

1993's *What About Me* Promises Nostalgia for the Dirtier, Dodgier Old Days of the Lower East Side

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Details:

Directed by Rachel Amodeo
Opens August 1, Anthology Film Archives

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Committed to a preservation-minded, grassroots-activism agenda, the second annual MoRUS Film Festival (August 1 through 9, at various East Village venues, presented by the Museum of the Reclaimed Urban Space) focuses on "Women of the Lower East Side."

The series opens at Anthology Film Archives with 1993's *What About Me*, writer-director Rachel Amodeo's broke-ass tragicomedy of desperation, now an essential, seedily romantic snapshot of Tompkins Square Park's pre-gentrified, tent-city wilderness.

New York doll Lisa (Amodeo) is suddenly homeless and helpless after her aunt drops dead, as tastelessly informed by a landlord (cult staple Rockets Redglare) who then rapes and evicts her. Wandering the claustrophobically shot, 16mm black-and-white streets, Lisa is alternately antagonized or granted mercy by a rogues gallery of the era's punks and downtown antiheroes.

Over a drink, Richard Hell learns the secret of crack-smoking Nick Zedd's success with ladies is total apathy, while Dee Dee Ramone twitchily promises to watch Vietnam vet Richard Edson's shit on a park bench.

Johnny Thunders provides a fittingly angry, poignant soundtrack and cameos as Lisa's brother, but bandmate Jerry Nolan has the best bit, after being shot and trying to smoke with a mouthful of blood: "I gotta smoke a lighter brand."

Come for the cult of personality, stay for the nostalgia of a dirtier, dodgier, far cooler scene.