was fleeting. There were simply too many options, too many adventures to be had.

It was only when something went wrong, when a woman ended it or turned out to be a freak—like the one whose sponsor from a sex-addict support group found out about him and contacted him—that he'd think twice about what he was doing. "I feel varying levels of guilt. A lot of times I think, 'What am I doing? My wife is amazing, she's wonderful. She doesn't deserve a cheating husband.'"

He had a close call once, when he thought he may have caught a sexually transmitted disease. As it turned out, it wasn't a big deal. But it took two weeks to get the results of the tests, two weeks during which he didn't sleep with his wife for fear of transmitting something. But then he took an antibiotic and was healthy again. He made love to his wife and resumed his extracurricular activities. His life returned to its delicate balance. "My goal is to become an amazing compartmentalizer," he says.

But boundaries shift, and rules change. Lately, there has been a woman who calls herself Amanda. She posted an ad saying she wanted to be dominated, to explore the mental aspect of domination-submission. "I'd never done anything like that, but it had always intrigued me," Matt says. They e-mailed back and forth, at times falling into role-play right online. The first time he

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CINEMATIK

## ROCK FRESH: THE MOVIE



Making its world premiere debut at this year's AFI Film Festival in Los Angeles is *Rock Fresh*, an insightful documentary on the world of the graffiti artist by up-and-coming filmmaker Danny Lee. The film gives us a glimpse into the lives of those who live and die for an art form that, up until recently, has dodged the inevitable commodification that sanitizes even the rawest forms of expression. The film focuses on the plight of individual artists who have forsaken the tried and true path in life to devote themselves to an obscure medium.

While nicknames such as "Kofie", "Axis", "Tricker", "Clare", and "Yer" may seem immature to some, these names carry with them a prestige that only those who have immersed themselves in the graffiti world can understand. In *Rock Fresh*, Lee helps us understand why the respect accorded to these individuals should go beyond the confines of this subculture, portraying them as martyrs rather than common vandals with his unique style of documentary filmmaking. The film focuses on the magnetic and dynamic personalities of these artists, who represent a wide range in age, opinions, and approaches to the art form. Legal constraints notwithstanding, these

assumed in life, or when Tricker explains the trials of living in his grandmother's basement, the hard reality confronted by these visionaries becomes abundantly clear. Yet, we are also given a window into the rewards conferred by taking risk, especially when we see the irrefutable splendor that assumes the form of what these artists affectionately refer to as "pieces."

Not without their critics, the graffiti artists showcased in this highly enlightening documentary must deal with stigmas of criminality that unfairly taints their creative ventures. Lee does an excellent job of showing the intangible forces into what



graffiti practitioners have diligently pursued what others can only talk about: art that exists for its own sake. Of course, we can't help but be relieved when we find out some of them have made cash by turning their work into cool clothing, as Lee wisely chose to focus on some of the most talented artists in this field.

As was made evident to those who attended the highly talked-about GQ Magazine industry screening in June 2004, *Rock Fresh* goes further than any other graffiti documentary in showing the bumpy road assumed by these artisans. Whether it's worrying about rival crews or just how they are going to make next month's rent, the plight of the creatively inclined seldom abates. When Kofie describes his parents' disillusionment at the path he has

For 11 news calls "tag-banging" and the questionable argument that graffiti-taden areas are seminatural for urban violence. The focus on iconic imagery, such as R2D2 and Jini Herdrix, allowed the Calico Arts production team to forge relationships with the Herdrix family. Lucisfilm, and the Bruce Lee family. *Rock Fresh* is currently available for acquisition and distribution worldwide, but it's obvious that it won't be for long, as this film has everybody talking.

JOHN HEATH

For more information go to  
[www.rockfreshfilm.com](http://www.rockfreshfilm.com).



