CALL FOR ENTRY
2ND EKO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

The 2nd Edition of the Eko International Film Festival (EKOIFF) will be held from 9-14 July, 2011, in Lagos, Nigeria.

The different categories of film to be submitted are:

Feature Length
Short Films
Fiction
Comedy
Drama
Horror
Documentaries
Student
1 minute short films.

The submission deadlines:
Late Deadline: June 15, 2011
Final Deadline: June 25, 2011

Applications for submitting films to the 2nd EKOIFF will be available on the official EKOIFF.
For more information, visit the official EKOIFF website www.ekoiff.com, or send e-mail to contact@ekoiff.com (see link: http://www.ekoiff.com/submit.htm)

Address: 1 Bajulaiye Road, Opposite Skye bank plc Shomolu, Lagos, Nigeria
2011 Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria Screening Dates

Posted on May 30, 2011 by admin — No Comments ↓
The final screening dates for the 2011 Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria (MBGN) have been announced with the locations:

**MBGN Screening Dates and Venues:**

- June 4, 2011. Platinum Lounge Silverbird Entertainment Centre, Abuja (FCT)

Follow the MBGN on Facebook to see more details, photos and videos of the contestants

For confirmation and inquiry, please contact: mbgn@silverbirdgroup.com

---

Fiona Aforma Amuzie was crowned MBGN World 2010 (Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria 2010 World). MBGN 2010 held on the 22nd of May at the prestigious Eko Hotel and Suites, Lagos. And she represented Nigeria at MISS WORLD 2010.

**The Most Beautiful Girl In Nigeria (MBGN)**

Beauty Pageant Holds June 25 at Eko Hotel & Suites, Victoria Island Lagos. There are 34 beautiful contestants from different states in Nigeria. The event starts By 6pm.
V1 ABIA Gabriella Ndu
V2 ABUJA Tessy Maduko
V3 ADAMAWA Nwando Ebeledike
V4 AKWA-IBOM Kome Osalov
V5 ANAMBRA Ify Jewana
V6 BAYELSA Sophie Jewal
V7 BAUCHI Chantelle Unachukm
V8 BENUE Josephine Igokie
V9 BORNO Gbemisola Shotade
V10 CROSS RIVER Agatha Eriom
V11 DELTA Chidebe Joyce
V12 EBONYI Delphine Okaban
V13 EDO Onabu Obehioye Liliane
V14 EKITI Awettada Ovoke
V15 ENUGU Obioma Isiwu
V16 GOMBE Jennifer Igwegbe
V17 IMO Urenna Oyeneke
V18 KOGI Okafov Ohichi
V19 KWARA Ngwu Oganna Linda
V20 LAGOS Grace Ndaw
V21 NASARAWA Menkiti Sylvia
V22 NIGER Amanda Simon
V23 OGUN Ige Temifope
V24 Ondo Tobi Banjoko
V25 OSUN Metu Kelechi
V26 OYO Florentina Nneka Agu
V27 PLATEAU Onaja Lovette
V28 RIVERS Mitchelle Ijeh
V29 TARABA Sylvia Nduka
Jeta Amata is working on new film after “Black Gold”

Posted on May 27, 2011 by admin — No Comments

Jeta Amata

Nick Vivarelli of the Variety reported that the ambitious Nigerian filmmaker is already working on a new international film after making “Black Gold”.

The director who is also well known for his daring film “The Amazing Grace” is going to focus on the corrupt practices of pharmaceutical multinationals in Africa in his new film “Journeys of One,” with Donald Ranvaud of “The Constant Gardner” fame as an executive producer.

Amata’s “Black Gold” had a market premiere at the 64th Cannes Film Festival. The film on the Niger Delta crisis featured top Hollywood actors like Tom Sizemore, Billy Zane and Hakeem Kae-Kazim.

“Journeys of One” will be a way to provide a more genuine take on the Big Pharma in Africa theme tackled by Hollywood in Fernando Meirelles’ “The Constant Gardner”. We like Hollywood coming to tell our story; but they miss some of the essence of the African point of view,” Amata said.

