



**Wales Documentary Support Network**  
**Transcript**  
**Episode 1 - Jay Bedwani**

**Introduction**

*(Intro music starts – cinema film reel whirring, and countdown beeps)*

Hello and welcome to *the Wales Documentary Support Network*, a podcast that celebrates non-fiction filmmaking. In each episode, our guest will share their tips on how to make award-winning documentaries.

I'm your host Angela Clarke, and this series is a Screen Alliance Wales & Wheesht Films Partnership, made with the support of the BFI Doc Society Fund.

My guest today is filmmaker **Jay Bedwani**. Specialising in character led documentaries, Jay's first film, ***My Mother***, was awarded Best UK Short at the *Iris Prize Film Festival*, whilst his second film, ***Stretch*** went on to win the *Best Short Documentary Award* at the *Wales International Documentary Festival*.

In July 2022 Jay's first feature documentary ***Donna*** premiered at the Castro Theatre in San Francisco as part of the *Frameline Film Festival* and showcased legendary trans activist and lip-sync performer Donna Persona as she embraces all that life has to offer in her twilight years. Driven by a desire to capture the nuance of human relationships, Jay often focuses on exploring stories concerning the LGBTQ+ community.

Jay and I discuss the inspiration behind his films, as well as the challenges that arise when you endeavour to capture complex, unfolding narratives on camera.

I hope you enjoy listening...*(music ends)*



Stretch (2018)



My Mother (2013)



Donna (2022)

**Angela Clarke** - Hey Jay, how are you?

**Jay Bedwani** - I am very good on this sunny morning!

**Angela Clarke** - I know you've been busy over the last couple of weeks attending premieres in the USA and the UK for your first feature doc – congratulations!

**Jay Bedwani** - Thank you.

**Angela Clarke** - Would you mind telling us a bit about how did Jay Bedwani get into films?

**Jay Bedwani** - Around 10 years ago actually I was in San Francisco, I was a photographer back then and I was doing some small jobs for local magazines in both Cardiff and in California. I was at a pool party, a gay pride pool party, which was fantastic, in San Francisco and I saw this incredible woman, Donna Persona. She is well known in San Francisco as a performer and an activist, and so a friend introduced me to her at this party.

We got chatting, and she asked me to take some photos of her. I met up with her, took some photos and everything she said was just so interesting. She had this great big dirty laugh which I was just really drawn to, and she talked about things I just didn't really expect. One minute she was chatting about Marilyn Monroe, then about her mother or poetry and for the first time ever, I just flipped my Canon camera over from shooting stills to video. I filmed her every now and then, whenever we'd meet up, and so it was very organic and intuitive.

Then one day I got my laptop out in a cafe and used iMovie to cut a short film. I sent it to a few festivals, and it did well on the indie festival circuit, and I realized I really loved making films. I love photography too, but all my friends were photographers and they're so good and so talented and I always felt I wasn't quite there. I was kind of struggling and didn't necessarily love it in the same way in terms of making photographs.

But with film, it just felt so organic and satisfying and exciting. You know when it gives you that sort of feeling. So that's how it started. And then I just pursued it and thought if I want to do this, I better actually learn some skills as I hadn't been to film school. So, I was kind of catching up from then on.

**Angela Clarke** - When you were being raised at home, was it was a household that watched a lot of films, or did you study photography?

**Jay Bedwani** - Well it was a household that was all about music. My mum was always playing Jefferson Airplane and Roy Orbison and so it was always about music, but films as well. It was very creative; it was really great. But I went into studying city planning bizarrely...*(laughs)*

**Angela Clarke** – Did you?

**Jay Bedwani** - I loved human geography and so I ended up studying city planning in Cardiff. But I did some work placements after my degree, and I thought I'm not going to be good at this, this is a little bit dry. So, I did an MA at Newport in Documentary Photography. It was

really cheap; you hardly had to pay much at all. I think attended the last year it was that price, so it was great. I did the course part-time, and I worked in a retro clothes shop in town. I met some great people and really got into that side of things, and I loved it. Exploring all these topics you're interested in, it's similar to film, you're not just focused on the moving image but everything else is the same really, especially the research process etc. You were always thinking visually so it was a great start. I did that for a few years and then discovered that I loved making films, but I didn't get to go to film school. I would like to have done that, but it didn't happen.

**Angela Clarke** - When you were doing city planning, had you always been interested in photography? Because I can imagine that would be the kind of thing that maybe especially your parents would be thinking that's a bit of a leap, you've just studied city planning and now you like photography...? *(laughs)*

**Jay Bedwani** – Oh my poor parents, you know you've hit the nail on the head bless them. I did that a lot... *(laughs)*

**Angela Clarke** – Me too!

**Jay Bedwani** - But I'd always loved photography. My dad and I would go on walks when I was a kid all the time and when I got my first little Boots camera, we were always taking photos of frogs and different things. They knew I had a sort of artistic side and that I was always expressing it, and they really encouraged that.

**Angela Clarke** - What kind of photographers did you like at the time? Or who do you like in the world of photography?

**Jay Bedwani** - I really loved the new topographer's collective who did lots of slightly abstract landscape work, Stephen Shore and Richard Misrack. Just the way they played with the light in the landscape was always inspiring to me. And I think it was that sort American ideal I was looking to. I was always looking that way, so they really connected with me.

**Angela Clarke** - Newport's Film's School was great and had a phenomenal reputation so I can imagine you would have learnt huge amounts there in terms of composition etc. You can see that in the films that you shoot. You can see you've got a photographers' eye in terms of your framing. And yet you never thought to dabble then and just flip things and try a little bit of movie filming - no?

**Jay Bedwani** - No I know. I kind of wish I had. But at the same time, it felt like such a leap. There was a part of me that thought it's hard enough taking good photographs, how on earth do you make a film? And then what you layer audio on top of that and you colour grade as well? How on earth do you do that? It just seemed almost out of the realms of possibility, and as unlikely as if someone just said Jay, try make an album or a record! It never popped into my head because I thought it just seemed too difficult. I'd need all this knowledge that I just didn't have *and* be able to use technology as well. Things have changed haven't they, but thank God for my little Canon 2D, you know it was enough just to attach a little mic and get something on film. I still sort of live by that philosophy, and you know you can do it.

**Angela Clarke** - San Francisco has featured a lot in terms of your work as a filmmaker. What drew you there? Was there somebody there that you knew or was it just an accidental holiday that turned into a bit of a longer obsession?

**Jay Bedwani** - That's exactly what it is Angela, once again you got it (*laughs*). Yeah, my brother was living in New Zealand, he's a doctor and he was working out there. I'd had a few months out there traveling around the North Coast and was surfing and just had the best time. I'd just finished a job back in Cardiff and had a bit of time and a bit of cash on my hands. I went out there and stayed with him and my stopover was LA on the way back. This was when I was in my early 20s. But when I got to LA, it was so big, and I didn't have a car and I just thought let's try San Francisco. I got a coach to San Francisco and was drawn mainly by the music scene initially. But I also think a part of me was drawn by the gay scene, but I wasn't out then.

