

In the film, which has its New York premiere on Saturday, the plaintiffs allege that three decades of pollution from petrochemical sludge dumped by Texaco, which merged with Chevron in 2001, have created a dead zone the size of Rhode Island and resulted in skyrocketing rates of birth defects and cancer, especially leukemia. Chevron has fought the lawsuit, claiming the case was cooked up by greedy "environmental con men" and blames the state-owned Petroecuador, which took over the country's oil production in 1990.

As much as "Crude" sympathizes with the plaintiffs (the film's hero, Pablo Fajardo, their lead lawyer, once worked in the oil fields), it isn't a starkly black-

The Human Rights International Film Festival runs through June 25 at Walter Reade Theater, 165 West 65th Street, Lincoln Center; (212) 875-5601, hrw.org/en/

and-white David and Goliath story. We hear from scientists, lawyers for both sides, Ecuadorian judges, celebrity activists (Trudie Styler and Sting) and President Rafael Correa of Ecuador, who has sided with the plaintiffs in a case that may drag on for decades. These real characters and events play out on the screen like a sprawling legal thriller.

There is more than one way for a film to tweak the powers that be. And "The Yes Men Fix the World" goes at it with a raised eyebrow and a droll sense of humor. The festival's closing-night film, this sequel to "The Yes Men" (2004) follows the screwball activists Mike Bonanno and Andy Bichlbaum, who pose as business honchos, sneak into corporate events and stage pranks that embarrass multinational companies.

Here Mr. Bichlbaum, pretending to be a Dow Chemical spokes-

man, declares that the company accepts responsibility for the deaths of thousands from the 1984 chemical leak at Union Carbide's factory in Bhopal, India. (Dow bought Union Carbide in 2001.)

A selection of the festival's stronger films would include "The Reckoning: The Battle for the International Criminal

Court." This history of the tribunal, founded in 2002, follows the intrepid prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo over three years as he tries, without police backing, to issue arrest warrants to Congolese warlords and the president of Sudan.

Barmak Akram's "Kabuli Kid" is a fictional, seriocomic portrait of an Afghan cab driver in Kabul

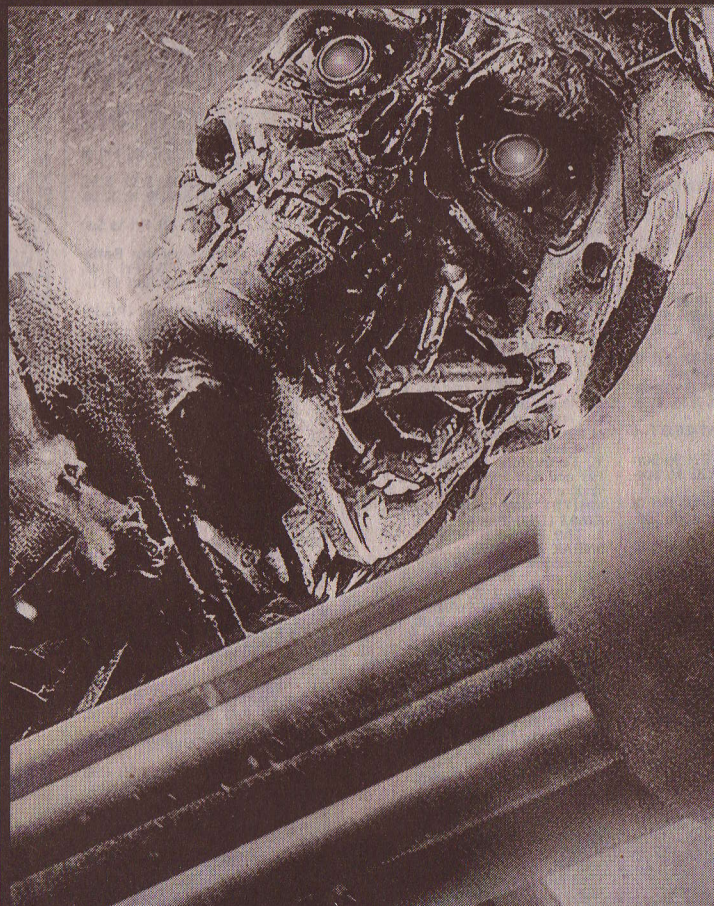
whose last passenger abandons her baby son in his vehicle. When the baby is rejected by an orphanage and the police, he brings the boy home to his family. The perspective widens, and "Kabuli Kid" becomes a complex examination of Afghan society.

Anne Aghion's "My Neighbor, My Killer" belongs to her decade-long documentary project chroni-

cling the Rwandan open-air reconciliation hearings called gacacas (pronounced ga-CHA-chas), in which citizen judges preside, as confessed Hutu killers, returned from prison, confront survivors in their communities. The film focuses on Gafumba, a rural village, and it earned Ms. Aghion the festival's Nestor Almendros Award for courage in filmmaking.

"AN EPIC SHOWDOWN."

-Joe Morgenstern, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



"THE SUMMER'S BIGGEST THRILL RIDE!"

-Mark S. Allen, CBS-TV

"McG PULLS OUT ALL THE STOPS."

-Peter Travers, ROLLING STONE



JUAN DIEGO PÉREZ

Joe Berlinger's "Crude" examines a lawsuit against Chevron.