

“truly amazing”

—The List Magazine



an Accidental Media film



# ***JUST to GET a REP***

*before hip-hop there was graffiti - the definitive story*

a film by Peter Gerard

Film Festivals and other screenings:

**Edinburgh International Film Festival 2004**

**Calgary International Film Festival 2004**

**CPH:Dox Copenhagen Documentary Festival 2004**

**Adelaide Film Festival 2005**

**Rhythm of the Line Film Festival, Berlin 2005**

**Documenta Madrid 2005**

**L'International du Cinéma Hip Hop de Montréal 2005**

**Change Methods Festival, Washington DC 2005**

**Kansas International Film Festival 2005**

**Vancouver International Hip-Hop Film Festival 2005**

**Från Gatan Film Festival 2005**

**Atlanta Hip-Hop Film Festival 2006**

**True/False Film Festival 2006**

**End2End Film Festival 2006**

**Revelation Perth International Film Festival 2006**

**Cultura Urbana Festival, Madrid 2007**

**New Global Graffiti Event** - Institute of Contemporary Arts, London

**Graffilm Film Series** - Madrid & Vitoria, Spain

**Members' Cinema Programme** - The Hospital, London

**Bling: Sampling Hip Hop Fashion & the Urban Aesthetic** - Exhibition at Columbus College of Art & Design

Broadcast:

**France Ô (RFO) - 2007**

**ABC2 Australia - 2009**

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## synopsis

### **25-Word Synopsis**

The first true story of graffiti and hip-hop, featuring exclusive interviews with New York's legendary spray-paint pioneers and today's leading international artists.

### **Short Synopsis**

The first film to tell the true story of the origins of graffiti and hip-hop features exclusive interviews with New York's legendary spray-paint pioneers and today's leading artists from Europe and the US. Youths in neglected neighborhoods revolutionized the subway system by spray-painting colorful signatures that travelled downtown, uptown and ultimately worldwide. Up against cops, the media and the art-world, a global community of elusive artists continues to re-claim their urban environment.

### **Long Synopsis**

More than thirty years ago, the youth of New York's neglected neighborhoods started a revolution by spray-painting their names on subway trains. The energy and freedom of this expression has inspired generations of youth throughout the world, yet the established authorities and institutions continually deny its merit. Working against the powers of the media, the police, and the art world, aerosol artists have developed a unique worldwide culture based on respect, camaraderie and a shared struggle to re-claim and re-create their environments.

*Just to Get a Rep* rigorously examines the love-hate relationship between graffiti and hip-hop. Hear the true story of aerosol art as told by New York's pioneers as well as today's innovators from all over the world.



### Peter Gerard's Selected Filmography

- |                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Siamese Crocodiles</i> (in progress) - feature doc<br>(director/producer) | <i>Fell</i> (2003) - comedy, 4 min.<br>(writer/director)                                                                                                |
| <i>Smut</i> (2005) - short drama, 30 min.<br>(cinematographer)               | "We Watch the Crap..." (2001) - commercial, 30 sec.<br>Shown as advertisement for Bargain Basement<br>Film Festival 2001<br>(director/producer)         |
| <i>Brainsstorm</i> (2005) - comedy, 15 min.<br>(cinematographer)             | <i>Out of Breath</i> (2000) - documentary, 30 min.<br>Winner Favorite Documentary - 2000 SOFA Film<br>Festival, Portland, Oregon<br>(director/producer) |
| <i>Out of the Sun</i> (2004) - short drama, 8 min.<br>(editor)               | <i>Planet Calculon</i> (2000) - animation, 2 min. 30 sec.<br>USC Ed Wood 24-Hour Film Festival<br>(director/producer/ animator)                         |
| <i>Tuesday Weld</i> (2004) - short drama, 14 min.<br>(cinematographer)       |                                                                                                                                                         |

### Biography

Peter Gerard is an indefatigable filmmaker who finds the extraordinary in the ordinary. His first documentary, "Out of Breath," looked at teen life in the Midwestern town in which he grew up. The film won the Audience Favorite award at the SOFA Film Festival in Portland, Oregon and has been shown at the Royal Museum in Edinburgh, Scotland. In 2000 and 2001, he produced the Bargain Basement Film Festival, a celebration of low-budget film. A multi-media visionary, he has made numerous short films, designed award-winning websites, and shown his photography in the U.S. and Britain. His most recent film, *Just to Get a Rep*, documents the art and history of graffiti in the U.S. and Europe.

### Director's Statement

In many parts of the world, there is a commonly held misconception that graffiti breeds violence and crime and that graffiti writers are dangerous or violent. I have spent the past three years with incredibly generous and respectful people that risk arrest to decorate their streets and trains. These are youth who have been denied creative expression, yet they find their own way to speak. *Just to Get a Rep* barely scratches the surface of an international culture that has created its own network, its own media, and its own galleries despite the constant threat of the authorities and the established art world. While it was initially a challenge to locate these mysterious artists, I quickly became part of the culture and have met hundreds of writers in Europe and the U.S. After more than three years in the field, I finally forced myself to stop filming and tamed the material into a coherent film.