Variety reported that Amata, producer Soledad Grognett and Ranvaud are looking for a name African-American actor for one of the key roles in “Journeys” and likely to also feature an Indian star.

“The idea is to make it Hollywood, Nollywood — as the Nigerian film industry is know — and Bollywood; the three biggest markets in the world,” said Amata. “If you go to the remote villages where they don’t have proper means of communication, you find people just dying unnecessarily,” he added. “And though they don’t realize it, the real thing that killed them was some drug that they weren’t meant to take.”

“The environment in Nigeria makes it a haven for these people (the pharmaceutical companies) to run whatever tests they want and treat people like rats and guinea pigs,” Grognett added.

~ By Ekenyerengozi Michael Chima

Call for Entries: Second Eko International Film Festival, Lagos

Posted on May 27, 2011 by admin — No Comments
CALL FOR ENTRY
2ND EKO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

The 2nd Edition of the Eko International Film Festival (EKOIFF) will be held from 9-14 July, 2011, in Lagos, Nigeria.

The different categories of film to be submitted are:

- Feature Length
- Short Films
- Fiction
- Comedy
- Drama
- Horror
- Documentaries
- Student
- 1 minute short films.

The submission deadlines:
- Late Deadline: June 15, 2011
- Final Deadline: June 25, 2011

Applications for submitting films to the 2nd EKOIFF will be available on the official EKOIFF.

For more information, visit the official EKOIFF website www.ekoiff.com, or send e-mail to contact@ekoiff.com (see link: http://www.ekoiff.com/submit.htm)

Address: 1 Bajulaiye Road, Opposite Skye bank plc Shomolu, Lagos, Nigeria
Tel: +2348033036171, +2347066379246.
Email: contact@ekoiff.com
Website: www.ekoiff.com
The Tree of Life wins the Palme d’Or!

Posted on May 22, 2011 by admin — No Comments ↓

Jury President Robert de Niro (L) shakes hands with producer Bill Pohlad (R) who receives the Palme d’Or award for the film "The Tree of Life", by director Terrence Malick, as they pose with Camera d’Or award winner director Pablo Giorgelli (2nd L) during the closing ceremony of the 64th Cannes Film Festival, May 22, 2011.
Credit: Reuters/Eric Gaillard.

Sunday evening, American director Terrence Malick’s The Tree of Life won the prestigious Palme d’Or of the 64th Cannes Film Festival.

This is Malick’s fifth feature, starring Brad Pitt, Sean Penn and Jessica Chastain. The film story centers around a family with three boys in the 1950s. The eldest son witnesses the loss of innocence.

SYNOPSIS
The Tree of Life is the impressionistic story of a Midwestern family in the 1950’s. The film follows the life journey of the eldest son, Jack, through the innocence of childhood to his disillusioned adult years as he tries to reconcile a complicated relationship with his father. Jack finds himself a lost soul in the modern world, seeking answers to the origins and meaning of life while questioning the existence of faith.

FEATURE FILMS
Palme d’Or
THE TREE OF LIFE directed by Terrence MALICK

Grand Prix Ex-aequo
BIR ZAMANLAR ANADOLU’DA (ONCE UPON A TIME IN ANATOLIA) directed by Nuri Bilge CEYLAN

LE GAMIN AU VÉLO (THE KID WITH A BIKE) directed by Jean-Pierre et Luc DARDENNE

Award for Best Director
Nicolas WINDING REFIN for DRIVE

Award for Best Screenplay
Joseph CEDAR for HEARAT SHULAYIM (Footnote)

Award for Best Actress
Kirsten DUNST in MELANCHOLIA directed by Lars VON TRIER

Award for Best Actor
Jean DUJARDIN in THE ARTIST directed by Michel HAZANAVICIU

Jury Prize
POLISSE (POLISS) directed by MAÏWENN

Vulcain Prize for an artist technician, awarded by the C.S.T.
LA PIEL QUE HABITO (THE SKIN I LIVE IN) directed by José Luis ALCAINE

