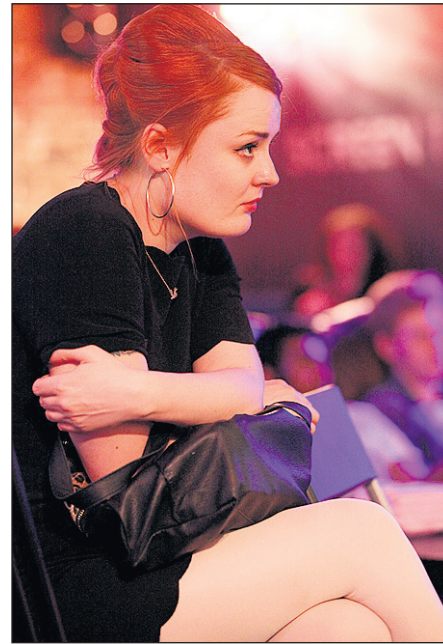




(Above, l-r) Daisychain Galaxy perform on the opening night of the festival; the cast from Miss Match; rapper Robert Lungs from House of Talent; Festival supporters Sapphire London provided catering for the popular Back to Bollywood event; the directors from Neighbourhoods Screening; audience members enjoy themselves; participant Nikkita Hollett.

Keeping it reel...

Locals proved to be a cut above the rest as record numbers attended a film festival curated by young people, as **Shalina Hussain** reports. Photos by **Rehan Jamil**.



(Right) Organiser of the Cutting East and East End Film Festival

THE Cutting East Film Festival was put together by a group of 15 young people, who worked for over six months to stage the three-day film and music festival.

Taking place at the Genesis Cinema in Mile End Road last month, the event was funded by the council, Queen Mary University London, the Mile End Community Project and Film Hub London. The project enabled young people to gain valuable experience of hosting an event and learning skills including marketing, commissioning, team work and interviewing.

The festival explored themes relevant to young people with this year's focusing on A Tale of Two Cities, learning about how different cultures interact.

"I've loved planning the festival and seeing it come together after six months of hard work," said programmer Hanifa Rahman.

(Main photo) l-r Isma Arif, Alison Poltock and Stephanie Pamment

"It's amazing to see people enjoy what we have planned. It's been an incredible journey which I am so proud to be a part of."

Hamida Begum added: "Cutting East 2014 has proved to be quite an eye opener, the opportunity to explore the power of film through understanding how film has created social and political change across the world has been wonderful."

Highlights included documentary Electro Chaabi, a unique portrayal of underground musical culture giving a voice to young people in Egypt during the Arab Spring. Director Hind Meddeb attended the screening.

There was also a Back to Bollywood day, which stemmed from an oral history project and memories of East End screenings which brought the colour and energy of Asian cinema to London.



"I am pleased with the success of the second Cutting East Festival which has inspired so many young people to work together to create a unique film festival," said Mayor Lutfur Rahman.

"In the process they have learnt valuable professional skills which help them develop their career in the arts."

The council's youth platform A Team Arts presented the premiere of Miss Match – a Bollywood adaptation of Jane Austen's Emma.

Miss Match was a comic adaptation bringing the romantic literary classic bang up to date by setting it in contemporary east London, and providing it with colourful Bollywood overtones.

Over the last few months a wealth of talent has worked on the production, including young actors, singers and dancers.

The story follows the fictional Tanya Match, who can't resist trying to play cupid with her friends, but whose interference is more harmful than helpful. When she takes Mina Patel under her wing, her good

intentions lead to disastrous consequences. The underlying themes of self-deceit, delusion and self-discovery remain relevant today and are presented by young people from Tower Hamlets' House of Talent in familiar locations with skill, passion and a sparkling script.

Cllr Shafiqul Haque, cabinet member for culture, said: "Congratulations to everyone involved in Cutting East which has been a fantastic success. I look forward to seeing how our young people develop and the many awards and accolades which are sure to follow."

The council's Youth Offending Team submitted a short film, which won third place as part of the Cutting It Short awards. Young residents created a film about crime – this subject was proposed by young people who wanted to give something back to their community.

A group of 22 people aged 13-18 known to the team worked with the council and Pup Ltd over four months to create, film and produce Your Choice, a short aimed to provoke discussion about youth crime and consequences.

Participants from Redcoat Youth Centre won first place with their film about power dynamics in teenage relationships receiving vouchers worth £450 for media equipment supported by Northern Trust.

The London Natak Company dancers



(Above, l-r) Cutting East programmer Hamida Begum; Cutting East film festival team; A 1 Scarz; on the mike; singer Ava Lyall belts out a tune at the music showcase; Cutting East team; spoken word artist Anthony Anaxagorou (Top right) Hind Meddeb, who directed Electro Chabbi; (below right) Neighbourhoods Screening, From Mumbai to Mile End