## credits list

Produced by Accidental Media in USA, UK, France, Italy, Spain from 2000-2006

Peter Gerard . . . . . director/producer/cinematographer/editor

Aaron Davis . . . . . assistant director/additional camera/sound (St. Louis)

Brian Kelly . . . . . sound recordist (St. Louis/Chicago)

Cole Gerard . . . . . sound recordist/still photographer (New York)

David Lee . . . . . sound recordist/still photographer (France/Spain)

Marta Macková . . . . . animation

Nick Koumentakis . . . . . sound design

Cousin Cole . . . . . composer

aka The Colossus

Kosmic Four . . . . . additional music

Shapeshifters . . . . . additional music

1SP . . . . . additional music

The Oratai Ensemble . . . additional music

## cast list

ZOKA	SHERM	Charlie Ahearn	FEAR
EZO	SPYDER	Grandmaster Caz	MOOCKIE
MES	SPREE ROCK	Percee-P	MODE2
Ben	DIAL167	RAVEN	KAPI
INKIE	AZ	Steven Hager	MES
SLANG	STAY HIGH 149	JAMES TOP	Fred
DOOLEY	TRACY 168	Afrika Bambaataa	Josh Jackson
DECS	PS	Breezly Brewin'	FDT 56
MEGA	SHARP	Henry Chalfant	FLYCAT
CANE	DANGER 59	Martha Cooper	AIRONE
MUTANT	BLADE	FUME	David Schmidlapp
Elani Myers	ZEPHYR	KAVES	CHAZ
APES	LEGO	CHUM101	SLICK
REX2	COMET	FUTURA	MAN ONE
L.A.J.	ROLIEO	Bernard Fiou	VYAL
CIRKUS	HOY 56	JAY ONE	KELZO
AWOL ONE	BG183	Ephraim Webber	



**Writing on the walls**

**Movie about graffiti, hip-hop by Columbia native comes to True/False Film Festival**

by Melissa Maynard, *The Missourian*, February 23, 2006

Graffiti artists tend to do most of their talking with aerosol cans in the middle of the night. But Peter Gerard, a 25-year-old native of Columbia, spent four and a half years talking to the elusive artists about their work — usually in the bright light of day.

Gerard's documentary film, "Just to Get a Rep," examines the love-hate relationship between graffiti art and hip-hop and will play at 10:30 tonight at Ragtag Cinema and again on Monday at 9:45 p.m. The film is part of the True/False Film Festival, a four-day nonfiction film event that begins today at numerous venues in Columbia. Filmmakers and musicians from all over are in Columbia for a crammed schedule of movie screenings, lectures, discussions and concerts. The event has grown in popularity and prestige since its debut three years ago, with almost a 60 percent increase in attendance last year.

The international community of graffiti writers, as they call themselves, refused, at first, to cooperate with Gerard, who directed and produced the film. He started the project by filming at Paint Louis, a graffiti festival the city of St. Louis used to sanction but has since banned. Then he chipped and networked his way deeper into the culture from there.

"Once you're in, you know everybody because everybody is connected," he said. "Once someone had verified that I was cool, then it was cool."

Gerard and a six-person crew made "Just to Get a Rep" with their own money and are still trying to put together the funding to release it for a wider audience.

But the documentary doesn't have the feel of a low-budget production. Gerard traveled the world with his own cash to interview writers and others who have been important to the hip-hop and graffiti movements during the past 30 years. The film features footage from New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, London, Milan, Manchester, Rome, Venice, Paris and Barcelona. The documentary is artfully shot, with juxtapositions of color and black-and-white footage that bring the vibrant aerosol paintings increased dignity. The graffiti artists are portrayed as much more than scandalous scribblers on walls.

The film has been featured at 12 festivals, including the prestigious Edinburgh International Film Festival in Scotland and Adelaide Film Festival in Australia.

Gerard was already interested in filmmaking as a student at Rock Bridge High School; he and friend Aaron Davis made a 30-minute film about teen life in Columbia titled "Out of Breath." In 2000 and 2001, Gerard and Davis hosted the Bargain Basement Film Festival, a forum for low-budget films at Ragtag Cinema.

Gerard graduated from Rock Bridge in 1999, then attended the University of Southern California before studying abroad and eventually moving to Scotland. He transferred to film school at Napier University in Edinburgh, where he currently works as a graphic designer and Web site producer. The job allows Gerard the flexibility to film and edit; he recently spent a few months in Ghana working on an upcoming documentary about a musician.

Gerard shot the bulk of "Just to Get a Rep" while studying at Napier University.

"Basically if I had enough money and I had time off from school, I would go somewhere and film," he said.

Gerard's brother, Cole, a New York City deejay known as Cousin Cole, recorded the soundtrack and is playing at a party for the documentary at Sapphire Lounge at 10 tonight.

Gerard said he found the community of aerosol artists he met so engaging that he had to force himself to stop filming after accumulating 60 hours of footage.

"I always found it really exciting to be around these people who really loved their art and just did it because it was a way of expressing themselves," he said.

The cast of characters Gerard assembles in "Just to Get a Rep" captures the diversity and texture of the international graffiti and hip-hop movements. Most are identified in the documentary only by their location and often-illegible graffiti signature.

There's the verbose Chicagoan who in one scene is uttering phrases such as "emulated the ideology that was presented" and in another is passionately rapping, "Hip-hop is what I love by, live by, hang my, give my, spray my, hang my, create my, innovate my, serenade my, dance



my dreams on the streets of the Chi."

There's a ponytailed Parisian magazine editor; a New Yorker wearing a polo shirt whose every other word, it seems, is an expletive (as if to prove his legitimacy); and a Londoner in a black leather hat and sunglasses with a habit of calling things "wack."

The on-screen reunion of Comet and Blade, two famed 1970s artists who reminisce about the glory days of painting the No. 2 and No. 5 trains in New York City, illustrates the depth and history of the movement. They finish each other's sentences as they recall cutting class together to watch the passing trains they transformed with aerosol cans and attitude.