Special Distinction by the C.S.T.
WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT KEVIN directed by Paul DAVIES, Joe BINI

SHORT FILMS

Palme d’Or – Short Film
CROSS (CROSS – COUNTRY) directed by Maryna VRODA

Jury Prize – Short Film
BADPAKJE 46 (SWIMSUIT 46) directed by Wannes DESTOOP

- Prize of Un Certain Regard Ex-aequo
ARIRANG directed by KIM Ki-Duk

- HALT AUF FREIER STRECKE (STOPPED ON TRACK) directed by Andreas DRESEN

- Un Certain Regard Special Jury Prize
ELENA directed by Andrey ZVYAGINTSEV

- Directing Prize of Un Certain Regard
BÉ OMID É DIDAR directed by Mohammad RASOULOF

CINEFONDATION :

- 1st Prize Cinéfondation
DER BRIEF (THE LETTER) directed by Doroteya DROUMEVA

- 2nd Prize – Cinéfondation
DRARI directed by Kamal LAZRAQ

- 3rd Prize Cinéfondation
YA-GAN-BI-HANG (FLY BY NIGHT) directed by SON Tae-gyum

The Jury
Robert De Niro
President of the Jury
Yeelen (Brightness) by the Malian Souleymane Cissé was the first African film to qualify for the official competition and won the Jury Prize at the 1987 Cannes Film Festival. It was also nominated for the Golden Palm award for the same year.

Africa at the Cannes Film Festival by Jean-Pierre Garcia*

The film that really marked the beginning of African cinema was Borom Sarret (1963) by Senegalese director Sembène Ousmane. Although Sudan’s Gadalla Gubara had been the first African on the continent to make a film with his documentary Song of Karthoum (1950), Sembène Ousmane remains the father figure by common consent. In tackling the story of a cart-driver subjected to the rules and regulations of the new regime, Borom Sarret sides with the poor of Dakar. This short film, which stirred consciousness and spoke out symbolically, led the way for future generations of filmmakers firmly focused on their own continent.

For the “father” of African cinema, the newly gained political independence only made sense if it was accompanied by a restoration of
dignity, which had hitherto been suppressed by the weight of the administration and its reductive mechanisms (language, religion, education and the police). From the outset, cinema became the instrument of choice in this process of re-conquest: images were used to rebuild self-image, as well as the image of every population on the continent. In his cinema seminar at Cannes in 2005, Sembène Ousmane recalled: “I was gripped by a need to ‘discover’ Africa. Not just Senegal, but just about the entire continent… I became aware that I had to learn to make films if I really wanted to reach my people. A film can be seen and understood even by illiterate people – a book cannot speak to entire populations!” Sembène Ousmane laid the aesthetic foundations of his filmmaking (very close to Italian neorealism) and set them in a pan-Africanist context. The initial equation was simple: independent Africa “needed” filmmakers who could (re-)awaken consciousness to counter colonial cinema, which had set out merely to entertain its audience, alienating them in the process.

“FINYé – THE WIND” (Mali 1982, winner FESPACO & Cannes) By Souleymane Cissé 1982, Mali

Around fifteen films made their mark over the course of this first decade (1964-1974). All dealt with either the colonial past and the liberation movements, or cultural assimilation and the problems of the newly independent states (corruption, bureaucracy, the shifting of wealth, etc.) The traumatic aftermath of the colonial past was addressed in Oumarou Ganda’s Cabascabo(1) (1968, Niger), Sarah Maldoror’s Monagambee (1968, Angola), Michael Raeburn’s Rhodesia Countdown (1969, Rhodesia), Sembène Ousmane’s Emitai (1971), and Nana Mahomo’s Last Grave at Dimbaza (1974, South Africa).

Udju Azul di Yonta, 1992 by Flora Gomes from Guinea-Bissau.

