

Screen: Anti-Corporate Film Festival

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In the second year of the Anti-Corporate Film Festival, there is still confusion for filmmakers and possibly audiences about what qualifies as an anti-corporate film. Must it be a documentary? Must it have an evil corporation at its center? Must it be a certain length? How widely can it be interpreted?

According to John Wilner, festival founder and director of the nonprofit CounterCorp, the sky's the limit. "We want to make it as broad as possible," Wilner says. "The submissions don't have to be overtly or aggressively anti-corporation. The only thing we ask, really, is that a corporation be at the center of the movie.

"You know, no one's ever taken me up on this, but it even could be a pro-corporate movie. Just so long as it shows the influence and power of corporations."

Indeed, that is the nonprofit's message: that corporations are both hugely influential and eminently open to influence. The festival sprang out of Wilner's desire to make that message appeal to as wide an audience as possible. He and his cohorts considered having weekly or monthly film screenings but decided a festival would be a more effective way of getting people's attention.

To drive home the point further, they've chosen a Spanish narrative film, *The Method*, to show on Friday. "We don't want it to be an all-documentary festival," he says, noting that *The Method* is a fictional take on a *Survivor*-like television show in which people compete for a job. "We think that one of the good things about a film like this is that it brings in people who might not want come see a documentary."

Saturday's programming, Wilner says, is referred to around the office as "solution Saturday." "We have a lot of shorts this year. We'll have a short program on Saturday and a segment on workers' collectives, an alternative to the corporate model, and we'll bring in some local workers." Representatives from local collectives such as Rainbow Grocery and Inkworks Press will be on hand for discussion, which, Wilner says, is key to the festival. Ideally, the films are just the start of the dialogue.

"I hope that a lot of the films on Saturday give ideas and inspiration," he says. In a David versus Goliath battle, Wilner notes, the citizen can beat the corporation, and these films show how it's done.

One of the hopeful trends Wilner has seen in curating the festival is the number of amateur filmmakers sending in work. "People are fed up with the situation," he says, pointing to *Overdrawn*, a film by a Portland, Ore., man about his struggle against his bank. "People who didn't necessarily set out to be activists ... but when they find out that they're relatively powerless against corporations, then they become organizers and activists." And, it would seem, filmmakers.

Festival opens with *Freedom of Expression* at 7 p.m. today. Check website for schedule. All films \$10. The Victoria Theatre, 2961 16th St., S.F. www.countercorp.org.

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