

White Riot (Members' Choice)

Director: Rubika Shah. UK, 2019. 80min. (15)

With: Mykael S Riley, Red Saunders, Pervez Bilgrami



White Riot is director Rubika Shah's debut feature, an expansion of her 2017 short of the same name; she also worked as the film's editor and co-writer. Shah has commented that as it was made for cinema presentation – “we spent a lot of time on the grade and mix to maximize how it would look and sound in the theatre” – it has been hard to come to terms with its mainly online release (owing to the pandemic).

Shah first began working on the story of the Rock Against Racism (RAR) movement in 2015, after finding archive footage of The Clash playing at Victoria Park; she felt this to be a major cultural event that no-one knew about. She “loves stories that you think are about pop culture, music or the arts, but they're actually a lens to explore other issues”; as such she admires films such as *Queen & Slim* and *Booksmart* (both shown by WFC).

The film features a wealth of archive footage, not just of well-known bands such as The Clash and Sham 69, but also less well-known bands such as Balham-based Asian punks Alien Kulture. The latter's singer Pervez Bilgrami has drawn parallels between the Rock Against Racism and Black Lives Matter movements: “it's all so similar, all these kids who are so committed.”

“Shah's genius resides in managing to compare both eras effectively, without resorting to the cliched or the careless.” Linda Marris, NME

“The treasure trove of archive is variously appalling and inspiring ... While some of RAR's personal anecdotes can be a little twee, Shah's indulgence of her subjects is forgiven given the nuance elsewhere.” Demetrios Matheou, Screen Daily

Best Documentary, London Film Festival; Special Mention, Generation 14+ International Jury Award, Berlin International Film Festival

Please rate the film out of 5* (5 = top score) at the screening room door as you leave.

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