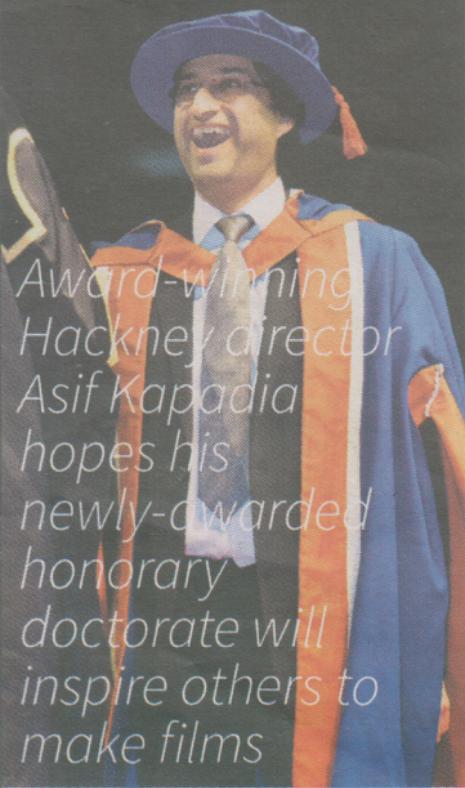


LOCAL DIRECTOR BECOMES HONORARY DOCTOR



Award-winning Hackney director Asif Kapadia hopes his newly-awarded honorary doctorate will inspire others to make films

Hackney-born director Asif Kapadia has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Arts from the University of East London (UEL), writes Dominic Simpson.

Kapadia, best known for directing the award-winning 2010 documentary *Senna*, which told the story of Brazilian Formula One driver Ayrton Senna, received the award at the North Greenwich Arena.

Catherine Harper, Dean of UEL's School of Arts & Digital Industries, said: "Asif Kapadia's contribution to filmmaking – but also to story-telling – is extraordinary: he weaves tales that move seamlessly from that of a boy thief in Rajasthan to the career of Ayrton Senna. Hackney is rightly proud of Asif, and UEL is equally proud to name him as an honorary doctorate."

Born in the borough in 1972, Kapadia's career began when working on student films as a runner. He then completed a HND at Newport Film School, followed by a degree in film-

making at the University of Westminster, before completing a Masters in film and TV direction at the Royal College of Art. Upon graduating, he directed *The Warrior*, set in the Himalayas and India's Rajasthan region; it would go on to be nominated for three BAFTA awards and won the Alexandra Kora Award for outstanding British Film of the Year 2002.

Senna, meanwhile, remains the highest grossing British documentary of all time. It won two BAFTA awards (Best Documentary and Best Editing), and scooped the World Cinema Documentary Audience Award at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival. Not bad for a Hackney native, born the youngest of five children.

Speaking to the *Hackney Citizen*, Kapadia enthuses: "It's an incredible honour! I'm a local boy, so this means a lot. Most importantly, I hope the honorary doctorate can inspire the graduating students."

On his native borough, he says: "It has influenced me in so many ways - I will always be a proud Hackney Boy! Although it was a tough place when I was growing up, my school Homerton House had a pretty bad reputation, so you had to be mentally strong to survive, to study hard and make something of yourself."

"The upside of Hackney was how multicultural the place was - everyone spoke more than one language, my school friends were from all over the world, and I guess this sowed the seed to learn more about other cultures, to travel as much as possible. To tell stories from around the world, something I have been lucky enough to do through my films."

For those Hackney-based filmmakers starting out today, Kapadia has some sage advice: "Study film if you can, even a short course. It will give you the training, access to equipment, hopefully some money and most importantly deadlines. Be original, be bold, take risks, and always finish the film, even if you're not happy with it. Then send it out to festivals and get on with the next one. The best training is getting out and making films, learn from your own mistakes."