You know looking back, it was gay San Francisco and I thought this is a good place to be. I found my feet in San Francisco. I met some great people. I took lots of pictures and I just really connected with the city. I came out there, got a boyfriend, my first boyfriend Martin and just kind of found myself. I was really supported by the LGBTQ+ community there. I think that's probably a big part of my connection with the city.

**Angela Clarke** – Yeah..

**Jay Bedwani** - It was fantastic, and inspiring and I mentioned these photographers that I loved, and I was seeing these places where they'd shot. It was just a special place full of artists and people doing all these different things and they didn't care about anything else. It was really special.

**Angela Clarke** - I can imagine if you were still finding out who you were as a person, that would have been a great place to go because it's kind of like nobody's watching you. Whilst you're still trying to figure out who you are and how you want to be and where your tribe is, I suppose it's a lovely place to be to do that isn't it?

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah, well, you're right in the sense of having freedom because you're not at home. It can be stifling when you're gay in the city where your school friends are. So just being able to go somewhere and be totally free. It was such a privilege, so I feel so lucky I was able to do that.

**Angela Clarke** - And do you think part of that experience and why *you* went there at that time was what attracted you to Donna in the first instance? Because she is a big, exuberant, welcoming character that has always stood up for *all* people. She's a trans activist but she's also stood up for everyone right? You know she's a big advocate of be who you want to be in life. Was that what attracted you to her do you think in a way?

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah, definitely. Donna personifies San Francisco for me and that welcome and the be who you want to be vibe. Yeah, you're right? That's what I was drawn to for sure.

**Angela Clarke** – But there's always a challenge isn't there with performers. Donna - she's used to performing by her very nature and so I suppose there's always that fear as a filmmaker when you're trying to make a portrait of somebody. How do you navigate that? Because it can be quite tricky when you've got a big personality and you're trying to film with them and accept you're there and just turn the dial down a wee bit on the performance notch. How long did you hang out together for? How long did you know her before you said do you mind if we do this? How was the relationship when you started?

**Jay Bedwani** - Well yeah, and that's a good question. I decided to focus on the performance aspect first, so she'd get used to me with the camera, and that part is so visual and was great. Be as performative as you can, and it looks great and it's fun to film and so I would go to a lot of her shows. Even when I had the footage I wanted really, I'd keep going to film. It's a great environment to film in any way, if slightly challenging so you learn lots each time.

There's lots of different people around and Donna looks into the camera then she'll turn around and go behind you, and you're trying to find her. So it was really fun, plus you've also got a beer in your hand. But as Alice Powell my editor says I usually film better when I'm drunk which is great (*laughs*). I decided to stick to that tactic for a while but then I started to film her more everyday intimate moments, kind of bringing them in gradually.

I filmed for quite a while, probably a few weeks, before I got to the point where I felt she was totally over me being there. And there's a scene in the film *Donna*, where she's counting money on her bed and it's really intimate. I remember thinking then, she's finally totally over it and she's kind of ignoring me. But anytime I brought someone else in to help, either with sound or just a camera assistant it would change the dynamic so much that I just knew I couldn't really do that.

**Angela Clarke** - Yeah because it's almost like she can't help herself isn't it. There's a new person to kind of slightly flirt and tease...

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah to flirt with, but to connect with as well.

**Angela Clarke** – Yeah.

**Jay Bedwani** – Sure. And to learn about and for them to learn about her, so it's a whole other thing. But it just changes the nuance of who she is and what I'm really interested in about her. So, there is only so much you can show of that performance before it doesn't work.

**Angela Clarke** - I think I've filmed the nightclubs like twice or three times and each time I have to say my experience of it has been horrendous....(*laughs*)

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah the drunk thumbs up...

**Angela Clarke** - Watching the footage in the sequences it almost feels like nobody was bothered by you. I was just thinking how many weeks of just hanging around did it take you before they were like yeah, oh it's just the Welsh guy back?

**Jay Bedwani** - That's also thanks to the edit! But there's a sense that people get used to you in the bars, especially in San Francisco. There was definitely an element of performance, but people instinctively know the shot won't get used if they're just kind of overdoing it so, there's that element. And filming in a gay bar, people dancing, you put signs up everywhere and I pretty much tell almost everyone as they're coming in what were we doing. They all knew what was happening and there wasn't too much resistance. But you've got to be so careful because you can't *out* people. You can't also ruin a good night! I know I when I go out, the last thing I want to see is someone like me, with a camera filming everything. So, it is hard, but that's it really.

**Angela Clarke** – That was your first film and obviously nowadays with things like compliance and consent, as a filmmaker we all learn things as we go along. But it is the kind of thing that you could so easily, as you say, *out* somebody and so there's a real responsibility entering into that world as well isn't there? Because there could be another version of you there, who has going to be *out* there. Do you think that your experience of what you were going through as a human being helped in those circumstances? You know would it be different if somebody hadn't had that experience...

**Jay Bedwani** - Completely and you're so right. I used to go to these bars when I was in that kind of hazy period of *coming out* and it would have been awful to be filmed and shown somewhere, so I'm really aware of that. I pretty much would speak to everyone there, even in a really busy bar. I'll make sure it's really obvious and I'll hold my camera up and be really visible without recording anything, so they know what's going on. And have a pocket full of release forms as well! I think there's a way of doing it and being obvious about it. You hang around, and by the end, people are just really used to you, and you get the shots you want. But it's a process and so really, you've got to be mindful.

**Angela Clarke** - Just as an aside I think you should keep him a pocket full of release forms as the title of your autobiography!

**Jay Bedwani** - Oh yeah, for sure! (*Both laughing*).

**Angela Clarke** - When you embarked on your first film, *My Mother*, that was pretty organic. So, what did you tell your contributor Donna in terms of what the outcome or the intention of the film was going to be? Because I suppose at that point, none of us necessarily know where a film will go. Do you just say I'm going to make a film, but you can't really promise anything because you don't really have a plan? How did you present that to Donna I guess to give her an assurance that you weren't wasting her time?

**Jay Bedwani** - Well, that's where I feel lucky to have that as my first film because it was a bit of an exploration for both of us. She does love the camera and we were very organically hanging out. I'd be in her place, and she'd be making me pasta and dancing while she's cooking, and I'd just film her doing that and we both enjoyed it. Because I didn't even think I could edit a film or pull anything together, so neither of us expected anything. It was just about doing it, which was really nuts. I would not have even thought I would have applied to a festival back then when I was doing it, so there was no expectation from either of us which I think was really liberating.

**Angela Clarke** - And what gave you that courage to think I'm going to give this a bash and see what happens? Was there a tipping point where you almost felt a responsibility to her, or did you start to think I've got good stuff? What was the final trigger that made you think, I'll go for it?