The films frequently focused on the suffocating links between the European and African capitals, as inConcerto For an Exile and Take Care, France by Désiré Écaré (1968 and 1970, Ivory Coast) or Djibril Diop-Mambéty’s Badou Boy (1970, Senegal). Other themes
The Africa that made its entry into the cinematic world in 1975 had thrown off its colonial shackles. Nine films were selected at Cannes between 1975 and 1985, all of which endeavoured to reflect African reality while examining the cultural roots of societies undergoing change. One image could serve as a common denominator for works as varied as N’Diangane by Mahama Johnson Traoré (1975, Senegal), Harvest: 3,000 Years by Haile Gerima (1976, Ethiopia), Ceddo by Sembène Ousmane (1977), Ababacar Samb-Makharam’s Jom (1981, Senegal) and Souleymane Cissé’s The Wind (Finyé, 1982, Mali): that of a pendulum constantly swinging between the present and the past. It is in this movement, with its focus on group identity (whether in cities or villages) in which individuals exist only in relation to a common destiny, that the films of this period can be contextualised. These films set out to recapture their country’s history: the stories of everyday men and women reflecting those of the earliest narratives and myths.

Rather than praising the brave feats of one particular character, it is “the spirit of resistance” that Sembène commends in Emitai (1971) and Ceddo (1977), just as Ababacar Samb-Makharam celebrates a sense of honour (Jom) rather than singing a eulogy to one particular man of honour. The aim of these films is to bear witness, rather than present a hero in the Western sense of the term. This rather disconcerting (for Westerners) rule of thumb, coupled with the difficulty of classifying these films into production-distribution categories, explains the relative difficulty they encountered in winning over European audiences. This reduced key films in cinematographic history, such as Djibril Diop Mambéty’s Touki Bouki (1973) or The Wind (Finyé, 1982) to mere secondary status.

African cinema had not yet emerged from its ghetto, in the sense that it had not yet acquired or won international stature. It was entirely devoted to marking out its own cultural and human space, while its filmmakers staked out their territory. The challenge in the 1980s was to achieve recognition on a national and international scale.

The real turning point for African cinema occurred in 1987 with the selection of Yeelen (Brightness) by the Malian Souleymane Cissé for the official competition on the one hand, and of Yam Daabo (The Choice) by Burkina Faso’s Idrissa Ouedraogo for the Critics’ Week on the other. Yeelen was in fact the first Black African Film to compete at Cannes, and the film played its part to the full. The initiatory voyage undertaken by its main character setting out to master the forces surrounding him mirrors that of African cinema in the world of festivals – and Cannes in particular. The next steps were Raymond Rajaonarivelou’s Tabataba (1988, Madagascar) and Idrissa Ouedraogo’s Yaaba (1988, Burkina Faso), both of which featured in the Directors’ Fortnight. Then Tilaï (1990) by the prolific Ouedraogo, once again selected for the official competition.

But then came the events of 1991, which certain journalists hungry for an exotic headline labelled the “Black Croisette”. For the first time, there were four African feature films at Cannes: Ta Dona by Adama Drabo (Mali), Sango Malo by Bassek Ba Kobhio (Cameroon), and Laada by Drissa Touré (Burkina Faso) were screened at Un Certain Regard, while Pierre Yaméogo’s Laafi (Burkina Faso) was selected for the Critics’ Week.

The decade turned out to be a prolific one: Hyenas by Djibril Diop Mambéty was entered for the international competition in 1992, as was a brilliant adaptation of Friedrich Dürrenmatt’s The Visit. Meanwhile, tiny Guinea-Bissau made its entry at Un Certain Regard with Yeelen’s Udju Azul di Yonta, along with October, by unknown Mauritanian filmmaker Abderrahmane Sissako.

Atitudes towards films made in sub-Saharan Africa have changed. The strength of the themes, the unique relationships not only to a film’s locale but also to its sound and music, and the staging ideas (imbued with a sophisticated bareness) developed by African directors have provided the answers sought by so many. Beyond the obvious themes, what was once considered disconcerting has come to be seen as a sign of vitality and evidence of a constantly renewed creative energy. The link to an oral tradition is expressed by symbolic, dramatic or amusing images that are as subtle as proverbs. When, in 1991, African cinema enjoyed its “merry month of May” as the late lamented Jacques Le Glou put it, it seemed as if African cinema had at last taken off. But such a view did not take Africa’s fragile economic situation into account, or the dependence of these filmmakers on funding from countries in the North. A closer look at African film production reveals that the number of films made each year is varied and cyclical. Everything depends on the support policies of European organisations and administrations, and their levels of funding. To take just the last two decades: there were peaks of production in the early and mid 1990s as a result of significant, regular and well-distributed support, before the machine seemed to grind to a halt.