In another memorable scene, a graffiti artist describes his creative process as he tries to sell a small canvas version of his work in a parking lot. "This is an unlimited — limited — edition," he tells the crowd. "A collector's item right there, man. I stayed up all — all night! — making those circles right there, man." He points to the loops, repeating the word circle over and over to emphasize the tedium and care with which he created the artwork.

"I was dreaming of Cheerios all night," he says. "Cheerios was jumping out of my head in my sleep."

When an observer asks the writer how many hours it took him to create the painting, he perks up: "See, this man knows! How many hou—ers. Hou—ers, man. See those circles, man?"

Surely Gerard, who spent a year editing the film, can relate.



## Columbia-born director documents the underground

Filmmaker Peter Gerard's documentary 'Just to Get a Rep'

will play at True/False Film Festival

by Jacob Stokes, *The Maneater's Move Magazine*, February 15, 2006

To one independent documentary filmmaker, the state of the large-budget, profit-driven American film industry is nothing more than a consequence of choosing money over inspiration.

"Hollywood's got no courage," says Columbia director Peter Gerard without a hint of haughtiness. "All they do is make remakes of old movies. No one is taking any risks."

But while Hollywood reverts to old sure-shots, Peter Gerard makes his movies by the seat of his pants, just like he always has.

Gerard, who graduated from Rock Bridge High School and attended film school in Scotland, sits in his parents' living room. He looks five years younger than his 25 years, and he exudes a charming boyishness. He makes people want to talk to him. Naturally, documentary filmmaking is his field of choice. Traveling the globe, Gerard records the world as he sees it, going from inspiration to inspiration.

Gerard's first movie, "Out of Breath" (co-directed by Aaron Davis), showed a snapshot of teen life in late-'90s Columbia. Generally composed of talking heads with little in the way of narrative structure, the movie somehow still strikes a chord. Once viewers get past the lo-fi nature of the video itself and the fact a bunch of teenagers made it, a deeper message stands out. It's a message of boredom mixed with optimism, a cherishing of youth tinged with a deep desire to be rid of its constraints. "Out of Breath" won the favorite documentary film award at the Student Original Film Art Festival in 2000.

On Feb. 23, Gerard will make his triumphant return home with a screening of his newest documentary, "Just to Get a Rep," a tight and informative look into the history of graffiti art. How does one get from a movie about Midwestern teenagers in the '90s to a movie about the history of a worldwide underground art movement? The idea came to Gerard when he ran the Bargain Basement Film Festival in Columbia.

"I read a book called 'Bomb the Suburbs' by William Upsi Wimsatt, which really got me interested in aerosol art," Gerard says, "and then we received a movie about Paint Louis and were intrigued by the graffiti event in Missouri."

Gerard had to go. Teaming up with the organizers of the now-defunct graffiti festival, he dedicated himself to a movie on the history of aerosol art. Gerard wanted to make a film

about the festival, but after he saw the complexity of aerosol culture, he realized that he couldn't make an effective movie without addressing the movement as a whole.

"We were going to make a film about Paint Louis, and then it just got out of hand," Gerard says. Four and a half years later, the film is finished and Gerard, who now lives and works in Edinburgh, Scotland, has returned to his childhood home. "Just to Get a Rep" will be playing Feb. 23 at the True/False Film Festival.

The journey from the streets of downtown Columbia and back wasn't easy. The film's subject presented many obstacles to telling the story effectively. Graffiti isn't a widely accepted art form, and the film's budget was nothing more than what Gerard could scrounge up.

"I work hard, and all I do to spend money is make movies," Gerard says. "That's how I did it."

"I stole tapes," Gerard says, laughing at how absurd it is not to have an adequate film budget. "I did whatever it took just to keep filming."

Another obstacle Gerard says he faced was getting in with a crowd that is naturally skeptical of outsiders, a clique whose admiration is based on talent and rites of passage. Starting with the writers at Paint Louis and working contact to contact from there, Gerard made his way through the graffiti world. He came out on the other side with what his Web site describes as "the new definitive video documentary about graffiti and its love-hate relationship with hip-hop."

Working with Susan Farrell, the director of graffiti Web site [artcrimes.com](http://artcrimes.com), Gerard roamed the globe to discover what graffiti was all about.

Gerard doesn't claim to have found or portrayed the entire story of aerosol art.

"It's a film," he says. "You can't show the whole story."

Gerard did find one thing: controversy.

The graffiti world has two personalities. It embraces both camaraderie and competition. It wants the art form to be legal and accepted by the mainstream art world, and it also wants to retain the adrenaline-rush style that stems from the persecution of its artists. Graffiti culture wants to embrace the man and fight the man. Because of this tension, the graffiti world has been fragmented since its start in the late '60s. As the art form becomes more accepted, the old-timers want to go back to their roots,

"bombing" subway trains in the city darkness, and the reformers want to keep moving forward, embracing graffiti galleries and magazines.

"Just to Get a Rep" explores this phenomenon comprehensively.

Mainstream acceptance has another side effect: The media lumps graffiti into the larger category of hip-hop and claims graffiti evolved as part of hip-hop instead of its own entity. This overarching miscategorization fuels the fury and indignation that many of the old-timers express in the film.

The film also explores the cultural effects on the graffiti artists of the media's association of aerosol art with three other cultural aspects of hip-hop: B-boying (break dancing), DJing and MCing. The film looks into how graffiti's clandestine and ephemeral nature was threatened by both graffiti's association with hip-hop and with the mainstream art world's attempt to tap into the art form's energy through institutionalization.

In many aspects, Gerard's filmmaking style mirrors graffiti. Both break from the art mainstream in terms of execution, and both reject elitism. Both require serious dedication and possess the energy that comes from the pure need to express — to let the art inside out.