**Jay Bedwani** – A couple of things combined. There was this side of Donna that most people in San Francisco would see in the bars. She was extremely lively and sometimes would have the odd wardrobe malfunction and people loved her. But you know that's just one side and it's kind of a show. Then I realized I had this footage of a really different side to her that was just so maternal and tender and again, the way she talks about her mother just really touched me so much. I just kind of wanted people to see that side of her.

And you know I told her my intentions and what I liked, and she loved it, and she really enjoyed the film. I remember her one day saying, oh you know in that shot I looked like an ugly toad. But that's just one side of me and so she was she was really open to just exposing herself. And I asked her if it was okay to apply to festivals and she said yes. I just applied to a few, and I think part of that was just the excitement of kind of wow, I've just made something. You know, it was only 10 minutes and there were some out of focus shots, but I was just excited to have something that I liked myself. That feeling is great isn't it? And I hadn't really had that before so I just thought well, I will apply...

**Angela Clarke** - So when you won the *Iris Prize* for the *Best British Short Film*, what was it like seeing the film in the cinema with an audience and hearing an audience responding to it for the first time?

**Jay Bedwani** - Oh it was amazing. I love watching films and going to the cinema. But seeing something you've done, yourself, on big screen is just incredible. And the *Iris Festival* is just the best place to launch things because it's so friendly and positive and I had friends there. It was, *(pauses for thought)* it changed everything really for me, and just gave me a feeling like okay I want to keep doing this somehow...

**Angela Clarke** – Yeh, it just gives you that confidence. So, what happened after *My Mother* was released? That was 2013 when the film wins at Iris, and then it appeared at loads of other film festivals. At that point were you thinking I want to learn something else about this craft or did you have another film in mind? What was the plan? What was your next move?

**Jay Bedwani** - Well I was working for the council at the time, working with recent immigrants that had come to Cardiff, supporting them in finding work. It was a really nice job, I really loved working with these different communities. So, I had full-time work, and I didn't feel a huge rush to make something new and amazing now. Also you still need money, plus I really felt that I still had to learn a few things. I just applied for a few training schemes and I got support from Ffilm Cymru to go on some short courses. I started shooting some more observational footage, sometimes back in California, sometimes here. And I did a great course at the Scottish Documentary Institute, and they've got a *Bridging the Gap Scheme* and the workshops were just incredible. I still remember so many little nuggets of wisdom that I use today, so that was fantastic. I just kind of wanted to keep doing my thing and it happened to

be mostly focussed on LGBTQ+ subjects I was interested in. And often they were to do with ageing or getting older. I've always been interested in that, and character led stuff. I really love spending a lot of time with people and filming, so I just wanted to go down that route.

**Angela Clarke** – And so the next short film you make was called *Stretch*. Do you want to tell us what that film was about?

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah *Stretch* is about an acrobat, a French acrobat Sebastian and he came to a point in his career where he had to make a few decisions. He was the oldest acrobat in the troop. Everyone really looked up to him, but you know he was getting a few aches and pains and he had to decide whether he carried on, and what that would look like, or whether he finished on a bit of a high and what he would do afterwards. And I just wanted to make something a little bit more poetic, without too much voiceover or explanation, and it was a really nice process.

**Angela Clarke** - So how did you meet him then? Was that at another pool party? Is that how you meet all your guests? *(Both laughing)*

**Jay Bedwani** - Actually it was it was a gay bar in Paris. So yeah, you know... *(laughs)*

**Angela Clarke** – I'm seeing a thread running through your, let's call it your research process there..

**Jay Bedwani** – Mmm now you point it out... *(laughing)*.

**Angela Clarke** - Where shall my research process take me next?

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah, that was a really fun research process. So, I was introduced by a friend, and we got chatting and I was like, wow an actual acrobat. I mean how incredible. And then we talked and got to know each other and sent emails back and forth. I figured out there was this underlying story going on with him. And again, he's former, so I guess I'm attracted to that. What's going on behind all of that performance? Plus he was just really interesting and funny and was just coming to this point where he had to make some decisions about his life. And he had these great mothers he talked about, and I really wanted to meet them. And it just ended up that we had this amazing dinner at their house, and I had a great French sound recordist who was translating. They just kept wanting to feed me and we didn't film anything for ages and then when we did it was great. They were just fantastic and I mean what a way to spend your time right? Filming and meeting this wonderful family.

**Angela Clarke** – Yeah. I really, really loved the first couple of minutes of this film. I mean I loved all of the film. But the first couple of minutes I really loved because I think it's about three minutes before he actually says anything...

**Jay Bedwani** – Yeah.

**Angela Clarke** – Which in a short is a brave choice to make, because with a short you're quite often trying to pack as much in as you can because you've only got maybe 10 minutes, and

that can fly by in a heartbeat. But I loved it. It was beautifully shot. I loved the fact that you've got all those lovely close ups of his back, and it felt like you were getting under his skin, as he was doing all these stretches and he's got this amazing muscular body which I'm sure you probably didn't notice...(laughing)

**Jay Bedwani** – I didn't notice Angela... (laughing)

**Angela Clarke** – I'm sure he barely caught your eye, but just viewing his body as a tool you know, just the physicality of him stretching out, and breathing and using his body as an instrument as well. And it had that lovely pulsating heartbeat that you almost felt like you were inside him, under his skin and everything else was stripped away.

It was lovely and all of that deep breathing stuff. The filming was beautiful as well. It felt as you'd said you'd had that period of learning where you can see your filmmaking evolve. There are some lovely, beautiful shots. Watching his performance, you've got these gorgeous shots of his silhouette reflecting off all the lovely buildings in Italy where he's doing his last performance. So, I just wondered from the moment that you met, how long did it take before you plucked up the courage to ask can I make a film about you? Because I guess that's always interesting for people to hear, trying to work out when do you ask somebody that question?

**Jay Bedwani** - Pretty quickly actually. He was less game than Donna but he let me do it and the troop did as well. That was the thing, they didn't necessarily want to be on camera too much. But I think he knew me and knew my intentions and it ended up working out, but I decided early on. I mean it's just so visual isn't it, an acrobat, and their body; the muscles, skin, the breathing, it just seems such a shame to put loads of voiceover over it. I really like it for that reason, that there isn't too much of that.

**Angela Clarke** - Did you feel you were starting to evolve as a filmmaker? Were you looking at it and thinking it is a very filmic film? You know the scenes are very beautiful. And you start to see that eye that you have, and that craft that you have and you're starting to push yourself a little further again. Is that's what you saw in that subject?

**Jay Bedwani** - Well, it's great when you get that confidence in what you want to shoot. Whether or not anyone else responds to it, you always want that. But it's nice when you just know and sometimes, I'm sure you're the same, there could just be a shot and you're like it must be a centimetre the other way and you cannot really rest until it is. It's fun, I love filming. I also love it because I feel like I'm always improving. Even if it's slowly because it's something that you just need to do a lot isn't it? Work in different conditions. Everything's always changing but when you hit a sweet spot and you get a shot you really like, it's really satisfying and so that just makes me want to do it.