Since then, a whole new set of directors have come to the fore: Abderrahmane Sissako (Life on Earth – 1998, Heremakono – 2002, Bamako – 2006), Mahamat-Saleh Haroun (Aboua – 2002, Daratt – 2006, A Screaming Man – 2011, Chad), Flora Gomes (Po di Sangui – 1996, Nha Fala – 2002) and Newton Aduaka (Ezra – 2007, Nigeria). Meanwhile, Sembène Ousmane achieved a brilliant coda to his career with Moolaadé (2004). These key works nonetheless remain shining exceptions in an impoverished cinematographic landscape characterized by lack of commitment from African funders or states towards their filmmakers and producers. Will new digital productions lead to a long hoped-for renaissance? This seems unlikely in the near future, but then, Africa has always had an astonishing ability to surprise us!
Jean Rouch was the one who "discovered" Oumarou Ganda in I, a Negro (1958) and encouraged him (as he did a number of African filmmakers) to make his own films. Far from "viewing Africans as insects", Jean Rouch knew how to combine an ethnologist's values with the aesthetic demands of an accomplished film director. As a humanist, he showed respect for others as well as for himself.

* Jean-Pierre Garcia is Editor of Le Film Africain & du Sud magazine.

The Festival de Cannes would like to thank the authors for contributing for free.

Sexual drama kicks off the Cannes Film Festival

Posted on May 14, 2011 by admin — No Comments

Sleeping Beauty, starring Emily Browning, is one of 20 films up for the coveted Palme D'or.

© 2011 Reuters Entertainment

Bollywood actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan arrives on the red carpet for the screening of the film "Sleeping Beauty", in competition at the 64th Cannes Film Festival, May 12, 2011. Twenty films are competing in the May 11 to 22 cinema showcase, with a roll call including major screen stars, revered “auteur” directors and relative newcomers. REUTERS/Vincent Kessler (FRANCE – Tags: ENTERTAINMENT)

The 64th Cannes Film Festival is in progress with the celebrated movie stars from Hollywood, Bollywood and other notable film industries from other countries participating and competing for the coveted prizes and other pursuits. Nigeria has a pavilion at the festival, but no Nollywood movie is in competition or even out of competition.
Jury Member Uma Thurman attends the Opening Ceremony at the Palais des Festivals during the 64th Cannes Film Festival on May 11, 2011 in Cannes, France. (Getty Images)more pics »

The galaxy of stars in attendance include the following:

Helena ALBERGARIA, Yvan ATTAL, Irene AZUELA, Antonio BANDERAS, Claude BAZ, Berenice BEJO, Rachel BLAKE, Elodie BOUCHEZ, Adrien BRODY, Emily BROWNING, Claudia CARDINALE, Han CHIN, Kerry CONDON, Michael CONNORS, Ines DE LA FRESSANGE, Michel DELPECH, Catherine DENEUVE, Marat DESCARTES, Faye DUNAWAY, Kirsten DUNST, Christopher EDWARDS, Yilmaz ERDOGAN, Charlotte GAINSBOURG, Gael GARCIA BERNAL, Louis GARREL, Julie GAYET, Vahina GIOCANTE, Melanie GRIFFITH, Layla HAKIM, Salma HAYEK, Noe HERNANDEZ, Dustin HOFFMAN, Henry HOPPER, Angelina JOLIE, Sandrine KIBERLAIN, Diane KRUGER, Mélanie LAURENT, Xiaoran LI, Gong LI, Heinz LIEVEN, Vincent LINDON, Yvonne MAALOUF, Chiara MASTROIANNI, Rachel MCADAMS, Ezra MILLER, Aimee MULLINS, Ahmet MÜMTAZTAYLAN, Sami NACERI, Gilda NOMACCE, Antoinette NOUFAILY, Michel PICCOLI, Brad PITT, Adèle POLZL HAENEL, Aishwarya RAI, John C.REILLY, Ludivine SAGNIER, Riccardo SCAMARCIO, Léa SEYDOUX, Michael SHEEN, Stephanie SIGMAN, Tilda SWINTON, Christopher THOMPSON, Mia WASIKOWSKA, Lambert WILSON, Owen WILSON, José YENKUE, Elsa ZYLBERSTEIN.

