

Filming Against the Odds 50 years of filming in Independent Africa. Conference in association with London African Film Festival and BAFTA 27 and 28 November

Date 27 November 2010 -28 November
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Time 10.00am - 5.00pm
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Conference in association with London African Film Festival and BAFTA
Indaba on 50 Years of Film in Independent Africa, African Media Centre,
University of Westminster, London, UK / LONDON AFRICAN FILM FESTIVAL
27 November 2010 10.00am - 28 November 2010

Venue

University of Westminster, 35 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 5LS
(Directions: <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/about/how-to-find-us/marylebone>)

Keynote Speakers

Professor Ferid Boughedir: Tunisian filmmaker and historian of African cinema (his filmography includes Camera d'Afrique - Twenty Years of African Cinema (1983)); Camera Arabe (1987); Halfaouine - Child of the Terraces (1995); A Summer in Goulette (1996); Villa Jasmine (2008))

Screenings

Three films, Pumzi, The Tunnel, St Louis Blues will be screened at BAFTA in association with the conference and London African Film Festival. They are a trio of contrasting short films that were made through a mentoring scheme by Focus Features through its Africa First programme. It is an important initiative that seeks to identify emerging talent from Africa.

'New African Cinema' Screenings of three short films at BAFTA, free to conference delegates:

<http://www.bafta.org/public-event.html?Pevent=com.othermedia.bafta.model.BaftaEvent-L-6198920>

Conference partners include the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) and The Africa Channel (on Sky TV 268)

Background

This two-day conference on 50 years of filmmaking in independent Africa is jointly organised by the London Africa Film Festival, BAFTA and the Africa Media Centre at the University of Westminster, UK. The starting point is that more than a half a century ago, Sub-Saharan Africa welcomed independence with a wave of optimism.

A new cinema was born, championed by the Senegalese film-maker Ousmane Sembène. This new cinema would provide a conduit of expression for voiceless Africans – revealing social conditions and sharing stories. Sembène's first short film, *Borom Sarret*, was a watershed. It reached a worldwide audience with a plot based on the tale of a poor cart driver whose tragic life mirrored the hazards facing many ordinary people. *Borom Sarret*'s issues became dominant themes in African cinema. Prior to political independence, colonial rule did not allow Africans to make their own films. African independence seems to have given the environment needed to produce African stories on the screen. Not only was political independence a subject in films, but the environment it created gave an added impetus to both independent and institutionally supported film-making in Africa. African filmmakers have produced stories that celebrate success and failure in their societies. African history, language and etymology are evident in the ways in which some filmmakers have sought an independent form to help indigenize the medium.

Today, Nigeria has become the centre of a lucrative home video industry known as Nollywood. According to a recent UN statement, around 900 titles are released in Nigeria each year and bring revenue of about £100m, and Nigeria has surpassed Hollywood to become the world's second largest film producer after Bollywood. Movies are made on the cheap and copies are exported, sold on the street, or distributed via increasing numbers of video clubs. The film-makers have to work fast and around the clock in their desperate attempt to fend off the pirates.

The contemporary African film industry is clearly of global proportions. However, the questions that must be asked are: whose languages are spoken in African film? What are the patterns of stories that have been told so far? What formats do African filmmakers use? What themes? How has funding affected what is produced? What are the politics of film-making in Africa? Apart from development, education and entertainment, has film on the continent advanced the emancipation of Africans? What has been the relationship between political independence and African film? The conference will include a session with leading African filmmakers.