



Inspiration on a sad day for first-time filmmakers...

First-time filmmakers and participants of Diversity Films CIC's inclusive filmmaking training and mentoring programmes have rallied round to tell of what they gained most from being involved in its award-winning work. The answer?

INSPIRATION

In a global recession and as the organization announces that it is ceasing its filmmaking programmes for the foreseeable future, it is sad to hear that what starts people on the road to creative success will have one less place to be nurtured.

"I have always been passionate about film making and Diversity gave me the chance to direct and produce my first film. I wouldn't have been able to do this otherwise. I was given the chance to use professional equipment and train with industry professionals. As well as this I met great, like-minded people who will be useful contacts and great friends. Everything I have gained from working with Diversity has been invaluable to me and I can't stress enough how much of a loss I feel it would be if Diversity was no longer available to Scottish film makers in the future!"

For five successful years as an organisation, Diversity Films has worked with over 300 people, produced over 50 film projects with them and reached audiences locally, nationally and internationally with its work as an organization and through the filmmakers it has helped develop.

Diversity Films was set up in April 2007 by Abigail Howkins, Marie Olesen and Doug Aubrey, a trio of award-winning professional filmmakers, in order to find, nurture and mentor new filmmaking talent, primarily from marginalised communities across Scotland, who would not otherwise have the opportunity to experience working with the film media.

Since its inception Diversity Films has developed a strong reputation, providing high quality inclusive outreach training workshops and mentoring in filmmaking skills to many individuals and groups in Glasgow, Fife and Dumfries & Galloway. They have delivered this activity as small

project commissions and under their core programmes, including *Community Filmmakers Project* (2007/8), *Brand New* (2009) and most recently *Starting Block* (see links to films below).

The output of these programmes has been a wide range of diverse and high quality short films, reflecting the stories the individual participants wanted to tell. The films were produced through a process where participants gained creative, technical, and confidence-building skills for education, employment and life.

Diversity Films has continually sought to build on the success of its activities, and invested heavily in developing the organisation's potential as well as its core project, *Starting Block*. Despite great efforts in a turbulent economic climate, it has sadly had to withdraw its application for funding awarded by Creative Scotland to continue *Starting Block*, an ambitious nationwide programme aimed at broadening the reach of first-time filmmaking around Scotland.

The financial downturn has not been kind to the type of grassroots activity Diversity Films has offered in the last five years. In a sector already reliant on abundant voluntary hours, good will and precarious economies, the increased prevalence of cuts and reductions in investment has impacted strongly on Diversity Films, whose primary aim was to function as a socially engaged, innovative organisation offering free training and mentoring to new filmmaking talent in Scotland.

'Tough times call for tough people' says director Doug Aubrey, which means it is certainly not the last that will be heard of the people whose creative energies who set up and ran Diversity Films.

'It would be a shame to see so much important work and partnership building wasted', Abigail Howkins says, **'but we're confident that as creative people who value increased access to the arts and filmmaking, we'll be back with renewed energy and projects which can also provide opportunities. We know we have not only inspired people and ourselves but increased skills, knowledge and access to filmmaking and the film-making industry to people who would not otherwise have had it. It's a great achievement and work that we are keen to continue.'**

'It's been a tremendous privilege for us to meet and work with so many outstanding folk over the years. The inspiration people have expressed getting from their involvement with Diversity Films, is totally reciprocal' says Marie Olesen.

Diversity Films CIC have over the years been funded by: Scottish Screen/ Creative Scotland, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Scottish Arts Council, 4 Talent, LEADER Fife, Holywood Trust, Glasgow City Council Area Committee Funds, Celebrating Fife!, Dumfries and Galloway Council, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Glasgow City North East CHP, Positive Mental Attitudes, Scottish Human Rights Commission, Ethical TV, Heritage Lottery Fund, Provanhall Housing Association, NHS Health Scotland, Awards for All, Action for Children and Barnardos through Creative Identities.

In-kind partners include: Platform, Kingsway Health and Wellbeing Centre, RSAMD/ RCS, Larkfield Centre, Glasgow Life, AIS, Wellhouse Community Trust, Scottish Mental Health Arts & Film Festival, FARE, Blairhall New Community Centre, the Royal Oak in Lochgelly, Rothes Halls, Fife Council, YMCA in Cupar, the Tayside Institute in Newburgh, Colinsburgh Community Cinema, Community and Support Services Dumfries, CLD Dumfries, the Film Office in Dumfries, Amnesty

International, Glasgow Youth Film Festival, Glasgow Short Film Festival and Document International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival.