You can follow the events from the opening day on11th to the closing day on 22nd May.

Screenings of the 14th May

COMPETITION – Grand Théâtre Lumière
Rod Stewart Returns To Las Vegas With “The Hits.”

Posted on May 12, 2011 by admin — No Comments

“ROD STEWART AND SIN CITY… A MATCH MADE IN ROCK ‘N’ ROLL HEAVEN” – The Hollywood Reporter

TICKETS ON SALE BEGINNING SUNDAY, MAY 15 at 10 a.m. PDT
LAS VEGAS, NV., May 10, 2011 /PRNewswire/ — Today, legendary rock icon Rod Stewart confirmed his long-rumored return to The Colosseum at Caesars Palace for his first 18 concerts of his two-year Las Vegas residency, kicking off on August 24, 2011. Rod Stewart: The Hits. will be a concert celebration featuring a set list of the rock and R&B favorites which have defined Stewart’s unparalleled five-decade-long career. The spectacular, state-of-the-art production, presented by AEG Live, will be a culmination of Stewart’s seminal hits like “Maggie May,” “You Wear it Well,” “Hot Legs,” “You’re in My Heart,” and “Some Guys Have All the Luck” mixed with a few surprise rarities and sizzling covers. Rod Stewart: The Hits. is being designed to give audiences that intimate, only in Las Vegas concert experience – with no fan more than 120 feet from the magnificent stage.

Tickets for the first 18 performances go on-sale Sunday, May 15 at 10 a.m. PDT:
Rod Stewart: The Hits. at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace
Ticket prices are $49/ $69/ $99/ $165/ $250 plus applicable fees.
Stewart’s triumphant return to Las Vegas continues one of the most successful and critically-acclaimed 12 months of his career, highlighted by his just-wrapped The Heart & Soul Tour with Stevie Nicks – which is currently the #2 highest grossing tour on Billboard’s 2011 Boxscore chart. The tour has garnered Stewart enormous critical praise including The New York Post which declared Stewart “Forever Young,” US Weekly, which called his set list “…a non-stop jam session” and The Globe and Mail, which declared, “Rod Stewart competes with no one…” In addition to praise for his concert performance, Stewart was just honored with the prestigious ASCAP Founders Award for his songwriting and received his 16th Grammy nomination for “Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album.” Stewart’s incredible year began with his chart-topping, 33-date 2010 European summer tour – which included four sold-out dates at London’s O2 Arena – and continued with a sold-out, eight concerts at The Colosseum in Las Vegas in November of 2010.

Tickets go on-sale Sunday, May 15 at 10 a.m. PDT and may be purchased in person at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace Box Office, by calling 1-800-745-3000 or by visiting www.ticketmaster.com, keyword “Rod Stewart.” All Ticketmaster orders may be subject to additional service charges and fees. Ticket prices are $49/ $69/ $99/ $165/ $250 (all prices include 10% Live Entertainment Tax). Dates for the limited engagement are August 24 – September 11 and November 3 – 20, 2011. All shows begin at 7:30 p.m.