Already in the middle stages of another project, Gerard recently returned from Ghana, where he filmed a documentary about a musician trying to get back to his roots who succeed in the music business by returning to his native Ghana.

Gerard has more than 150 hours of tape to sift through just in this project. He has his work cut out for him, especially because documentary films are in many ways written through the editing. (Gerard only decided on a final cut of "Just to Get a Rep" because he had to show it at a festival that had already admitted the film.)

Yet Gerard remains energetic and inspired. When describing his motivation, he dispenses with the mightier-than-thou attitude that accompanies many filmmakers.

"I just do it because I love the form of expression," he says. Laughing, Gerard quickly adds, as if to remind himself, "It's not for the money. Definitely not for the money."

So what does Gerard hope his films accomplish?

"I want my films to inspire people to paint," he says. "I want them to inspire creation. I will be happy if my films inspire people to think differently and change the world, whether that's by putting art on trains and walls or by making new music or simply fighting for global justice."

It seems with Gerard inspiration comes standard.



### ...And we speak to the directors of two shorts at the Film Festival

Peter Gerard's documentary *Just To Get A Rep* on the emergence of graffiti culture and its connection to hip hop is being shown with two other shorts as *Mirrorball Short Docs*.

"I used to run a film festival in the states and one of the submissions we had a few years ago was this short documentary about the Paint Louis event which you see at the beginning of the film. It was a pretty terrible documentary, well, it wasn't very good, so we decided to go there and make our own documentary about it. But from there it kind of grew out of proportions and became a film about the whole world-wide graffiti movement.

"The Edinburgh Film Festival sent me a rejection letter. Luckily I saw the programme before I saw the letter. It was confusing, but they apologised. Apparently they don't normally take films of this length, about an hour long, so probably they saw the length and said okay, send a rejection letter. And then watched it.

"People shouldn't pay to see the film. They should sneak in. Not that it's a bad film, it's just that it's too expensive. And I don't get any money out of it."

Filmhouse, Aug 22, 17:30, Aug 25, 21:00



Film director Peter Gerard whose graffiti documentary, *Just to Get a Rep*, features as part of the *Mirrorball Short Docs* in the Film Festival. August 25, 21:00.

Photo: Mike Pinches

Fest Newspaper, 20 August 2004

**Mirrorball: Short Docs** Short documentaries with a music or street basis or theme. Contains the truly amazing 64 minute hip hop history documentary *Just To Get The Rep*.  
Filmhouse 3, 9pm

The List Magazine, 19 August 2004



# A road-trip to stardom

He's a 23 year old American who has just graduated from Napier University. This summer he completed a documentary about graffiti which was selected to feature at this year's Edinburgh International Film Festival. Jesse Karjalainen speaks with Peter Gerard about film, graffiti, Napier and Fahrenheit 9/11.

photos J.K

He's very much the ordinary guy, like any student of his age. When we meet to chat, he chooses to drink neither beer nor coffee. Instead he orders and large hot chocolate.

Though from Missouri, Peter went to University in LA. He then came study at Edinburgh University. "I thought I was a little to close to Hollywood and needed to get the hell out of there," he recalls. "I was at there for a year and didn't want to go back to LA, so I was looking for further options."

Napier was not his first choice. "It was too late to apply for the college of art, and I found out that Napier had a film course, called them up. I went in for an interview, and basically it all happened in one day."

Does Napier have a good film reputation? "It did, about ten years ago.... Not anymore. The national film school has a stronger reputation for turning up talent."

After three years, he doesn't intend staying. "I was supposed to do a four year course but I'm only doing three. Sorry to my class mates and my professor!"

### A film project

The film *JUST to GET a REP* is a documentary about the history graffiti from 60s to the present day. It began as a film project in late 2000. Peter, then 20, went with a friend to a graffiti event in St Louis. "Paint Your 2000 - the last ever - was on, and we thought we might as well have some fun, go on a road trip and film it."

"We added Chicago, New York to the trip. We didn't know what we were doing and we didn't know anything



about Graffiti."

"Eventually I started looking at the books, but only after a considerable amount of time. After that we went on that two week trip, we went to NY and then we ended up interviewing some rappers, and DJs."

### Is it Art?

Gerard sees his film as more a history of the art rather than an attempt at giving it more legitimacy. "Within the culture there is a lot of confusion about the history." Though regarded as having originated in New York, some say it sprang up in Philadelphia. I ask him for his opinion. "Well it's all a bit hazy. I think that story comes from Steven

Powers. I think there is definitely some legitimacy to it, but, the styles and things really developed in upper Manhattan."

Mainstream society generally detests graffiti. "A lot of it's ugly. They associate it with every other kind of graffiti. Like people writing nasty - and offensive - stuff on the wall, and they associate this other stuff together. They see it as one thing - which it's not!"

"They're not going to call them graffiti artists. The whole term graffiti as a negative term was applied by the media. Phase-2 (a writer) for instance, he calls it Aerosol Art, and fair enough."

While graffiti is continually denied Art status - for fear of what

legitimacy might pave the way for - it is increasingly being exploited by the commercial world.

"Chaz for instance, he makes a lot of money by doing graffiti style logos for films and things, in LA. You either sell canvasses or end up in graphic design. It's natural that that's going to influence the design world. And then there are probably a lot of other people who aren't graffiti artists that are definitely biting that style. The fact that there are people in the mainstream now who are formally graffiti artists, it's natural for the graffiti aesthetic to come through."

"I think one of the important things is the lack of value. Because

painting something on a wall, you can't ever sell it, no matter what you do. You can't take that wall down and sell it. I like that it's free, and when you put it onto a canvas it becomes a commodity, which is not what graffiti art is all about."

