

It's independents' day

FILM

Portobello Film Festival / Canary Wharf Film Festival

If you think there's an indie film festival every week, you'd be right. According to Film London, there are more than 60 a year in London alone. So much for DVD killing the cinema.

Now in its 13th year, the Portobello Film Festival bills itself as 'the biggest independent film festival in Europe'. 'We get about 13,000 to 15,000 people every year,' says director Jonathan Barnett. 'Of course, it helps we're free.'

It's also free to submit your film and, thanks to Portobello's unique 'love all, screen all' policy, every one of the 700-plus entries gets shown at some point in one of the many scattered venues, from Westbourne Studios to coffee shops.

'I think that without trying to have our finger on the pulse, the pulse has sort of found us,' Barnett explains. 'For instance, the first year we had loads of lad crime films, including Guy Ritchie's first film, but every year it's different.'

The hot ticket this year is tomorrow's premiere of *The Town That Boars Me*, starring Kelly Osbourne, Sadie Frost, Sophie Ellis-Bextor and Jodie Harsh: a mad-sounding 'art film' about a half human/half pig who terrorises a town of women. Other highlights include an evening of films with *Son Of Rambow* creators Hammer & Tongs and Sandy Lieberman



Hogging the limelight: Kelly Osbourne is among an all-star cast in *The Town That Boars Me*, showing at the Portobello Film Festival

introducing his cult 1970 Mick Jagger vehicle *Performance*.

In fact, what often sets this festival apart is the cool quotient in the audience, with the likes of Kate, Sienna and Jade Jagger mingling with hip directors. The fact you can't throw a croissant in Notting Hill without hitting three celebs must help. 'Yes,' agrees Barnett, 'but if Notting Hill has anything left, it's artistic integrity. And in North

Kensington, where we're based, it's still kind of bohemian.'

Across town, energetic young festival director Olivia Bellas has a harder sell. 'Canary Wharf has a negative stereotype of being corporate, soulless and so far away,' she admits, 'but there's so much creativity there.' Now in its second extremely successful year, the Canary Wharf Film Festival is not just about showing 50 new short

films but also about bringing together lunch-hour office workers and local residents via 'the joy and passion of film'. 'I know that sounds cheesy but I'm a bit of a community freak,' Bellas laughs.

With its *The Apprentice*-style workshops and potential sponsorship from Reuters, Canary Wharf represents a new breed of thrusting film festival that's a world away from Portobello's. But whether you're a

West End boy or an East End girl, this week there's a film festival out there with your postcode on it.

Larushka Ivan-Zadeh

Portobello Film Festival, tomorrow until Sep 14, various venues and times, free. www.portobellofilmfestival.com
Canary Wharf Film Festival, tomorrow until Sun, various venues and times, £3 per film (some free with valid ticket for any other paying screening). www.cwff.org.uk/08