

# VMAGAZINE

Spring 2008



## NEW FILM

For many people, Arthur Russell's 1986 album *World of Echo* remains one of the defining releases of that decade. *Echo*—with its subtle, almost shy, pop sound strained through a classical sensibility—exemplifies the delicate, intimate nature of Russell's sound. Unfortunately, despite a resurgence in notoriety (thanks, mostly, to a series of reissues in 2004) most people know little of the Iowa native's private life or the wild diversity of his work (which included forays into pop and rock, as well as disco and classical composition). Though he trained as a cellist (a prominent instrument in much of his work), Russell had dabbled in almost every medium (including scores for dance, theater, and film) before his untimely death in 1992 at the age of 40. New York artist Matt Wolf's new documentary—*Wild Combination: A Portrait of Arthur Russell*—seeks to unravel the mystery surrounding the peculiar icon. Featuring interviews and archival footage from many of Russell's friends, lovers, and collaborators—a list that includes Allen Ginsberg, the Modern Lovers, Philip Glass, and the Talking Heads, as well as Russell's family—the film itself plays out like music, retaining the languid, soothing, and dreamlike aesthetic that characterized so much of Russell's output. Intertwined with interviews and performance footage are hypnotic shots of the pastoral Iowa landscape where Russell was raised. Set to his music, these sweeping views of his childhood home provide what is perhaps the most moving evocation of Russell's life (cut tragically short by AIDS)—a life marked by boundless experimentation and an almost painful sense of wonder. **T. Cole Rachel**

*Wild Combination: A Portrait of Arthur Russell* is out in spring 2008

For info: [www.arthurrussellmovie.com](http://www.arthurrussellmovie.com)