### Putting it together

The film opens with a sequence apparently shot in night vision mode. The film is a grainy black and green. It is obvious that the people spraying the walls of what looks to be a railway underpass don't exactly have a permission slip.

"It worked well. If you're not into graffiti, it's fulfilling all your preconceived notions

of these people. Seeing them sneak around, talking about fucking up trains and shit. But it [the film] gives you another perspective as the light comes out."

"Most people who want to be on film aren't the ones doing illegal stuff. I'm sure you've seen homemade graffiti videos - where all they have is that kind of action stuff - which is maybe something that my film is lacking; at least from the graffiti community's point of view."

After collecting footage for nearly four years, he felt it was time to get it finished.

"I kept saying it's not good enough. I spent about a year editing, started in summer of 2002, and I just finished two or three weeks ago, in July. I started in chunks and edited down. I would build it up, take it down. I originally had a criss-cross kind of structure, following the path of discovery that I had, but it wasn't really coherent. I wanted to trim it down as much as possible."

A daring choice of graffiti elements is used in the titles, something that could easily have looked cheesy - or plain terrible. He explains: "Well I'm a graphic designer as well so that helps. A lot of motion graphics you see is really bad because they're not done by designers, they're done by video editors."

### Edinburgh Festival

Gerard reveals that getting a film featured in the Edinburgh International Film Festival was no mystery.

"It was the standard procedure of film festivals: you fill out an application form, send in your tape, give them a lot of money. Edinburgh is one of the most expensive festivals in the world, it's £95 for a feature. I managed to convince them to take £25 because I said I'm a local film-maker and all this kind of stuff. That is probably why they considered it."

"I submitted the film in April, though it wasn't ready. They



contacted me and said that they didn't want it, and then the programme came out and my film was listed. I called them up and asked what's going on, and they were like, oh sorry, we'll send you another letter."

"That left me in a weird situation, because, I wasn't ready, and they wanted it in a few days, ready to screen. I managed to hold them off a couple of weeks and finished up the titles and did the whole sound mix."

The film featured as part of the EIFF Mirrorball programme, and had two screenings at the Filmhouse cinema. "They went really well. Both sold out. The first went really well, and the second, I couldn't even get a ticket."

Was he approached by anyone in the industry? "Film Festivals, yes, but no one prepared to give me any money yet, which is what I'm waiting for."

"I got a screening in Madrid next month, part of a graffiti film series, and then there's the Calgary film festival. In October I've got a screening at the ICA (Institute of Contemporary Arts) in London and then

November, Copenhagen and then March, Adelaide Australia. There should be more as well."

"At the moment I'm trying to get into festivals, and then try and sell it to television and various places. I did an interview for the Sunday Times, went way out of my way to do photos for them, and then they didn't print so..."

### The Future?

"My next film is going to be about me on a greyhound bus travelling across the US two or three times without getting off the bus or out of the bus station. So we'll see what comes out of that."

The idea seems similar to Morgan Spurlock's *Supersize Me*, who also has a documentary featured in the Film Festival. "Ah... I can understand why you'd make that association, but this is an idea I had long before that movie came out," he says defensively.

What does he think of current documentary trends, having migrated into cinemas? "In some ways

it's very encouraging that they've had a lot of success. At the same time, a lot of documentaries that have become successful are becoming increasingly formulaic. Within documentary there are a lot of different ways of making films, and they're really only paying attention to a couple of ways."

What about Michael



Moore? "I liked *Roger and Me*. And I kinda liked *Bowling*... though I have some problems with it, problems with the style. *Big One* was terrible. But *9/11*, I have to say, it's all good that he's trying to get Bush out, but it was really boring, I wanted to walk out. But what's worse is the fact that it plays on the same racist tendencies in America that Bush is trying to play into."

"He's using the same fears, to tell his argument: racism against Muslims in the Middle East. He's just picked Saudi Arabia as the evil state instead of Iraq, and that's not going to solve anything. He's not improving the situation he's just making the problem worse."

"If I vote, I'm not going to vote for Bush. Probably not for Kerry either. Most people are seeing it as Anyone-but-Bush, but I think it's kind of sad, because it doesn't help. It's even more important in desperate times like this to vote for a third party, just to show: even though we've got this evil guy here, we still want to have another choice."

Peter Gerard is currently in the USA filming his next project. He intends to travel coast-to-coast by coach for ten days straight without ever leaving the terminal or bus.

For more information about his film *JUST to GET a REP*, see his website [www.justtogetarep.com](http://www.justtogetarep.com)





## Interview with Director Peter Gerard

### Why did you make *Just to Get a Rep*?

We watched a short video about this graffiti festival in St. Louis and I was intrigued by the art on the walls—the huge murals were intriguing. I didn't realize the connections between hip-hop at that time, although I was quite interested in hip-hop. This was 2000. I went to the same event to do my own version of the documentary, not really knowing about *Style Wars*, *Wild Style*, or any of the films. I was just interested in the art. When I got there I realized it was this big hip-hop thing, and I tried to understand why. So that's basically what the film became about: how graffiti writing became part of hip-hop.

**It was interesting the way a lot of the characters didn't want this banding together with hip-hop. There's this impression that a few white guys in the media labelled them together. Do you think most of the artists themselves are aware?**

I think some people are aware, and then other people lose their awareness over time because the media is a pretty strong force, and when you're constantly told by television, the films, newspapers that what you're doing is part of something else, then eventually you believe it, even if you never believed that before. I think that's what happened to a lot of people. For example, TRACY168, one of the very early guys that I interviewed, I asked him why it was part of hip-hop and he said, "Oh, that's just the way it is in New York, you know, you bring all your different cultures and it all melts together in this big pot of stew. You know, one guy brings a carrot and he's down..." That kind of surprised me 'cause a lot of people from his generation who had gotten out during the 70s (he stayed in for a long time) held fast to the idea that hip-hop wasn't a part of it because hip-hop didn't exist while they were doing it. So I think people saw the hip-hop thing moving in on what they were doing and if they were still doing it they were probably happy to accept that for the most part.

