

## Sci-Fi? *Zenith* Imagines a Future When No One is Happy in Brooklyn or Queens

By [Michael Atkinson](#) Wednesday, Sep 29 2010

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*Zenith* uses the wasteyards and warehouses of Brooklyn and Queens as the city of a wasted future.

"The film they don't want you to see," by "Anonymous," shouts the teaser, prefaced by warnings of legal threats and "illegal" images. *Zenith* comes off at first blush as merely a spurt of faux-transgression looking for rubberneckerers. But it's actually a densely written, sparsely filmed dystopia, using the wasteyards and warehouses of [Brooklyn](#) and [Queens](#) as the city of a wasted future, when people have been genetically fine-tuned for "happiness," leaving everyone numb and scrambling after painful-bad-side-effect pharmaceuticals just so they can feel *something*. Knowledge of language and abstract nouns have apparently also been bred out in the process (using the words "solace" and "curiosity" becomes a kind of secret handshake), and the dope-dealing hero ([Peter Scanavino](#)) is obsessed with tracking the eponymous conspiracy responsible for it all, as was his dead father (Jason Robards III), seen in samizdat video tapes that record his investigation. (Not conspiracy theory, the gruff dad barks, but "fact"!)

The waltz between grizzled, realistic acting (particularly from [David Thornton](#) as a spooky, upbeat post-surgery millionaire) and evocative compositions entrances, but *Zenith* is actually one of those films for which poverty dictates that its story be told largely through narration—a brooding science-fiction trip enjoyed largely as a monologue. Luckily, Nikolic's lust for paranoid desperation is powerful, and his way with actors is stunningly graceful. Give him some money next time, and let him fly.



Lady and the dope-dealing hero.

### Details

*Zenith*  
Directed by [Vladan Nikolic](#)  
Cinema Purgatorio  
Midnight, October 1 and 2, IFC Center

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