

INTRO

00:00.00

Jess Brough: Welcome to Before the Applause - an audio programme for hybrid arts festival Fringe of Colour Films. We are going to be hearing from the filmmakers and artists who are behind the films in this year's festival programme. Some of these films will make you laugh, many will challenge you, and others will be thoroughly dismantling in their ability to find their way straight to your heart. Please enjoy hearing from the people behind these remarkable films and this continuation of their stories.

DIALOGUE

NA: My name is Neha Apsara, and I've been commissioned by a Fringe of Colour Films to do a film programme off my strand of a programme of films I've been working on called *Begana*, which focus on queer South Asian filmmaking. *Begana* means strange or like, not related or like, foreign. And it just kind of feels like for me, a good kind of translation of queer. *Begana* started about six to eight months ago now. I got an opportunity as a new promoter to start a film programme was like, completely new to the film industry. I just have this obsession with wanting to bring South Asian film into the film world, I guess. And I didn't know how I was going to do that, but I guess this was the way it is. Just a focus on South Asian queer films as well as Indocaribbean Queer films and other diasporic queer films as well. So Coconut / Cane & Cutlass is a film made by filmmaker and artist Michelle Mohabeer and she is based in Canada. A lot of the film is made in Guyana. So she grew up in Guyana and moved to Canada in her formative years as a woman that was finding her sexuality and queerness and identity. And it's a really pivotal piece of work. It's really, for the time, like, really forward thinking.

[FILM CLIP]

NA: I think as well, when people think about South Asian, and I know a lot of Indo-Caribbeans, they feel that they're not included in that label, but it's a connected history. And I just think it's time that they're also included. And I just think at the time, there was a lot of South Asian queer filmmakers making amazing work. And, um, the Indo-Caribbean artists that were doing their work are also part of that era. And I just wanted to shine a light on that. I never saw the film or heard of the film until last year. I mean, I was born in 1998 so it was made before my time, so I don't know how it was received. And I guess it's been shown a lot around the world in various film festivals, but not anywhere that I've been. And I can't seem to find much about how it was received. And if there is anything about how it's maybe been received, it's probably by art critics or people that I'm not maybe as interested in. *Flesh and Paper*, I guess for Pratibha Parmar, I'd heard about her film *Khush*, like, when I was in my teens, when I was on Tumblr and one of those blogs where yeah, South Asian Tumblr blog, and saw screenshots about this and someone talking about it, and I'd wanted to watch it for ages. And I remember seeing that it was actually a channel for production so I emailed them, being like, how do I get this film? They never replied to me. And then, yeah, last year I was like, okay, I've got this job. Now I can actually try and find this film. And then I found more of Pratiba Palmer's films considering Fringe of Colour's focus on poetry this year as well. It just felt like it fit really well.

[FILM CLIP]

NA: So *Flesh and Paper* is about a poet named Suniti Namjoshi. And she was born in Mumbai in India in the 40s. She wrote this one book called *Flesh and Paper*. It was written with a woman who's also in the film, Gillian Hanscomb. And it's an interview about her work and her poetry. Because of the link of the poetry and then queerness and South Asianness previously, like her book. And then obviously the film being her interviewed about the book and about her poetry being like a dialogue between two women as lovers and friends and poets, it just feels like it fits really well. And it feels like especially going off the back of Michelle Mohabeer's film as well with the themes of colonialism and Suniti's... Suniti Bamjo, she's approach to talking about colonialism in her other work. This just felt like something more focused on loving as a woman, loving another woman as a woman. And so for me, it feels like they fit really well. I think in terms of migration and trying to find places of refuge, especially in terms of queerness within the South Asian or Indo-Caribbean context, there's this assumption that if we go westwards to these colonial strongholds, that we'd feel more open and more allowed to express ourselves and be ourselves. But actually, that's like erasing so much of the queer history that exists in our cultures as they are. And actually it kind of takes you away from the ways that we can express our queerness that feel more in line with our ancestors. Yeah, I think there's something really special about actually being like, I have this in me already. I don't have to find that within these white colonial structures or cultures. Before I started watching a lot of these films, which are most of the time not very accessible to find. Like, you can find writing about them, literature about them, but it's really hard to actually watch them. I thought there was such little, for example, such little queer movement within South Asian communities in the UK prior to the last ten years, it felt like, oh, we are starting something new. And actually, no, this has been going on for so many years and it's been there, and people have been doing the work and we're not starting from scratch. I think I just want to see South Asian people in the audience. I just want to see them and I just want to hear them and hear what they feel about the film. I just feel like it's really important.

OUTRO

09:01:03

Jess Brough: Fringe of Colour Films 2023 takes place from the 23rd to the 29th June, but this audio programme will be available in perpetuity. If you are listening to this before the festival, we hope you can join us either online or in-person in Edinburgh, and if you are listening after the festival, you can stay up-to-date with our work at fringeofcolour.co.uk. This podcast was brought to you by Fringe of Colour Films, a hybrid arts festival for Black people and People of Colour. This series is presented by me Jess Brough, produced by Halina Rifai and Fringe of Colour, theme music by Xavier LaCroix and is supported by Creative Scotland. Thank you for listening.