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Music, Art Docs Show at 35MM Beat Festival

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Genesis Breyer P-Orridge with Lady Jaye, as seen in Marie Losier's look at their quest for identical looks.

The Beat Film Festival brings an eclectic mix of music and art documentaries to the 35MM movie theater this week, from the story of the record label that made Oasis famous to a couple who went under the knife to be as one — to the story of Hole's drummer Patty Schemel.

Organizers say they are filling a gap in the Russian film distribution market.

"The interest toward documentaries is growing worldwide among international film festivals, distributors and audiences," said the festival's executive producer, Alyona Bocharova. "So we wanted to bring this phenomenon to Moscow and show films that would never be bought by Russian distributors but are nevertheless essential to the contemporary cinema scene."

The festival, which starts Wednesday, is showing 12 films in total. One of the most anticipated is "Upside Down: The Creation Records Story" — a success at the South By Southwest festival

in Austin, Texas, earlier this year — which looks back with interviews and lots of music at the iconic British record company whose groups included Primal Scream, the Jesus and Mary Chain, and My Bloody Valentine.

A completely different tale is told in "The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye," directed by Marie Losier, which tells the love story of artist Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, once of punk outfit Throbbing Gristle, his soul mate Lady Jaye and their attempts to look identical through a series of plastic surgeries, most notably P-Orridge's breast implants. Critics have praised the film for its intimate and often touching portrayal of the couple.

Variety magazine described it as "a dreamy home movie," and Losier in an interview called it "a mix between dance, surreal fictional scenes and daily life film all together weaved like a very tight personal bubble."

Indeed, the style of filming helps personalize the avant-garde oddness of what is often shown, Variety wrote. "Somehow, people in extreme fetish gear just look prettier and cuddlier on grainy stock," the magazine wrote in a review.

Viewers also have a chance to see "Hit So Hard," which looks at the story of Schemel, drummer in alternative rock band Hole, and how she dealt with fame, addiction and a rock 'n' roll lifestyle.

The movie, which combines recordings from Schemel's private archive with present day interviews of band members, is a good way to prepare for Hole's debut in Russia on July 23 at the Afisha Picnic — Schemel who left the group in 1998 will not be playing.

"The bulk of the tapes we have are from Patty's camera," director David Ebersol wrote in an e-mail interview. "They are more like home movies made by a group of friends, and so when someone picked up her camera and shot the concerts, they were never intended to be much more than momentary memories of the experience, for the band and for Patty."

Other films to look out for are "Beats of Freedom," a look at the role rock played in Communist Poland and a clubland trilogy of movies by Romuld Karmakar, an acclaimed German filmmaker who will come to Moscow to take part in Q&A and give a talk on his work.

The Beat Film Festival runs Wednesday to June 7 at 35MM, 47/24 Ulitsa Pokrovka. Metro Krasniye Vorota, Kurskaya. Tel. 917-1883, http://2011.beatfilmfestival.ru.

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