

Lagos Film Review



iREP 2016 Daily Coverage Vol. 3

By Agnes Atsuah

MAKOKO: YOUNG FUTURES AFLOAT, a 30-minute film by director and producer Femi Odugbemi, is not about a mostly ignored people's cry for help rather it is a beautiful film about a place that is rarely, if ever, associated with beauty. The director almost approaches Makoko - a Lagos settlement on water - like a photographer, resulting in interesting angles and composition.

Everything from the wide-sweeping shots of children headed to school in colourful uniforms on narrow canoes to the even wider shots of local fishermen at sea, and overhead ones of the floating city is clearly done with a gentle eye for colour and character in unexpected places. Although this can sometimes make some scenes impersonal and slightly detached but

Dreams On Water



there is never a second's doubt as to the location of the film.

Perhaps this is done on purpose to prevent the film straying from its main topic and theme in a place that is almost overflowing with various interesting project ideas. The film's main narrator - director of Whanyina School Noah Shemedede, delivers

his story and experiences in an honest manner that makes his love and dedication to educating children evident.

Other narrators are not only relatable and genuine but also contribute their own stories and hopes in different languages that succeed in not feeling dulled by subtitles.

Odugbemi and his team must have spent time building a rapport with everyone involved as there is a calmness that is present even in classroom scenes full of school children.

The soundtrack of this film, while fitting, takes a little too long to hit its crescendo and does not change fast enough thereby affecting the pacing. There are a few repetitive establishing shots, but they are so well done and easily forgivable.

Odugbemi's Makoko is softer, more hopeful, positive without sugar-coating the everyday struggles of its residents and offers a small yet profound look into the floating city without resorting to charity advertising techniques.

By Jite Efemuaye

African funds for African documentaries

What will happen if funding from foreign donors for making African documentary films dries up? This was the most important question raised at the discussion on Documentary Funding with Steven Markovitz at the 2016 iREP Film Festival on Friday.

Markovitz is a South African film and television producer who has worked all over Africa producing documentary series and fiction films.

According to him, close to 80% of documentaries filmed in Africa are funded from foreign sources, mainly Europe. This in itself is an issue as it puts power in the hands of the donor and takes away some independence from the filmmaker.

The idea of African documentary films made by Africans and funded by Africans is not a far-fetched one, but is fraught with a number of challenges: collaboration being one of them. It is

more likely to find African countries going into agreements with non-African countries to make documentaries. "South Africa has nine or ten co-production treaties with Europe and Canada and Australia but not a single co-production treaty with an African country. In reality though, we don't need treaties to co-produce," Markovitz said.

According to him, South Africa is not the only country guilty of this "non-collaboration". There

is in fact no system that fosters collaboration, which translates into different countries working in seeming isolation, unaware of what is happening documentary film-wise in neighbouring countries. This can be blamed on the absence of a distribution network.

While online platforms could work, Markovitz expressed the opinion that such already exist *story continues on P2*

Do you remember?

By Dare Dan

African funds for African documentaries

Story from P1

but are faced by the same challenges stated above: African countries are unaware of one another's platforms. A unified online platform that curates films from all over the continent and makes them available online could solve two problems: distribution and funding, Markowitz added. Films could either be made available at a small charge or goodwill donations should be encouraged to support the films.

Until such a time when this happens, Africans will continue to look outside for funding to make their documentary films while working towards having a robust African fund.

Unveiling the iREP Foundation

By Amarachukwu Iwuala

The highlight of the opening cocktail at the 2016 iREP Festival was the unveiling of the Foundation for the Promotion of Documentary Film in Africa (FPDFA), which is expected to oversee the expansion of the iREP vision through a 7-point agenda that includes an academy and iREP TV.

Africa Magic plus other corporate and individual partners were extolled for their support and the Lagos State Government through the Honourable Commissioner of Information, Steve Ayorinde, indicated that platforms like iREP would be worthy partners as the state prepares for its 50th anniversary in 2017.



See backpage for more images



Was sehen Sie, wenn Sie sich dieses Bild anschauen?

Most times we simply do not let go of memories because we feel they owe us. In the film **MAKING OF HISTORY** by Constanze Fischbeck and Daniel Kötter, memory is heavily indebted to a people who have lived in an epoch that decidedly dictated their fates.

For these ones, whose lives were kited by government forces in exchange for other lives during the Second World War, or whose lives take a sudden and sharp turn as they open their arms to foreigners, there is a score to settle with history.

Fischbeck and Kötter take a simple yet gripping and deeply emotional route to negotiating the path of their subjects within an era. In 45 minutes, Fischbeck retraces the path of her grandparents, who were German civilian prisoners of war. They were replaced by Jewish prisoners of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and took a later detour to Tanzania where they began a religious mission school in Kigarama.

In the film, 92-year old Kolutindo Sospater, baptized by the older Fischbecks in Kigarama, and 90-year old Elisheva Auerbach, one of the so-called exchanged Jews from Bergen-Belsen, go down memory lane. Elementary questions such as, "What do you see in the picture?" begin a journey 50 years back in time, in turn

producing a logical and profound outcome towards the quest for identity. The pictures in question are of the original sites of the prison camps, and of ships and fences as the Fischbecks arrive the shores of Tanzania.