**Angela Clarke** - When you're starting that kind of process, how much do you just observe? Because with him and the stretching, what was lovely, well it's always like that in your films because you use a lot of natural light, and it's beautifully handled. You use a lot of natural light and play on it, with all those lovely kinds of puffs of chalk dust coming off his hands.

**Jay Bedwani** - Oh yeah, I loved that shot...

**Angela Clarke** - So how much of that did you plan then?

**Jay Bedwani** - Well, it's funny because I developed the film with the Scottish Documentary Institute. I had a storyboard, and so I had quite a thorough idea. But I thought that the troop were going to be performing in a big top tent in a field somewhere, that was the plan. And then things worked out differently and it happened that the only time and place we could film was on this strange bamboo structure in an Italian square. So, it was very different visually to what I'd imagined.

And I can't remember how long it was, I think it was three days or so that I was with them. So much shorter than I imagined as well. Because I usually like taking ages with people and so it was quicker than I'd imagined. I had a bit of a shot list and I sort of got through that quickly. But then it was just that great enjoyable moment of just observing with the camera. And it was maybe a bit quicker than I'd have wanted, but I got what I wanted and I focused. I mean it was a lovely place to film, and the light was incredible.

**Angela Clarke** - Yeah, it was a visually beautiful place. But at first, when they put up the scaffolding, I was like is that bamboo? *(laughing)*

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah, it looks like Jenga or something...

**Angela Clarke** - It all looks so higgled piggily doesn't it? *(laughing)*

**Jay Bedwani** - It's scary and I'm not great with heights. But then I realized I had to get up there to the top and film something. So, I got on, and they gave me a little harness and I'm shaking a bit and I'm up there with this big FS7 camera and lenses, trying to change lenses slowly and not to look down at the a seagull flying below *(laughing)*...

I mean it was actually a brilliant experience and I loved it. But I had a troop of acrobats just helping me tighten onto other things, so I felt safe. But it was definitely a crazy moment.

**Angela Clarke** – I'm sure your risk assessment probably was good *(laughing)*...

**Jay Bedwani** - We didn't do what of those! *(laughs)*

**Angela Clarke** – Risk of plummeting to death from unstable bamboo structure? Mmm. Well, you lived to tell the tale, so that's the main thing. So that film also does well for you and so what did you do after that? What was the kind of next move now that you had a couple of shorts under your belt?

**Jay Bedwani** - I just wanted to make a feature and spend time on developing a feature. I'd always, ever since I met Donna thought if ever a story comes up for her, I'd love her to be the subject of a feature. I just love her character and her approach to life just resonates strongly with me. We kept in touch a lot and things were happening with her and she wanted to connect with her siblings. She was thinking about changing her performance style and a few things were going on, small things, but for her really big things. And I sort of wrote some

treatments and Ffilm Cymru put me in touch with Truth Department, Dewi Gregory and we met up in Chapter and just thought that it had legs and there was something there.

So, we developed a story, you know some story threads and had some ideas. I then went out to California to shoot just for a couple of weeks and got some footage and I did some fairly crude interviews. And it's always that weird time when you're trying to pitch and make this huge story but actually I was interested in the smaller, more internal things which I knew I could probably capture.

**Angela Clarke** - But not instantly, in a kind of just I'm here for two days vibe...?

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah not instantly. And it's also that thing when you need to get some money that you must decide what you're going to try and put the emphasis on. Really for me it was all about Donna's internal change which was where I felt something was happening. She never until that point really called herself transgender. And certainly, her family had never seen her in dress. So, I had a feeling she was just kind of gathering the courage to make that happen and you know film or not, funding or not, I really wanted to just capture that because I think she is special and it's an important, *(pauses)* it's kind of coming out at later age.

**Angela Clarke** - So do you think it had always been a case of she kind of almost got into the world of drag performance and then that evolution happened, because she was still mainly just dressing up for being on stage and not necessarily dressing up as much as a woman outside of that performance when you first met her. Is that what you mean in terms of a slight shift?

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeh there's a shift and it was quite..*(pauses)* There's nuance and I would never try and sort of explain what that was. And I quite like that she didn't necessarily either, but she went with it and that's what I also love about her. She just goes with how she's feeling and what feels right. And it's a kind of we don't need to dive into this, this is what I'm feeling now and this is what I can do. And for me to be able to film that as much as I could just felt exciting.

**Angela Clarke** - If people are listening that haven't made a feature, is that a standard process in terms of you get a little bit of money to go and film something? Was it kind of like, you need to do about a 15 or 20 minute cut or to get more money don't you?

**Jay Bedwani** - We cut around 15 to 20 minutes and I think visually it looked really nice. There were some great performance scenes and Donna is great on camera that I'm sure all that really helped. And in terms of an unfolding narrative, we hadn't got much of it, and so it was a case of sticking on some interview/voice over quite crudely really and just giving an indication of where we think things are going to go. Which is a bit uncomfortable, but you sort of must try and get that next little bit of money to shoot. So that's kind of how we did it.

But then when I started working with Anne de Mo, a French editor who's fantastic and Alice Powell then we were getting into it more and looking at all the footage. Before I'd go on a shooting trip, we'd just have a thorough look and think okay, this is what we think is

happening. Let's try and shoot some stuff around that, and that's when it gets a bit more solid and exciting and less sort of fluffy.

**Angela Clarke** - So just in terms of the process or timeline, how long did it take you from going to film that couple of weeks when you pulled together that 20 min cut, before you then went out to film again? Did you have to do any other jobs in the interim period because obviously quite a lot of the time there are big gaps between these things?

**Jay Bedwani** - It takes a while doesn't it? And it was a bigger deal than I'd maybe thought about having to go out back and forth to California, funny that! It's great, however it's also disruptive. And you can't do some other jobs and so I found that difficult. But it worked out, in fact, I had another job I worked on a film called **Overshare** with Rose and Rosie who are a couple You Tubers and they are fantastic. We did some work together for a few months and that helped things along and then I could go back out to the States, and you just juggle things.

**Angela Clarke** - But that wasn't necessarily an idea that you originated, was it?

**Jay Bedwani** - No, I was approached by them to film something about them and their fans. It was very different to what I usually do but it was wonderful. It was a really nice lesson in having a project where you just film for 3 weeks and then whatever you've got at the end, you just work with it, with an editor and it has an endpoint. It actually had a very quick deadline but it's really nice to work on those kind of projects too.

**Angela Clarke** - Maybe we can talk a little bit about that since we're here now. Rosie and Rose are a young lesbian couple in a relationship. And I suppose they struck a sweet spot didn't they where they'd kind of built up this You Tube following because they talked openly about their relationship. The premise of the film that you made with them, **Overshare** was about them going to meet some of the people they had connected with all around the world. And that could be anyone from a lovely young trans person in Liverpool right the way through to an older LGBT couple living in the back of beyond in America where there was nobody like them in the community, and they didn't feel comfortable about holding each other's hands outside.