### How did you find these people?

I was looking in the phone book for the most part. Or I would get in contact with someone through a website or email. And then I would find more people through them. Or sometimes people would just write to me cause I had a website that was quite prominent in the scene. (JustToGetARep.com) And there's an organisation called Art Crimes, which is run by Susan Farrell. She runs this website which is the center point of the online graffiti community. (Artcrimes.com) So she put me in touch with a lot of people

### Were most people aware of the history of the movement?

I think that people have only started reassessing that within maybe the past ten years. From about the early



Paint Louis 2000 Festival, St. Louis, Missouri

80s to the mid- to late-90s I don't think people questioned the way that it developed that much. Most just bought the history portrayed in *Style Wars* and *Wild Style*. Around 1996, a guy called PHASE2, who is considered one of the most important people at the start, one of the founders, he published this book called *Style* which was a kind of a dissection of the true history. It was independently published by an Italian company, so I don't know if it got well distributed. And then there was another book that came out while I was doing this film, the year before last, written by a friend of his, with a very academic approach. Yet it didn't quite fully grasp the history either, and most people don't, which is kind of surprising 'cause it's their passion.

**Hip-hop created a new genre of music. Are these people pissed off because they created a new genre of art but didn't make it or get accepted in the art scene the way that hip-hop got accepted in the music scene?**

Yeah, definitely. PHASE2, for instance, is very angry about what happened to his culture. And a lot of people feel like it's time that they get their dues. PHASE2, he prefers to be called TRUE now, is probably the most angry and the most vocal about the way they got fucked over or whatever. He is afraid that what I am doing is going to be another addition to the stack of books that malign the history of his art.

**So it just looked like you were just another guy coming in, perhaps younger, still wanting to get the buzz off it rather than see the history? How did you manage to get round that perception?**

Most people seem to appreciate what I'm doing. Most people are very excited about it and they really like the fact that I was taking a much different approach than what other people have done in the past.

**TRACY said galleries are ass holes. Why do you think that graffiti didn't get accepted into the art world?**

It was a fad. And the art world is about fads. They saw this potential for selling this new exciting art. These are all people from the streets, from the ghettos, who have small support networks and no background in art history or anything like that and they're not going to last in the



## interview

art world. There are a few people who made it, maybe I could count them on one or two hands.

### Like who?

BLADE, but to be honest, BLADE also works a night job as a delivery driver. But he stills sells paintings for \$5000 dollars. Then there's DAZE and CRASH who have done very well and LEE. FUTURA2000 is probably the best success story, but even him, between say 85 and 92, he was working as a delivery guy as well because the art scene just dropped him. He only managed to get back in to it in the early 90s by getting into fashion. But the main people who succeeded were Basquiat and Keith Haring, who weren't actually from that culture at all. They were established artists who were trying to use the aesthetic of street art in what they were doing. They already knew the way the art world worked and they exploited what was there. For a brief period in the early 80s everyone was selling paintings for a few thousand dollars, but Basquiat and Haring were selling paintings for ten times as much as everybody else. And they were the only ones who lasted. The other people, when galleries stopped being interested, they didn't understand it and they didn't know what to do. They kept trying to sell their paintings. And now you find STAY HIGH selling his paintings for like a hundred dollars on the street. But the art scene was just interested in the aesthetic for a brief period.

### How did it go global? JAY ONE says, "It's like the internet without the technology." How did it get that far in a relatively short space of time?

Well, basically, one of the main things that brought people together was this brief period of interest from the art world. During the early 80s a lot of these guys from New York travelled around the world going to gallery openings and exhibitions. And there was a lot of money thrown at these guys, especially FUTURA, LEE, ZEPHYR, PHASE2, people like this. So they established links because people who had seen the films and got interested in it would come to these exhibitions and meet these artists and they would start making friends. And they kept travelling, and that kind of became the norm. Especially in Europe, because people in London would be painting and competing against each other and they would be looking for different people to paint with. And it's not that hard to get over to Paris or Amsterdam, so they established networks internally within Europe at the same time. The internet has just made it a lot easier for everyone to stay in touch.

### Is it more accepted now? You show in the film the St. Louis festival and they have a wall. Graffiti walls in cities are not that unusual now. Do you think that the fact that it's become less dangerous has made it less popular or has it lost some of the edge there?

That is quite a common sentiment that you hear: people talking about it having lost the edge. But what I think is important to note is that the scene faces a lot of opposition all over the place; it's just in different forms and different levels. Europe isn't all a safe haven for graffiti artists. The UK is one of the harshest places in the world; people get prison for several years. And you

never see paint on trains here because of the policing that's done.

### People get in prison for years, really? Do you know of anyone who's been imprisoned?

Yeah, there was a guy in Manchester a couple years ago who got caught and accused of a series of vandal acts, and he got something like three years. A lot of people protested against it. I'm not sure what came of that, but he was in pretty serious trouble. He just put his name up everywhere.

### Ok, so the UK isn't safe. But do you think that it still depends on where you are to give it that edge or bite it had previously?

