

# Asif: 'This place never leaves you'

**The concept of home consistently threads through the recent output of Hackney-born filmmaker Asif Kapadia.**

It is present in his award-winning documentaries Amy and Senna. And it is present once more in Diego Maradona, his film on the Argentinian footballing god who grew up in a poor shantytown on the outskirts of Buenos Aires before talent whisked him away aged 15 firstly to Barcelona and then Naples.

Home shapes you and home for Kapadia is Hackney, but not the Hackney of today.

"I don't recognise it," he says with a hint of nostalgia flickering in his eyes. "It's a place where money has come in and it's changed. I grew up there in the 70s. It was a very different place.

"What I loved about it then was that it was this amazing, multicultural part of town.

"I went to Tyssen School in Stamford Hill and Homerton House School. I was born in Mothers' Hospital, which doesn't exist anymore. It was quite poor and quite rough, but I had friends from Jamaica, and from India, and Africa, and all over the world.

"Everyone spoke more than one language. Everyone ate different food. Everyone understood different cultures."

Kapadia feels as though it was also a safer and more

carefree time to grow up; certainly one unencumbered by the technology that dominates our world today.

"I played out on the street all day long from the age of four with my tricycle, and then I played football all day long until the ice cream van came and it got dark," he recalls. It has all changed now.

"I've got kids and no one goes out. No one is allowed out. Everyone is obsessed with their phones. And you're worried. I'm from another planet from the Hackney of today."

The makeup of the borough during his youth is something he credits for getting him into film.

"I was always interested in world cinema and I have always put that down to where I grew up – everyone is from somewhere and I was interested in people from different parts of the world.

"My family are not connected to the Arts in any way. We didn't really watch movies that much apart from Bollywood films, but I didn't have the patience to watch them – I'd be out playing football on Stokey Common – but that interest in world cinema and the world around me came out of going to school in Hackney and growing up there.

"I feel like the reason I'm still making films like Diego Maradona, which are not in the English language, is because I grew up [in a



A still from Diego Maradona, the film, which is released tomorrow (June 14).

time] where a day trip was catching the 73 bus and going into town, hearing fifty different languages on the way there and another twenty on the way back, and being aware that we are a part of the world and outward-looking," he adds.

And yet, for all of the mistily-eyed recollections of a bygone era, it was not all idyllic.

Kapadia reflects on the impact of 80s Conservative Britain. "A moment in time. Thatcherite politics and what she called 'Care in the Community' which essentially meant shutting down all of the hospitals and putting people with mental illness out on the streets homeless, who we then had to go past in order to get to school each day.

"I talk to friends and there are a bunch of us that have gone off and travelled the world and done well but when we meet we say that we'd not change [our upbringing] for the world. It was the best time ever".

With thoughts having rushed back to his beginnings, Kapadia concludes on an affectionate note. "You can leave Hackney, but Hackney never leaves you" and then flashes a smile for the place he once called home.

**Greg Wetherall**



Kapadia's film about Maradona follows his documentaries on Ayrton Senna and Amy Winehouse.

**Diego Maradona is released in UK cinemas on June 14.**

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