



'You have to fight to make the films you want to make and remain independent'

Lord David Putnam and Ken Loach.

"I was lucky to get into the school and find my first term's fees," said Janis. "But you have to fight to make the films you want to make and remain independent. I've been helped by a lot of people who put in private money and now support me to develop scripts and sit at home and write.

"The film school offers one scholarship a year and I was the first female to win it, on the strength of my film, House, a documentary shot in Flint about the bingo playing women at Castle Heights flats.

"It could have been made in London but I switched the location after coming home one weekend. As a film maker I depend on personal emotions and being able to feel my characters. Those women in the community room at Castle Heights have such subsisting strength. They are so positive and warm that when they smile on film you can imagine the audience smiling back.

"They are so funny and have a wonderful glow. House won the scholarship and meant I no longer had to pay school fees. House talks about Courtaulds and an incredible community in Flint. It's a community film that turns into a political film, with a bit of Thatcher bashing thrown in. I approve of them closing dirty, old industries, but they should have replaced them with something better.

"Those women in their seventies and eighties have opinions and they deserve a voice. House drew packed audiences in London. It presented the history and culture of an area with an incredibly unique voice."

Also showing in Mold was Blue Collars and Buttercups. Starring Louise Kempton and Sue Jenkins, it was shot in Halkyn, the Greenfield Valley and Rhosesmor, as Janis' graduation film.

"We had a budget of £10,000," she said, "While other graduates had up to £50,000 for their films. We camped out on Halkyn mountain for ten days and fortunately the weather was good. Louise had to learn to walk on stilts for her part.



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"We shot it in a council house in the Greenfield Valley. The local kids were lovely and we gave them a part in one of the scenes. You couldn't have got an actor to beat them. Film making for me is all about coming to a community and using all its resources while you tell a story that belongs to the community.

"I think one of the reasons I've been successful, is that I don't do reality as grim scenes of working class life, like Ken Loach and Mike Leigh have done. My films are colourful. That's why I used the electric blue overalls and was so pleased we had blue skies and billowy clouds during filming."

Growing up in a large family in a small

house, Janis relied on her "buttercups" for a bit of personal space and privacy. They were the yellow skips she used to climb into and sit for a while.

Janis prefers to use film for its superior quality rather than video, but it's expensive, and there are nail-biting moments as her stock dwindles by the minute and the film has yet to be finished.

The Event, a film about the power of the global media, was shot in eight hours on a £50 budget. She had five minutes of 16mm film stock and the piece ran to four minutes. Her first feature film, Balaclava Sands will also be set in North Wales when she raises the half million it will take to finance it.

It's her father's story as one of the Shrewsbury flying pickets in a building workers' strike who had to move away afterwards to find work. One of the leads will be Gwernymynydd actress Clare Barron.

"I wouldn't want to shoot this any-

where else but North Wales," says Janis. "It's an area oozing with talent."

A fact not apparent to the careers development woman who asked Janis what she wanted to do.

"An actress! Have you got an Equity card? No, then fill this in."

It was an application to work at the chicken factory. "I'm sure it was a fine place to work for some," said Janis, "But I couldn't bear it. After two days I quit and hitch-hiked back from Sandycroft to Flint."

When we parted she was off to New York to promote Blue Collars and Buttercups, prompting the thought that there's nothing chicken about this girl.