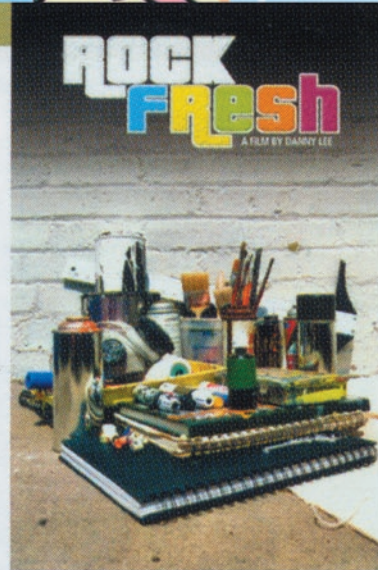
by Paul Labich

The world of graffiti art has historically been seen by the establishment as "street crime," a sign of the urban decay of modern society. But in recent years, as hip-hop emerged as the most prominent marketing tool of the new millennium, graffiti art suddenly became a legitimate art form to the masses and a "must have" image for corporations in selling what's cool to the youth today.

Director Danny Lee's new documentary *Rock Fresh* follows five graffiti artists during the strange time period of the last few years when the mainstream media suddenly took notice of what they had been doing quietly for almost two decades. Lee's film focuses on writers Axis, Clae, Kofie, Trixter, and Tyer, recounting years of late night bombing sessions, with hundreds of pieces from their personal archives.

*Rock Fresh* also does not censor the struggle of a graffiti artist, living perpetually near or below the poverty line. Not to mention the health issues of inhaling the fumes from cans from multiple hour sessions of writing and the constant harassment from law enforcement, which has recently elevated the graffiti penalty to a full-fledged felony.

The film reveals how in the life of these artists, and historically throughout the existence of graffiti art, respect is the only currency and selling out is a death sentence. In order to find ways to supplement their income, writers like Kofie and Clae begin taking their bombing styles to legal walls like storefronts as well as sneakers, hats, and shirts. *Rock Fresh* chronicles the handcrafted hats and clothes on the international market. The graffiti writers soon find themselves in high demand to produce their signature hand-painted clothing and Lee's unflinching camera captures the idealistic conflict of selling out.



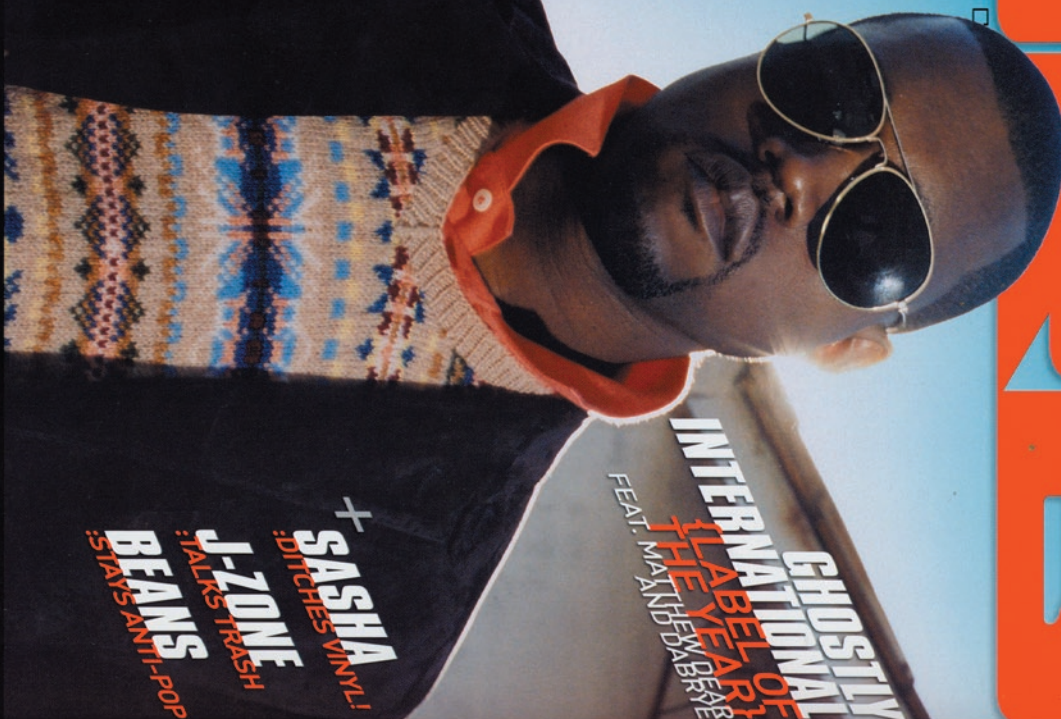
Poverty has always come with the territory of the art form and to be suddenly thrust onto an international stage as legitimate artists is a mixed blessing for them. Aside from the money being made, the interviews in *Rock Fresh* show how the artists, themselves, suddenly become exiled from the world they helped create just by making money off the art form. But it shows the acceptance of five writers who paid their dues in graffiti finding ways to make a living from it. In the process, they may have lost some of the "cred" they built their names on, but without sacrifice, there's no evolution.