In tasking memory from living archives, the directors through pictures and direct questions, create an ambience not just for their subjects but for an audience to exercise memory and engage history. The interludes of silence, and sounds of nature are, in themselves psychological; nature is left to guide the procedure. The pictures are almost protected from human institutions and activities as the filmmakers cook up 'memory culture' in their protagonists.

The present-day school pupils are not left out of the memory exercise. "I would build a fence as high as possible; and of iron," a nine-year old says when asked what he would change in his school. It is obvious from his response that there is a connection between a boarding school in Tanzania and the historical site of the concentration camp in Bergen-Belsen that his fence would not have comprehended.

In the final scene, a ship is seen approaching an island and above, the words louder than all that has been said in the film, I hear, "Do you remember?"

African Popstars Made in China

By Adefoyeke Ajao



Melissa Lekowitz and Dorian Carli-Jones' CHINA REMIX sets out to overhaul stereotypes. The film chronicles the everyday lives of Flame, Ivan and Dibaocha, three African immigrants resident in Guangzhou, China. Unlike most of their compatriots who survive by trading, these three have chosen to eke a living from music. The film-makers follow Nigerians Dibaocha and Flame Ramadan, a career musician, as well as Ivan Manivoo, a student of Ugandan origins,

through studio sessions, club performances and downtime with their companions, who also chip in to make this documentary an interesting watch.

It is not always clear-sailing for the three subjects; the media's negative portrayal of Africans and the propagation of negative stereotypes among the Chinese population have frustrating consequences: the immigration

process is tedious and frustrating and their complexion attracts scrutiny from the public and law enforcement agents. It is also not so easy penetrating the country's entertainment industry. Despite these challenges, they all agree that China is a more enabling environment than their home countries.

CHINA REMIX is a deviation from the usual stories of crime and illegal migration that have become the normal descriptions of Africans in the diaspora. Lekowitz and Carli-Jones deserve commendation for focusing the spotlight on those involved by intelligently allowing them to narrate their own stories, focusing on their performances and making ample use of the trio's music as the film's soundtracks - there are no drawn-out or slow-paced scenes. After watching the enthusiastic indigenous fans gyrating at the clubs and the remarks of the Chinese women the subjects are romantically involved with - especially Dibaocha's wife, Cherrish, who speaks English with a Nigerian accent - you'll have to agree that Africans actually thrive, acculturate and facilitate culture exchange in the diaspora.

BLACK. QUEER. RADICAL. WOMAN

By Dare Dan

Audre Lorde may have been tagged, Caribbean-American, lesbian, feminist, activist, poet, womanist, and mother among other tags. She may have fallen into the temptation of boxing herself as these occur at various times in the course of her life, as a victim of a world where classism is king. The system, like a machine on fuel, thrives on classifications in which hypocrites find greenery. Lorde would otherwise be an epitome of freedom. Her works and life, as seen in the film Dagmar Schultz's AUDRE LORDE - THE BERLIN YEARS 1984 to 1992, reflect this. "It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences," she says.

In making the film, Schultz, German activist, author and a close friend to Lorde, takes all the liberty that depicting such a life demands. Through Lorde's professional and private life: interviews, readings, intimate and leisurely discourse, an utterly powerful

documentary that will stand the test of time and inspire many generations has been made. This documentary captures the most prolific years of a radical.

"I love to learn," Lorde says in another scene, spreading her arms, gesturing freedom as a camera follows her up a Berlin street.

Growing up in the United States of America, she understands politics and life like any curious person of colour in the USA. She was the first Black student admitted to Hunter College High School, an all-girls secondary school at the time, and this is enough for her brilliant young mind to start asking questions. The answers to her questions reverberate in the ways she chooses to live her life and more profoundly, in breaking the ice of inequalities, prejudices and injustices as she senses it in her world. The film trails Lorde's time in Berlin - in the mid-80s to early 90s.

She is a visiting professor at the Free University of Berlin, Germany - a country going through a revamp, a decisive political shake-up, at that point in time.

The Berlin Wall would fall and along this political tremor is a movement that will change the way Afro-German women are perceived in the society. Lorde's altruistic and eloquent nature soon attracts different generations of men and women, white and black, old and young.

After fitfully chronicling the life and times of Audre Lorde to the point where she finally succumbs to cancer, Schultz shows her in a convivial last scene, dancing away with friends as if resurrecting meaning to life even in death.

Photo Splash from iREP Cocktail & Foundation Launch



Lagos Film Review Newsroom

Contributors

Amarachukwu Iwuala
Agnes Atsuh
Oludamilare Kolawole Dan
Adefoyeke Ajao
Wome Uyeye
Oris Aigbokhaevbolo
Didi Cheeka
Jite Efemuaye

Photographer

Opeyemi Balogun

Graphic Designer:

Aderemi Adegbite

Editor:

Aderinsola Ajao

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