Yeah, but what I think has also made it lose the edge a bit is the magazine culture that has come out of the scene. They have loads of magazines that just publish pictures of graffiti art. So people will paint in places that are safer and take the picture, and then they get up essentially by being in the magazine. Or they will paint somewhere where they know the painting is going to get washed off the next morning, but as long as they get a picture that's going to go in a magazine they're happy that their name is getting out there. So that has taken away the danger aspect quite a bit.



Peter Gerard filming in London

### So are graffiti artists still disaffected youth wanting to express themselves?

Yeah, definitely. But every now and then the media gets interested and it becomes another fad and more people get excited about it because they think they'll be cool. But at the beginning it was more of a supreme need to say something and not having any way to do it other than getting a can of paint or a marker to write it everywhere.

### Is there sort of an orthodoxy in the graffiti world or are there these different strands? Is it fractured or is it as unified as parts of the film make out?

It is quite fractured actually. I left that out, I guess maybe intentionally. There are a lot of conflicts involved.



## interview

People who steal other people's styles—that causes anger. Or people who paint 3D styles—that's not respected by some people who think you should only paint straight letters like they painted in 1975. There are definitely these different attitudes towards it, but as a whole I think most people are interested in all these different styles. They may have preferences, but they're not going to show a lot of disrespect to other people; however, that does happen.

### **There aren't beatings and shoot-outs are there?**

Oh, there's beat downs and there's people killing each other and stuff.

### **Really? In the graffiti world?**

Yeah, a couple years ago one of the guys I interviewed in Los Angeles, his friend had just been killed by some rival graffiti artists. That's pretty rare. More often people have to deal with gangs and police. But a lot of the beef comes from people painting over other people's paintings.

### **What were the things that you enjoyed most about making the film?**

The main thing I enjoyed was meeting people. I met so many interesting people. The guys you see on the screen

are just a handful of the incredibly interesting people that I met. And it took me a long time to actually stop filming; I was filming for about three years. And I couldn't stop because I just wanted to meet more people. That was the main thing, and the other thing was finding out the true story of this culture, which isn't that well documented. PHASE2's book is probably the best, but a lot of people haven't read that. It was very interesting for me to kind of figure it out through the process of meeting people and doing interviews and the research.

### **People might label this as another film in the vein of Style Wars. What would you say in response to that?**

I was trying to kind of question Style Wars and question Wild Style and show a different picture of the story and let the people from the early 70s speak next to the people who just started a couple years ago. I show how things have changed over time. I think Style Wars was more about the conflict between the city of New York and the artists, which is what makes it such a compelling film. I think it is quite a different approach.

*Interview conducted May 2004 by Shiv Malik.*



*Peter Gerard at Paint Louis 2000 Festival, St. Louis, Missouri*



## Basement tapes: Fest brings small films an audience

by Pete Bland, *The Columbia Daily Tribune*, August 16, 2001

Distance is on the minds of Peter Gerard and Aaron Davis.

Whether it be the lengths they've come in this, only the second year of their international film festival known as Bargain Basement, or the vast expanse that threatens to shelve the fledgling undertaking doesn't matter.

Separation anxiety has set in.

The two Columbia-raised amateur filmmakers have been working together since junior high, but Gerard now spends most of the year in Scotland - where he attends Napier University in Edinburgh - while Davis remains in Columbia.

"Yeah, we'll see how this one goes," Gerard said of the second edition of the Bargain Basement Film Festival, which will take place from next Thursday through Aug. 25 at Ragtag Cinemacafé, 23 N. Tenth St. "This year was pretty difficult" to organize "since we were so far away" from each other.

Still, the partners in sublime forged ahead, concentrating their full efforts on the task at hand, making the 2001 festival as memorable as possible.

And this time, Gerard and Davis - a pair of 20-year-olds who last year began their quest to bring low-budget films of a variety of skill levels to a wider audience - have more ammo with which to make a lasting impression.

Last year's inaugural fest featured 27 films that were whittled down from about 50 submissions. With an increased Web presence - at [www.bbfilm.com](http://www.bbfilm.com) - and an additional year of experience under their belts, Gerard and Davis this time landed 120 submissions, making it more difficult to choose the 33 that would constitute this year's lineup.

"Definitely the quality of submissions this year was better," Gerard said. "Last year, we didn't have anything that we rejected that we would've liked to have shown. This year, that wasn't the case."

Among the selections are three feature films, a first for the festival. They are: "Neophytes and Neon Lights," an Australian sci-fi adventure that takes place in a world where teleportation replaces air travel and urine therapy aids longevity; "Drought" ("Soluções e Soluções"), a Brazilian film revolving around the dryness problem in the northeast part of the country; and "All the Wrong Places," a New Yorker's sardonic take on art and self-discovery, with a dash of romance.

While the features and the 55-minute desert drug drama "Death Sweat" are obvious

highlights, there are a number of other standouts that will be on display during the three-day affair.

Gerard and Davis especially expect positive reaction to "Lint People," an eight-minute stop-action romp about a lint family's domestic woes; "The Prince and the Pee," a British comedy in which an everyday visit to the toilet turns into both a dream and a nightmare; and "S.T.D. (Space Time Destroyers)," a sci-fi/hip-hop tale of b-boys defending their turf from an evil space overlord.

And there are three Israeli films - "Sugar," "Bicycle" and "Moosh" - that could strike a chord with attendees.

These shorter films will be shown in groups of four to six, with each set of screenings costing from \$3 to \$5. But for the best bargain - that is, after all, what it's all about - a complete festival pass will be available for \$20.

Also on the schedule are a Ramen noodle cook-off, an ice cream social, a live

performance by a local band and other parties. Filmmakers also will be present to discuss their films.

"We're really trying to make it more festive, seem like a real film festival, I guess," Davis said. "Last year was basically just a screening of films."