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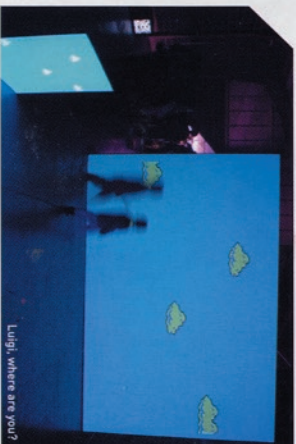
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## FORWARD

### ► SHY BOY



### Corey Arcangel hacks his own 8-bit wonderland

Corey Arcangel brings a unique perspective to the art world: "I like the idea of making things out of trash, and I like the idea of actually having to break into something that I find in the trash even better."

The premise is simple — by physically altering the chips inside classic Nintendo 64 Mario Brothers cartridges, Arcangel manipulates their 8-bit graphics at his whim and presents them in larger-than-life video installations. His first work took Mario and company out of the loop, leaving only the polluted clouds that incessantly scroll across the horizon against a candy-coated teal arcade sky. Simple, yet subtle enough to catch the fancy of the curator at Manhattan's Whitney Museum of American Art, who featured the work at the institution's 2004 Biennial.

"I started out with the Mario cartridges because they were cheap and easy to find," Arcangel said. If one cartridge got fried in the lab, it could be replaced for a dollar at the local thrift store. Arcangel gradually honed his hardware skills and plans a forthcoming series of "landscape pieces" forged out of the detritus of a hand-held Japanese racing games.

When he's not hacking Mario, Arcangel produces and performs with Beige, a group of four battle DJs who spin homemade loop records they make by torturing old Commodore 64s, Atari 800s and, of course, Nintendo. Battle records spun by mixer DJs busting Atari cuts. . . . Everything about Arcangel — his moniker, his group, his techno-Dadaist art — evokes the image of an unlikely antihero in a William Gibson novel. But once again, truth has met fiction in a dark alley and buggered it senseless.

So what can he follow with? Fifteen minutes of Mario getting violently owned by eight-bit bees-ties roaming an apocalyptic wasteland, which Arcangel will present at Manhattan's Dutch Projects gallery in January. "It's kind of like Mad Max Mario," he said. ▶ Ken Janette

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## WITNESS

### ► ROCK FRESH



### New film tells a tale of street arts and business smarts

From the streets of New York and LA to the corporate offices of Gucci, HBO and Toyota, graffiti has evolved into the next stage of American pop-art. In *Rock Fresh*, writer/director Danny Lee turns his keen graphic eye on Los Angeles graffiti writers Kofie, Traxter, Case, Axis and Yee as the crew grows from dedicated street bombers to highly in-demand artists, with all of the unseas and drama that can happen when commerce intersects with art.

Lee's camera exposes the innermost conflicts of these young men, catching Kofie at odds with his mother, Traxter sweating his own opportunities and Axis making the disconcerting claim that his "bones ache" as a result of years in the Kroyton mist. The group starts their own clothing line, which brings them to Japan. But only the future knows whether their hand-crafted wears will bring them artistic satisfaction and financial stability.

Lee's collage style of editing offers a unique and breath-taking view of the graffiti arts, highlighting the often overlooked fact that while their pieces may be spread over the landscape, great writers build a body of work that reveals that of the most renowned visual or graphic artists. Meanwhile, his footage of these painters in action reveals in the poetic physical gestures used to make something beautiful from a can of spraypaint. ▶ Joshua Glazer

More info at [www.rockfresh.com](http://www.rockfresh.com)