

Filmmakers drawn to Diamond saga

By Gary Bulso

Tinseltown might be interested in tunnel trailblazer Bob Diamond—Brooklyn's veritable Vasco da Gama—this paper has learned.

At least one California-based production company and a New York-based filmmaker have reached out to Diamond, who in 1980 rediscovered the old Long Island Railroad tunnel under Atlantic Avenue.

"Bob is a dreamer," said Brooklyn-based filmmaker Trey Nelson. "There are not that many people out there who still dream."

"He has a genuine interest in opening the tunnel to people so they could also dream," said Nelson, who has directed shows like "Inked," and "Road Tested."

Over the summer, Nelson, who lives on Atlantic Avenue, noticed a long line of people waiting patiently in the summer heat to go down a manhole.

He was immediately intrigued, he said, and joined the line.

Down the rabbit hole, things changed. "The place is like a time machine," Nelson said. "It smells different, it feels different."

The Long Island Railroad tunnel was built in 1844 as a route connecting New York Harbor and Boston. It was sealed up and abandoned in 1861. According to Diamond, it is world's oldest subway tunnel.

Diamond began the tours back in 1982, but discontinued them five years ago, faced with bureaucratic roadblocks and a dwindling bank account. This summer, he resumed giving tours of the half mile tunnel.

Continued on page 16

Filmmakers like tunnel king



Photo by Kendall Rodriguez

Bob Diamond, far right, is planning another tunnel tour.

Continued from cover

under Atlantic, between Hicks and Court Streets.

"Bob said to me, 'If I could inspire one kid to want to explore the heaven or the earth, than I have succeeded,'" Nelson recalled.

"I wanted to know more about Bob," he continued. "He is a very interesting person."

Nelson said he is working with Jerry Kolber, an executive producer who has worked on shows like "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy," and "Sex and the City," to see

if a feature length documentary on Diamond will work. "Part of that is finding out all the stories which exist in the tunnel," Nelson said.

"It is fantastic," said Diamond, the founder and president of the Brooklyn Historic Railway Association (BHRA), a group whose mission it is to restore trolley service to the borough.

Diamond believes the world's oldest locomotive buried in the tunnel near Columbia Street. Discovering it would be an "archeological coup," he said.

"I think the stars might be right in the universe for something good to happen with the tunnel," Diamond said.

"Cities of the Underworld," a History Channel program examining unseen layers and remnants of civilizations, has also contacted Diamond.

"Cities of the Underworld is interested in the Atlantic Avenue tunnel location," said Thea Bergeron, a producer with Los Angeles-based Authentic Entertainment, which creates the show for the cable channel.

"We look at underground locations around the world, so of course, that location is of interest," she said.

The program is now in its second season and will be filming in New York for one episode. Whether Diamond's tunnel makes the cut has not been confirmed just yet, she said.

Meanwhile, Diamond's mother Elsa, isn't mincing words about the attention her 48-year-old son attracting.

"I love it—are you kidding?" she said. "He deserves it."

Another tour is scheduled for Sunday, November 11 at 1 p.m. For reservations or more information, call 718 941 3160. For more information about the BHRA, go to www.brooklynrail.net.