

An Open Letter In Support of The Melbourne Underground Film Festival

Bruce LaBruce is an internationally renowned filmmaker and writer. His works have screened across the globe: at the New York Museum of Modern Art, the Sundance Film Festival, Berlin Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, the Hong Kong Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and many others. Several of his films have also screened to appreciative Australian film festival audiences. His films are readily available to rent and buy, both internationally and nationally, where many have been released on DVD.

Mixing black comedy, politics, genre, melodrama and porn, LaBruce's films tell stories of homosexual desire, of lust and love, all shot through with a low budget, post-punk aesthetic that pays homage to both underground cinema and Hollywood classics. He has a dedicated cult fan base and his work is central in both indie film and contemporary GLBT cinema, a documentary study of LaBruce's work is due to premiere at a major European film festival in 2011.

His most recent movie, *LA Zombie* follows a 'gay' 'zombie' who, rather than killing brings the dead back to life by having sex with them. The sex, much of which is faked, is, behind the 'shocking' concept, gentle and loving. Beneath the stage-bloodied zombie movie is a tender film about the regenerative powers of sex and love.

Film fans across the world were surprised when *LA Zombie* was 'banned' during the Melbourne International Film Festival. When the film was subsequently screened with no police interference to an appreciative audience as part of the Melbourne Underground Film Festival many praised the event for enabling an audience to see the work.

It is, then, troubling that Richard Wolstencroft, the director of the Melbourne Underground Film Festival, had his house raided on 11th November by detectives searching for a copy of the film. The involvement of Victoria Police and the threat of legal action simply for screening a film that has already played to global audiences is deeply disturbing.

The image of the police and courts enforcing censorship is never pretty; when the target is the work of an internationally famous gay filmmaker it is downright shameful. The threat of legal action simply for screening a film is part of an increasingly hysterical response that can only have a detrimental effect to filmmakers and audiences in Australia.

As filmmakers, film fans, and consenting adults, we roundly condemn the banning of this film and the possibility of legal action against the director of an independent film festival.

Jack Sargeant
Richard Sowada
Anne Demy-Geroe
Julie Rigg
Dov Kornits
Christina Andreef
Fiona Patten
Maija Howe
Dominique Angeloro
Dan Angeloro
Jon Hewitt
Stefan Popescu
Katherine Berger
Dean Bertram
Mathieu Ravier
Daniel Palisa
Michael Adams
Dejan Ognjanovic
David Leadbetter
Matthew Clayfield
Jane Louise
Brendan Walls
Dave de Vries
Frank Howsom
Bec Sutherland
Matthew Clayfield
Leigh Barnes
Joel Brady
Ian Drummond
Simon Strong

International:
Craig Baldwin
David Flint
Carl Ford
Mitch Davis
Michael Tierney