

# Docs around the clock

A new film festival for documentaries aims to make filmmaking and watching accessible to all

RUSSELL PARTON

Hackney director Asif Kapadia may have won an Oscar for his film about Amy Winehouse, but budding documentary makers from East London and beyond continue to have a difficult time making work and getting it shown.

Documentary can be an unnecessarily inaccessible medium, according to filmmakers Vera Hems Anderson and Natalia Garay, which is why they together founded Cheap Cuts Documentary Film Festival.

The volunteer-run festival, which takes place over the weekend of 2-3 April at Hundred Years Gallery, is for films under 30 minutes long made without a huge budget or the backing of a production company.

Filmmakers submitted their work for free (which is increasingly rare these days) with a total of 1,400 submissions received for the fledgling festival.

"Our aim is to make documentary accessible to people for all walks of life. We think too many film screenings and festivals have become exclusive events and this is both unfair and unproductive," Anderson says.

"Film can be an extremely inaccessible medium and financially the film industry is one of the most unforgiving

around. Film schools remain out of reach for most young people, obtaining the latest equipment is not cheap and even cinema trips are now a luxury outing."

The open doors submissions policy meant Cheap Cuts received a diverse range of documentaries, some by unknown filmmakers from countries such as Syria, Mexico and Iran, as well as home grown practitioners from East London and elsewhere in the UK.

"We strongly believe in content over form and are interested in the stories filmmakers have to tell and not the equipment or budget used to do so," Anderson adds.

In keeping with the festival ethos of inclusivity, screenings are free to attend, with the weekend itinerary also including workshops and at least one masterclass with a renowned documentary maker.

*Cheap Cuts Documentary Film Festival*  
2-3 April  
Hundred Years Gallery, 13 Pearson  
Street, E2 8JD