It's lovely because it comprises lots of intimate portraits of people with quite poignant stories or who are going through very seismic moments in their life. I guess Rose and Rosie gave them a sense of you're not alone, other people feel like you. And that is the beauty of the internet. For all its downsides, you can have that connection, can't you? What did you enjoy most about that process?

**Jay Bedwani** - We had so many of their fans who wanted to be in the film, and I had quite a lot of Skype calls with so many different people. We whittled down this list of people we'd film and we only had about two weeks to do the UK and the States to film a few stories...

**Angela Clarke** - Oh gosh.

**Jay Bedwani** - And we'd have just like an afternoon with most people. And it's not long and was very different to what I usually do. Rose and Rosie are fantastic and straightway I could

see the massive impact they have, just from being themselves on the internet. They're funny and thoughtful and kind and they're wonderful, but just being a couple, visibly talking about their relationship. They're married now, and they've got a beautiful baby boy. People responded so well, and they were changing people's lives. I didn't quite realize to what extent until we were on the trip and we'd meet all these really diverse people. And so Rose and Rosie and I just decided we'd make a film that was almost quite simply saying you know it gets better and whatever insurmountable problems you might have, things can change. So, we just kind of kept that in our minds the whole time and met these inspiring people.

**Angela Clarke** - There were people that had quite profound disabilities or were facing quite serious illnesses, but it had a lovely tone to it. A lot of the people they met had gone through big, awful experiences at times. But it was funny and weirdly the tone of it never felt incongruous either because they feel genuine. They're quite bubbly and a bit zany but you just knew that they cared about everybody, so there was a lot of warmth to it. But it's a lot to get, that was a tight schedule in terms of what you were trying to capture...

**Jay Bedwani** - Really tight, yeah.

**Angela Clarke** - So how did that push you then as a director because as you say you are more of a slow burn kind of man (*laughing*)...

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah, I usually like to hang around in the shadows and just film. Yeah, it was hard. It was a good lesson and we had to be so thorough, traveling between places, we had so many shot lists. And always as soon as we met someone I'd just go in on my own and chat to them. And they'd be with their mum or their brother or whoever and I really enjoyed doing that. I'd just tell them exactly what could happen because Rose and Rosie are really well-known and these stories are going to go out into the world and I was worried they'd also be a bit starstruck. They're meeting their idols and are huge fans and we're saying to them, we're going to come up to your house and you're going to meet Rose and Rosey and they're like yes, yes, yes.

So, I felt I had the duty to explain exactly the impact of telling their story. It's very personal and it's going to be online forever, and we'd do that, so everyone knew what they were getting. And because Rose and Rosey are just so approachable and funny, so it wasn't hard to get that tone right. It was harder in the edit to balance things and not make it sound too one way or the other, but we were certain it just had to be this idea that talking about things, and laughing about things, however terrible can bring some benefit because you're sharing. That's helped me, and I know it helped Rose and Rosie so that was the philosophy behind it. I mean it was hard as director and you've got to do a bit more bossing around which I was always a bit uncomfortable with, but it turns out I could do it. Plus, we had a really great little crew and Richard Buffy Dunton was the camera person and he was incredible and we shot a bit together too.

**Angela Clarke** – Yeah...

**Jay Bedwani** - But he was just brilliant and sometimes when we had a difficult interview, he'd say Jay should we all bugger off and we had this code word. I can't remember what it was,

but it was essentially a cue to say okay everyone out of the room to give me scope to do a little setup, so we could capture these more intimate chats. We did that few times and it was great. But also you know we filmed Tatyana, this wonderful girl in a tattoo parlour in New York...

**Angela Clarke** – Yeh, that’s right..

**Jay Bedwani** - And there were people buzzing around in and out and it was a bit noisy but she was telling her story and I just love that, and it wasn't the easiest thing. We could have just found a room somewhere but, it was a nice little challenge, and Rose and Rosey were just up for trying things. It was a great, great job.

**Angela Clarke** - I think you have to be a certain kind of personality to get people to tell you something really personal, even if they give consent and say they want to do it, especially when you're flipping that lens onto a person that's lived a fairly closed life. Because a lot of them had struggled to *come out* or weren't living in places where they felt as confident as they should be able to feel being exactly who they want to be in their community. Especially as you say things have a legacy online now...

**Jay Bedwani** - I think the other side of that is there is a power in telling your story. Actually giving people the opportunity to tell their stories, making sure they know what's happening and exactly what they want to say and when you edit being very respectful of that. But it's a really great thing to give them this power. I'm still in touch I think with 4 or 5 of the contributors, and I still get little Instagram messages or likes or just a check-in or some nice emails and you know I feel that for me is a success, if people still want to know you in a few years.

**Angela Clarke** - And again there were just lovely moments, a bit like some of the stuff that you had in *My Mother* and then in *Donna* which we'll come to talk about now. But I remember when Anne (*pauses*) I think it's Anne and Danny, the two older lesbians...

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeh..

**Angela Clarke** - When they are talking about the fact that they weren't out. Sorry I can't remember the name of the town they lived in...

**Jay Bedwani** - Elizabeth Town.

**Angela Clarke** - Yeah, that's it. So it's pretty small and not the most welcoming of LGBT community members. But just the fact you had a little sequence where they have a little cheeky kiss in the street.

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah, I love that...

**Angela Clarke** – And it was a massive, big deal because they were talking about the fact they hadn't really even held hands in the street all those years, and I was thinking...

**Jay Bedwani** - It's my favourite moment yeah.

**Angela Clarke** - Again, it's one of those something and nothing moments that if you didn't know the story, you would kind of just think oh that's just somebody expressing their love in the street. But for them, that was probably the biggest deal in the world....

**Jay Bedwani** - And we all have those moments don't we? And if you can get that on camera and make it bigger, sort of monumentalize it, that's such a privileged to do that isn't it...?

**Angela Clarke** - Yeah for sure...

**Jay Bedwani** – They were such a lovely couple. Yeah...

**Angela Clarke** - So that documentary filled the gap whilst you were waiting to come back to film the rest of *Donna* now. You shot that over a four-year period, and so that is your first feature documentary *Donna*. Now this has quite literally premiered in the USA and the UK this week. So, talk me through then how many times did you go back and forth to see her?

**Jay Bedwani** – You know what, I literally can't remember, quite a few times. Four or five visits maybe.

**Angela Clarke** - The reality is people have jobs and you must earn other money whilst you're here. And so sometimes you're in that no man's land of thinking well I can maybe go over now for a few weeks because I've got a few weeks between one job and the next job. But then sometimes when you can go out, it's maybe not the right moment in terms of her particular story, so how did that work?