Pictures or comments regarding Diversity Films can be arranged by contacting Diversity Films on 0141 357 7299 or email mail@diversityfilms.org.uk

DIVERSITY FILMMAKERS SAY:

"Without Diversity Films, I would not have been able to make my projects to the level I have. I have gained more skills in a short period of time that I had in previous years looking for work experience within companies. Diversity Films gave me and others a chance when no one else would. I will forever be indebted to them and would not hesitate to help them in the future if I was able to assist."

"I cannot quantify how much Diversity Films has helped me professionally, educationally and personally over the past year I have known them. I was part of the Starting Block programme, which gave me the opportunity to make my own short film. Not only did they give me a budget for the film, but I was given invaluable one to one writing and directing mentorship, which has given me skills I have utilised since the end of the project and I know I will be using for years to come. I was stuck in a rut that I was having trouble getting out of until a friend persuaded to enter a script idea to the Diversity Films Starting Block programme. Now I have a film that has been in over 100 film festivals worldwide, has given me the opportunity travel (Creative Scotland funded me to support the film at Palm Springs Shortfest and the Iris Prize, a cash prize I was nominated for by London) and has won me money with which I made my next short film with confidence, knowing I had the skills from my mentoring process. Today alone I have to send the film out to 7 requests, such as India, Mexico, New Zealand, Italy, and Korea, a year after production. Inspired by Diversity Films approach in the film industry, I started a filmmaking group made for experienced and non-experienced filmmakers who want to get people together to share ideas, talent and skills. The group consists of workshops on different areas of film, taught by local talent in the area and in the industry and allows people to bring their scripts and discuss them. Since starting up 6 months ago we already have between 20 – 30 people who attend our meetings regularly, we have almost 200 members on Facebook and 3 short films made and a fourth and fifth in production. Our youngest attendee is 14. All this as I felt I wanted to share and give others the opportunity to experience what I achieved with Diversity Films. The amount of friends I have made since working with Diversity Films is awesome, from backgrounds I may not have come into contact with otherwise. I would be very sad to see Diversity Films go, not just for myself, but I get anxious there won't be others getting the same the opportunities I did with them."

'It was the first place where I did a more meaningful voluntary work: I worked within a small, dedicated and passionate team, which helped me a lot at the time to have more purpose and contributing ideas, plus gave me a really big motivation. It was really great to have been able to discover other communities of Glasgow, and make films with people there, so much good fun! Plus I worked with a variety of people from refugees to teenagers making their own music band. I learned a lot as well: using a camcorder, conducting an interview, organising film collections ...I really wish I could have still volunteered there!'

"I have loved every moment of my participation with Diversity Films, from learning how to set up cameras, to seeing completed films appear on the big screen. All of the trainees were involved in a great deal of teamwork and discussion as to how to make the best film possible, and were given all the support and guidance from the staff at Diversity Films to help make this possible. We appeared at a variety of film festivals over the course of the last year, as well as appearing at more local venues, where we would be available for a Q and A session from the audience. This was a real confidence builder for all concerned, as all of the films were so well received wherever we went. This all stems from the first class training we got from everyone at Diversity Films, and shows just how important an organisation they are when they give such great opportunities to people such as ourselves who might never have been able to access such training without their help. I can't emphasise strongly enough how much this experience has enriched my life, and brought great joy as well as encouragement and education to me, a disabled man who has very little of the above available to me. There are many others who could be helped out of the poverty of opportunity and one of the best ways of doing so would be to continue to fund Diversity Films in increasing the reach of the arts to people like myself. They were fantastic."

READ MORE AT:

www.diversityfilms.org.uk/index.php/inspiration/

ADD YOUR COMMENTS HERE:

www.surveymonkey.com/s/V5VD9J2

Watch the six Starting Block films: [http://diversityfilms.org.uk/index.php/starting-block-2/!](http://diversityfilms.org.uk/index.php/starting-block-2/)
Diversity Films online:

www.diversityfilms.org.uk
www.vimeo.com/channels/diversityfilms
www.youtube.com/diversityfilms
www.facebook.com/DiversityFilmsCIC
www.twitter.com/diversity_films