Like last year, however, both audience and jury award winners will be named, and this time, certificates will be presented to favorite films at an after-party at a yet-to-be disclosed location.

After that, it'll be decision time for Gerard and Davis, who are continuing to work together on a documentary detailing graffiti of the world.

"We'd like to keep the festival going," Davis said. "But it seems like location is gonna be a problem."

"We talked about maybe getting a big 18-wheeler and taking" the festival "on the road," Gerard added. "The side of the truck makes a great screen."

"I don't know if that will ever happen, but it could be Bargain Basement for 2004."



Aaron Davis and Peter Gerard, photo by Don Shrubshell



## Student Festival Offers Clues to the Movies of the Future

by Shawn Levy

*The Oregonian*, April 15, 2000

It seems inevitable that the way we see new movies today — going out to a theater, where a mere handful of films can be shown at any one time — is a goner. Cable, satellite, the Internet: These technologies seem likely to drive the multiplex into history.

But what will be shown via these new transmission media, and who will choose it for us?

One answer might be available for viewing — the old-fashioned way — tonight in Wilsonville High School at the second annual Student Original Film Art Festival, a three-hour celebration of films-on-video by college and high school filmmakers from around Oregon, the United States and, indeed, the world.

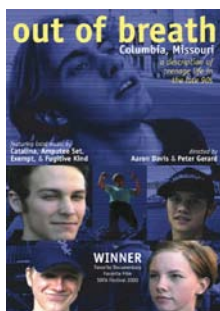
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Among the highlights are "Passage," a beautifully shot black-and-white noir nightmare from Portland filmmakers Eric Martens and Christian W. Schaefer; the sweet and sunny "Radiation Vibe" by West Linn's Ashley Sibley; and "Out of Breath," a documentary about the lives of teens in Columbia, Mo., by USC students Peter Gerard and Aaron Davis.

Although the SOFA Festival is not a competitive event, there will be an informal ballot available so that audience members can select their favorites.

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**"Out of Breath" won the SOFA Film Festival Audience Award for documentary.**



## Peter Gerard and Aaron Davis

**Our Town: a weekly portrait of mid-Missouri**

by Ed Pfueller, *The Columbia Daily Tribune*, August 24 2000

Peter Gerard and Aaron Davis were in junior high when they began writing screenplays and making movies with a camcorder in the garage.

Now at 19, they've collaborated to bring their own kind of international film festival to Columbia. It might not be Sundance or Cannes, but the Bargain Basement Video and Film Festival fills its niche quite nicely, celebrating low-budget, do-it-yourself cinema.

With a slogan of "Low cash ... little sleep" the festival last weekend at the Ragtag Cinemacafé was a great success, luring a near-capacity crowd that voted for its favorite films.

"We received about 50 films from all over, one from Australia, a large amount from Canada and some made here in Columbia," Aaron says. About 26 made the final cut.

Aaron and Peter credit the quality and variety of films submitted to an advertisement for entries that was placed in Punk Planet magazine.

One of the films shown at the festival was a documentary that Peter and Aaron shot last year about a subject close to their own lives. "Out of Breath," a video made for less than \$50, examines the lives of Columbia's youths and reflects the sentiments of young people growing up all over America in the late 1990s.

"What is Columbia all about? Definitely nothing, boredom mostly," a young man with glazed blue eyes and a cocked baseball cap says bluntly in the video. Though his opinion echoes that of a slew of young locals, the documentary doesn't pigeonhole teenagers. It always provides an alternative point of view. "What's great about Columbia is that it's a college town," says another teen, "so there's a lot of diversity."

"Out of Breath" won a Best Documentary Award at the SOFA Film Festival held in Oregon. "People who saw it in Oregon said it reminded them of their hometown," Peter says. "We think

it's pretty universal."

"We struggled at first and didn't have a lot of direction," Aaron remembers about the pair's early work on the video. They credit much of the movie's success to the openness and honesty of those they interviewed.

Despite frank discussions about drug use and sexual activity among area teens, Peter and Aaron say they've had positive feedback from adults who watched the screening. "Many parents remember the discrimination and oppression they faced as teens," Peter says. "It is kind of the same among every generation."

Peter and Aaron have a special chemistry and hope to work together in the future, despite their geographical separation. Peter is studying film at the University of Southern California and plans to spend a semester abroad in Edinburgh, Scotland. Aaron, meanwhile, will remain in Columbia.

But they still have lots of plans. First, they hope to hold another Bargain Basement Film Festival in Columbia next year. And Aaron says they're planning a documentary on graffiti around the world. Peter will probably start the project by studying the graffiti of Paris while in Europe.

Both Peter and Aaron hope to take a shot at a career in film some day, without forgetting that quality movies can be made regardless of the size of one's bank account.



Peter Gerard and Aaron Davis, photo by Ed Pfueller

## Bigtime small budget films a bargain for audiences

by Stacey Steelman

*The Maneater*, August 24, 2001

Last year, two amateur filmmakers from Columbia rose from the ashes of the deteriorating movie industry.

Sick of the big budget, high-tech, over-

commercialized productions of Hollywood and frustrated with the lack of venues for new independent films, they set out on a mission to bring Columbia a variety of new flicks from around the world and to contribute to the cultural development of our community. Their names are Aaron Davis and Peter Gerard; their contribution: The Bargain Basement Film Festival.

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Even though the festival kicked off Thursday, today promises a full day of fun with a Bookmobile show at 5 p.m., and in the Bargain Basement theme, a Ramen Noodle cook-off is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. The program boasts an ice cream social with "free ice cream headaches for everyone."

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