**Jay Bedwani** - It's a compromise. It would have been great to just stay out there and respond to things. Sometimes I'd get these messages when I'd wake up in the morning from Donna and it would sort of say, 'Hey I'm doing this today... or I did this for the first time, and I wish you could have been here', but I'm in Cardiff and my camera is in my loft! But there's nothing you can do. It's frustrating, but you've got to get out of feeling that way otherwise it's going to be really hard. Equally you know, Dewi and I timed these visits to coincide with things that were happening, especially when she was writing the play, and when she was visiting her family.

**Angela Clarke** - So just tell us tell us a little bit about what the narrative ends up being then. It started off, as you mentioned earlier, with Donna kind of wanting to reconnect with family, because her family hadn't necessarily accepted her as she presented now, in the latter years of her life. And tell us also a little bit more about the play in terms of what she was doing in case people aren't familiar with the story in the Compton's Cafeteria.

**Jay Bedwani** - Well she was approached by a playwright to co-write a play about the Compton's Cafeteria Riots. The riot is a really overlooked part of San Francisco's queer history where transgender women would visit this cafe in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco but they were always harassed by the police in the 60s. And one night in 66' they just stood up to

this police brutality. And there was a riot, and it kind of sparked the beginning of a resistance to the police and put them on the map a bit.

This was pre-Stonewall, so it kind of started to make people thinking differently. And it was a really important time but there's no photos, there's no film it's just stories. And Donna was spending time in that cafe as Gustavo. She knew these women and so she had a lot to contribute to the writing of that play and she'd always wanted to write and she's good. She loves poetry and she writes well herself so she was offered this opportunity, but I actually didn't think it was going to be part of the film. But when I went out to see her I could see there's was a change in her.

That just doing this process, and again the power of telling her story and other women's stories, it really affected her. And it is funny how things work and the film sort of weaves between that narrative of her writing the play, meeting these brilliant transgender actresses and gathering the courage to reveal a bit more of herself to her family. And you know you can construct things in a film, but that's what happened. She found this courage and she felt proud. She's always been proud of who she is, but she felt like I don't know there was something else. She was getting this power, this courage from these women, from these stories and she'd talk a bit more about connecting with her sister and showing a bit more of herself. It felt like the play was just a massive part of who she is.

**Angela Clarke** - Well it felt a little bit like she was unlocking a wee bit more of herself, because as you said, she came to San Francisco at quite young age, she was in her early 20s or something wasn't she? So she'd been in San Francisco for a fair old chunk of time, albeit not as Donna, not literally inhabiting that persona but it felt a bit like because she hadn't been there as a trans woman and she was observing things as Gustavo, she felt she had a duty to tell that story because you get a sense that she feels she should have been on the other team supporting.

**Jay Bedwani** - Well she says in the film that she didn't have the courage back then to live like they did. And she's so honest and I think you're right because they looked after her, I think she felt a bit of a duty to tell their story. She's so protective of them and their stories and she just wanted to see that accurate portrayal of them.

**Angela Clarke** - And as you say, it was a big moment in LGBTQI history. But when there's no footage or photographs etc...

**Jay Bedwani** - How do you do it?

**Angela Clarke** - Yeah, how do you immortalize that and save that memory? And I think one of the other things I really liked about the film, I loved those moments where she was almost building another family herself. You got a sense that because she was kind of estranged from her own family at the time and because she came from a religious background, born to preachers as it were, in that kind of world who she wanted to be just wasn't accepted or acceptable to them. I liked the relationship she had with Shane, Shane being a young transgender woman who was trying to make it the world. And again, there's just lovely sequences that in and of themselves are just tiny moments that aren't necessarily big

moments like Donna helping Shane get into her padding and shape her booty and all that kind of stuff that they both doing.

**Jay Bedwani** – Yeah, yeah.

**Angela Clarke** - But again, just those lovely little moments, and it was really nice to capture just those intergenerational moments that you get within the trans community as well.

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah, I love intergenerational friendships and I've got some friends who I get so much from them and I hope they do for me. And we're years apart and it's in both the younger people I may have taught, and I love those kind of mentee/mentor relationships. And I've just got older friends in San Francisco particularly who I just hang out with and have drinks with, but they live so much and feel so much, and I think it's not always represented well. And I really wanted to get that on film with Shane and Donna's friendship as that grew and you could just see it. They were both getting so much from each other just felt like a really lovely thing to follow.

I love it when Donna strokes Shane's hair just before she's about to cut it and they're looking at each other and it's just so maternal and so tender and then I love those moments. You're right, they're small moments and you know some people don't like to watch films with just loads of these small moments, but I love it. I love getting those on film. And they're important, aren't they?

**Angela Clarke** – Also I think because quite a lot of the narratives that feature in the mainstream, a lot of the time, especially around any sort of issues either featuring trans people or trans stories, understandably because the trans community have experienced a lot of suffering and pain, focus on those issues and quite rightly because you've got to raise awareness of those stories in order to try and hopefully change people's opinions about trans people and how they should be treated now and how they deserve to be treated.

But equally I think it's easy to forget little moments of joy, the little wins that people like Donna or Shane or whoever experience where you just get those small moments in the day that are good and where they feel like they're winning. We've done something nice and we're helping each other and it's easy I guess to overlook those. And I think sometimes as well it's nice to have people within the community seeing something where they are reminded there will be good days as well as bad days.

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah, and they're also universal moments aren't they? And I think that's a really good way for other people to just connect with a transgender story. Maybe it's not all about the politics of which bathroom you use, or JK Rowling tweeting. It's just showing someone for who they are. There's power in that isn't there? Yeah, and that's what I always want to do with *Donna*.

**Angela Clarke** – Yeh and it's almost just bringing it back to the very core. It's just a human being at the end of the day who just because they use a different pronoun doesn't mean to say that there isn't still a lot of other characteristics that, as a human being to human being you still share.

**Jay Bedwani** - So much zest and joy and understanding of others as well. I'm just like how can you argue with that? You know you can politicize things all you want but to me that's just it.

**Angela Clarke** - She's just a person, yeah. The other sequence in the film that I really enjoyed was her going to get her hearing aids fitted (*laughing*).

**Jay Bedwani** - Oh yeah...

**Angela Clarke** - Because again it's not a big, extraordinary moment. But what I loved about it is, well I absolutely love her dirty laugh. I love what she does with her face when she laughs, she's just got such an animated face...

**Jay Bedwani** - And her mouth is wide open, a big, mouthed expression...Yeah, you can't mistake that laugh. Sometimes I'd hear it and I'd be able to find her, I think it's brilliant.

**Angela Clarke** - I can't see her but I can hear like there's no hiding, it's so distinctive. Again there were just some lovely little moment where she's losing her hearing so she's gone to get hearing aids fitted and she's doing what she always does which is taking the mickey with the two young girls that are carrying out the tests for her. And there are all these weird moments of her listening to stories about carrots to test her hearing! First of all, I was like what on earth is going on?

