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ARTS DINING ENTERTAINMENT LEISURE NIGHTCLUBS TRAVEL

## Park Slope Filmmaker to Premiere 'The Bag' At BAM

By Joe Maniscalco

Where will the next generation of talented movie makers come from?

One of them might already be busily working out of his basement workshop in Park Slope.

A quick look around Jason Cusato's improvised 11<sup>th</sup> Street post production space will tell you exactly where the determined young filmmaker's heart lies.

With his collection of baseball caps lining the walls and an array of camera tripods covering the floor, Cusato, 27, is still at his desktop editing a few scenes of his new movie called "The Bag" which is set to premiere at BAM's Rose Cinemas in just 10 days.

"Things are going so well," Cusato says.

Cusato has been down this road before - twice in fact.

His first film outing about the dying neighborhood sport of street stickball won both critical and audience acclaim.

For his second film, Cusato dusted off the old Poe story of the *Tell Tale Heart* and updated it with Brooklyn attitudes and locations.

"I'm building each time out and getting more knowledge," Cusato says.

As his expertise grows, so does his film crew.

The burgeoning writer/director has seen the size of his cast and crew roughly double in each of his successive projects.

"I'm trying to stretch out," Cusato says. "Just by making film, I'm learning more."

Although Cusato did study at the School of Visual Arts, he doesn't think that the art of filmmaking is something you can learn sitting in a classroom.

"You have to have a natural gift," Cusato explains. "It's not like becoming a plumber. Going to school will just bring out your talents."

Cusato has taken his particular talents and honed them on his own neighborhood streets.

He shot "The Bag" last April and May on locations in Red Hook, Windsor Terrace, Bensonhurst and Bay Ridge.

"It was a lot of fun to shoot," Cusato says. "The movie is



The guys in 'The Bag' [l to r], Phillip T. Miller, Jason Cusato, Adam Nawrocki and Andrew Lilley find themselves in a tight jam in this screen capture from the movie.

a lot of fun, too. I'm really excited, because I think people are really going to get a laugh out of this."

"The Bag" follows the exploits of a band of hapless neighborhood pals who believe that their buddy has accidentally killed his date after one particularly wild encounter.

"We previewed it down there [BAM] last week and the projection guy was dying hysterically," Cusato says.

From BAM, Cusato has his sights set on taking "The Bag"

onto the film festival circuit.

"Just the fact that I want to get there is inspiring," Cusato says.

He's already started work on his next project.

"We had a casting call three weeks ago and it went great," Cusato says. "We have amazing actors in the film."

*The Bag* premieres at BAM Rose Cinemas on August 17 at 9 p.m.