**Jay Bedwani** – Yeh like, exactly what is going on?

**Angela Clarke** – Yeh for the first three seconds I was thinking why is she learning about carrots!?! And then you realise what's going on. But there's just a lovely touching part at the end of that sequence where the girls are going through the paperwork and obviously on the paperwork is her birth name.

**Jay Bedwani** – Yeah.

**Angela Clarke** – And I just thought again, it's just a lovely tiny little moment where they are really sweet about handling that moment where she still has to go through this stuff about almost kind of explaining who she is again isn't it.

**Jay Bedwani** – Yeh.

**Angela Clarke** - And I just thought that was a lovely moment...

**Jay Bedwani** - And yeh they navigated that together didn't they...?

**Angela Clarke** - Yeah, and I suppose when you were filming that, did you know that they would handle it like in the moment or did you just...

**Jay Bedwani** – No. I didn't know they'd bring up the birth name. I just kind of knew that Donna going to get hearing aids fitted would kind of be funny...

Angela Clarke - Which it was, very funny.

Jay Bedwani -Yeah, it's laugh out loud funny. I think her jokes are just brilliant. But then you know you have all that laughter and connection, and then there's oh wait a minute, there's a load of legal stuff and it's based around a name you don't want to use. So it's quite poignant I think but I love the way they all handle it with such grace and understanding and they are like okay, well this is what it is, that let's navigate this together.

**Angela Clarke** - Yeah. But that's what I mean it's a lovely moment and it's those moments that, you can watch certain sequences now and you get the sense that she's now completely forgot that you're there. You know because she's so engaged as you say. It's almost like she's used to just you being there now that you're just like some sort of shadow that's with her...

**Jay Bedwani** - Slightly annoying shadow....*(laughing)*

**Angela Clarke** - But she's so busy with them and she's so engaged, it just felt like a really lovely moment because she explained it with not many words and they agreed with not many words. In terms of them being just like, 'Ok, well just put Donna down in brackets', and it's just a lovely, kind, touching moment. There were a few moments like that where she also goes back to reconnect with her sister...*(pauses)* Gloria?

**Jay Bedwani** – With Gloria yeh...

**Angela Clarke** - For thanksgiving yes. Talk us through a bit about how that relationship had been with her, because she's had tons of siblings didn't she?

**Jay Bedwani** - Oh yeah, she's one of 15 children, so there were loads of siblings and whilst she wasn't really estranged, there were emails or Facebook messages flying around a little bit, but they'd never seen her in a dress. She'd never really revealed that side of things to them and it been many years. And Gloria was always, they were just so close and they went through a lot when they were young and she talked about it of all the time. Donna had so many memories and I think Gloria was the first one she wanted to try and reconnect with. She talked about it quite a lot. She'd make a few phone calls and then at one point she was like I'm just going to go down to LA and see her. And you know, there was an invite, quite a loose invite, and so I went with her and, it was really difficult.

**Angela Clarke** - So how do you approach that moment? Because again, there's the logistics of as you said being on the end of the phone thinking that's a massive moment, you can't not go to that...

**Jay Bedwani** – A massive moment. I spoke with Gloria on the phone a couple of times and let her know that it was always her call and even if two mins before I arrived in LA, which is an eight-hour drive from San Francisco but even then, if she just said, no okay, that's fine. We got to know each other, we'd talk quite a bit on the phone and Gloria is great and we got on. I showed her ***My Mother***, the film that was also about her mother. So that helped. And I just went into it with no huge expectations and it's a gentle meeting, but for me, there's stuff

going on, there is quite a lot happening. Again it's that gentle reveal of each other, that navigation and negotiation of how much you reveal and what you say and the small moments with Gloria.

For example, Gloria finding it hard to call her Donna and so it was really intimate. But I mean, you know you make documentaries, it's these moments that you feel so privileged to be there. And then to get it on film, or some of it on film, is just incredible. And then after that, their relationship just developed a little more and that set a new level within the relationship and they spoke a bit more on the phone. They laughed a bit more and then Donna was invited to Thanksgiving. And that's when they, *(pauses)* well it was a bit awkward at first, but then they start comparing their nails, and they've got the same nail colour on and they're both laughing and they're just like two young girls together. And it's a small moment again, but I love those small moments but they're monumental for Donna and for Gloria. And after that they're just like drinking and laughing and singing and totally ignoring me and it was great.

**Angela Clarke** - I mean I suppose that's the thing, when you make those kinds of films and there's a level of sensitivity understandably as a filmmaker thinking I want to capture that moment where she meets Gloria, but there's the human being part of you thinking invariably those moments are always tricky aren't they because you want to be almost as invisible as you can be in that moment, which is hard when you're turning up with your tripod and camera...*(laughing)*

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah, exactly and there is a big family inside quite a small house actually and it was packed with people thinking who is this guy and why is he filming us? Yeah... so yes...

**Angela Clarke** - I also think as well, all of us have been there in terms of, especially when you get financial backing for your film and you're not based out there. It's different when you're making a film where there's a low cost to capturing this moment in time, then great. There's a slightly different pressure on you isn't there. But when you don't live in the same place as you're subject and you need to fly, and then do the 8-hour drive to the house, and as a human being, there's a part of you thinking at the end of the day, they are still real human beings going through a really, sensitive moment in their own evolution as siblings. You want to be there, but equally as you say, if you're a decent human being you want respect that. You want to give them the assurances look if you change your mind...

**Jay Bedwani** – Yeh but you want to get the shot as well. Yeah...

**Angela Clarke** - But that is the thing isn't it, it's a head and heart thing when there's a part of you, the human part going I don't really want to push this. But ultimately that comes down to you in that moment of having to say sorry guys, am I good to hit play? *(laughing)*

**Jay Bedwani** - I mean that's I guess where it's our job isn't it to notice these moments and predict them, and follow the right things. And they might be something else you miss, but I do love that part of it.

**Angela Clarke** – Yeah.

**Jay Bedwani** - I do and you know when you know two people like Gloria and Donna, I know Donna really well, so you can kind of predict a few things in terms of what might happen and so you just follow it and don't move away. But you know sometimes I'd be outside then I'd race in, and you know all the while not looking like your stressed because it's such a buzz kill right? If you're at a party and there's a guy with a camera looking all sweating and stressed shouting do that again (*laughs*).

So that's the last thing I do. I'm always smiling, and someone would stop me and say Jay that looks heavy and you know they'd give you some food and it's a really odd thing to do but, it's great when you get a few shots, you can relax a bit.

**Angela Clarke** – Yeh. But it is one of those things I think, as you grow as a filmmaker because what's lovely about that sequence is, there's not a huge amount of words spoken initially until we get to the nail varnish moment...

**Jay Bedwani** – Yeah...

**Angela Clarke** - But what you've got is loads of lovely non-verbal shots. And it's got that classic vibe when you get families back together whether it be at Xmas or Thanksgiving, where everyone's in their small house, pulling out the random spare chairs. We've got 17 larger adults in a space that is still only suitable for 17 small children, and everyone is squashed in and you're all slightly clamouring over each other.

Jay Bedwani - Yeah, yeah, someone is lying on the sofa...

Angela Clarke - Loosening their trousers, after eating too many carbs! But there are just those lovely moments building up to things, just silently waiting around to capture those tiny little bits. Do you make a Plan B for those moments. What would you have done if you'd got there, and she'd just said actually I've decided I just don't want film it. Like how much do you think about that (*both laughing*) or do you just not allow yourself to think that...?

**Jay Bedwani** – Usually, I'm just so concentrated on thinking okay this is happening and do as much prep as possible. Maybe contacting the right people beforehand, but that's also really tricky. So, for me, it's about turning up and I always think wherever I go that there might just be a situation where it's like, hey you can't film. So that's always in the back of my mind. But once you get in and you've got the camera out then you just kind of go for it and I try not to think, well if I don't get this, what can we do next?

That's kind of a discussion for maybe the edit when you get back home or with the producer Dewi. You just kind of get what you can. I try not to put too much pressure on myself, otherwise you just go mad, and I think people will response to you in an odd way I think.

**Angela Clarke** - But it's hard to get to the place where you've got that confidence in yourself to have that balance where you know you think I can only do what I can do in the moment, and as you say if you do it to the best of your ability and you get there, sometimes things are going to work out 100% the way you want it....

**Jay Bedwani** - It's difficult. You're right, and I remember actually now with that scene, there was a young person, one of the children and she was fascinated by the camera. She was jumping in front of it and pressing things and I could put up with that for bit but then something was happening with Gloria and Donna. You know, you don't want to just go into someone's house and tell their child to not do that, so that was probably the hardest part (*laughing*).

Yeah, so there is there's a constant negotiation in terms of how I handle this but I think a big smile always helps and a thank you etc, you know is all so important.

**Angela Clarke** - And so how has Donna responded to the film then? You had the premiere in the Castro Theatre in San Francisco a couple weeks ago, so how did she take to that?

**Jay Bedwani** - Ah, she loved it. She was totally in her element. The screening went well, it was such a reactive audience, and a really big audience and they like totally loved it. And she came out at the end, and everyone formed this big circle around her and were chanting her name Donna, Donna.

**Angela Clarke** – Ohhh.

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah, it was the first time I've seen her really overwhelmed. But she was laughing, that big dirty laugh, and I was kind of in the shadows, no-one looking at this chump (*laughing*). But it was really lovely and actually some of her family were there. They actually all came up to me, lots of them with tears in their eyes, and they all hugged me. It was a really perfect screening, and a lovely response and lots of the transgender community in San Francisco were there too. It was just a really positive day, so, she was really happy. She still is, and more of her family is reaching out a little after the screening and there's been a bit of press around it. Yeah, it's good but you always worry about the subjects of a film. I'm constantly checking with her and she's checking with me, but so far it's all going well.

**Angela Clarke** - Well that's the thing because there's lots of lovely other little moments in the film with the sons and daughters of Donna's brothers and sisters. And they were already immediately much more accepting of Donna weren't they in the film so you can imagine, it's just those slow ripples of coming out. It's nice to hear that other family members are coming forward. I suppose it must be weird for her as well, albeit she's been a performer for years and there's been a stage persona. She's used to getting up on stage but who she is on stage is slightly different from who she is at home. And in the film, there was lots of lovely family archive and pictures of her as she was growing up, so you're seeing a version of her that she maybe doesn't always reveal quite as much either. So that's good to hear. Where else will people be able to see it in the UK over the coming months as it were?

**Jay Bedwani** - Well we're adding a few screenings and it's played in a few theatres. It did a nice Cardiff and London run and Dublin and we're constantly adding screenings, here and there and the website <http://www.donnafilm.com> is being updated all the time. It's available to stream on Bohemia Euphoria and IFI so, it's getting out there.

**Angela Clarke** - So people can go to the website and figure out where they are in the world and watch it at some point, cool. So, what's next then? What bar have you been in to do your next research, or what pool party have you been at? *(laughing)*

**Jay Bedwani** - I'm changing things up a bit and that's not actually happening now. *(laughing)* Although you know, why not! I'm working on an augmented reality documentary with Story Futures Academy and the University of London and the BFI and that's been in Swansea and it's been about Italian Welsh immigration. That's been fun and is a kind of location-based documentary with the makers of Pokémon. It's something I never thought I do and it's great, and there are so many similarities with making a film but with a few mad differences. And so that's been good, and so I'd like to explore that bit more.

I'm also working on my second feature doc about a Shakespeare professor called Barry back in the Bay area in California. I filmed him seven years ago on his first day of retirement carrying boxes out of his office and I've been filming him every now and then since, and the people that come into his life. He's got this amazing, big old professors house with books everywhere and it's always messy but it's wonderful. It's like a second home to me and I've been filming him there, him and his parrots Joaquin...*(laughing)*

**Angela Clarke** – Right...

**Jay Bedwani** – Him and his personal trainer Tyler who comes in every day and tries to get him to do his exercises and his friends and he's got a really interesting approach to his later years, and I've just been following that and there's a few little story threads happening with him and I'm really excited about it. So, this summer I'm starting to edit that with an editor maybe the first half roughly...

**Angela Clarke** - Again to get more funding?

**Jay Bedwani** – Yeh, to get more funding for these observational trips and hopefully I'll film again later in the year and just build it up. I'm imagining filming for a couple of more years and then it would have been 10 years overall, so that you see the change in people. Some obvious ones and some things I didn't expect, and it's how we pull those out in the edit. It's fun, and it's exciting and Ffilm Cymru have supported that so far and the TV and Film Charity. I've got a really good feeling about it. He's hilarious and quite a character with more energy than anyone I know. Probably the same as Donna really, these are people who just want to do everything and so yeah, it will be good.

**Angela Clarke** – Excellent. Well listen, thank you so much for your time today. It's been lovely to speak to you in more detail and to hear more about how things evolve because I think that's the thing that's hard isn't it, when you start this process. Nobody really tells you things can sometimes take ages and it might be stop/start. As you say, it's how you find a way around that to be able to live and earn and do the films that you want to do and still stay true to the stories that you want to tell.

**Jay Bedwani** - Yeah and the way you want to tell them..

**Angela Clarke** – Yeah...

**Jay Bedwani** - Otherwise it's kind of pointless isn't it. If you take any of the pleasure out of it and you don't end up saying what you want, so you've got to sort of stick to that.

**Angela Clarke** - Absolutely but it's hard to do that in those moments when you know, especially when you are under pressure, and especially with regards to your subjects living further away. It's been good to hear the challenges involved and how you navigated them. And good luck with things, I hope **Donna** does really well and I look forward to hearing more about Barry when the time comes.

**Jay Bedwani** - Really, really nice to chat to Angela, thank you and you take care.

**Angela Clarke** – Bye.

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