About AEG Live
AEG Live, the live-entertainment division of Los Angeles-based AEG, is dedicated to all aspects of live contemporary music performance. AEG Live is comprised of touring, festival, exhibition, broadcast, merchandise and special event divisions, fifteen regional offices and owns, operates or exclusively books thirty-five state-of-the-art venues. The current and recent concert tour roster includes artists such as Taylor Swift, The Black Eyed Peas, Bon Jovi, Usher, Carrie Underwood, Daughtry, Justin Bieber, Leonard Cohen, Wisin
& Yandel, Kenny Chesney, P!nk and Paul McCartney. The company is also currently producing shows in Las Vegas including Celine Dion at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace and Barry Manilow at Paris. The AEG Live exhibition portfolio boasts the most successful exhibition of all time, Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs, which has attracted more than seven million visitors since 2005. AEG Live is also the largest producer of music festivals in North America from the critically acclaimed Coachella Music & Arts Festival to Stagecoach and New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. www.aeglive.com

About Caesars Palace
Caesars Palace is the world’s best known resort-casino, celebrating the grandeur that was Rome, in an 85-acre destination location that sets the standard for entertainment, dining and luxury. Reigning at the heart of the Las Vegas Strip, Caesars Palace features 3,300 hotel guest rooms and suites, 23 diverse restaurants and cafes, five-acre Garden of the Gods pools and gardens, 50,000 square foot Qua Baths & Spa and 300,000 square feet of premium meeting and convention space. The 4,300-seat Colosseum sits just steps from celebrity chef restaurants and the acclaimed Forum Shops at Caesars and spotlights world class entertainers such as Celine Dion, Elton John and Jerry Seinfeld. Find Caesars Palace on Facebook at and follow on Twitter.

# # #

Media Contacts:
Christi Nelson
AEG Live, Las Vegas
(702) 866-1451
cnelson@aeglive.com

Emily Wofford
Caesars Entertainment – Las Vegas Region
(702) 794-3171
Ewofford@caesars.com

Michelle Loosbrock
Wagner/Junker Agency
(702) 287-4130
Michelle@wjagency.com

For Rod Stewart contact:
Hannah Kampf
Conformity Media
(310) 497-9517
Hannah.Kampf@gmail.com

Nollywood: Reconstructing the Historical and Socio-Cultural Contexts of the Nigerian Video Film Industry

Posted on May 11, 2011 by admin — No Comments ↓
Nollywood: Reconstructing the Historical and Socio-Cultural Contexts of the Nigerian Video Film Industry

By Professor Femi Okiremuette Shaka
Department of Theatre Arts
University of Port Harcourt
Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Introduction: The theme of this year's Nigerian Film Corporation's (NFC) Annual Film Lecture is, "Nigeria's Cultural Explosion through Film." Working under this general thematic focus, I should like to title my lecture as follows: "Nollywood: Reconstructing the Historical and Socio-Cultural Contexts of the Nigerian Video Film Industry." Evidently, the history of the Nigerian video film industry has been well documented by Jonathan Haynes, Onookome Okome and the contributors to the anthology edited by Jonathan Haynes entitled, Nigerian Video Films. There have also been other notable contributions by scholars like Abdalla Uba Adamu, Foluke Ogunleye and Femi Okiremuette Shaka, whose works have further shed light on the often taken for granted complexities of the omnibus film culture referred to as Nollywood. We are aware of the UNESCO rating of Nollywood as one of the big three film cultures in the world, alongside Hollywood and Bollywood. But we should also put on record that Leke Alder of Alder Consulting, has estimated that the total market potential of Nollywood is about N522 billion or $3 billion (Odugbemi, 2010, p. 46; Onoko, 2010, p. 61). As a result of the already existing historical criticism of the industry, in this study, the emphasis is being placed on reconstructing the historical and socio-cultural contexts within which the industry emerged, the nature of Nigerian culture projected through the early video films that were released, and analysis of critical remarks on the products of the industry in terms of what the industry has done right or wrong and the way forward.

Nollywood: The Birth of a Brand Name and Film Culture.
Currently, in both local and international scholarship and popular entertainment arts criticism in the tabloids, the Nigerian video film industry is popularly referred to as Nollywood. The date of the birth of the brand name is situated in 2002, specifically in the pages of New York Times. The name itself is problematic in the sense that it attempts to essentialize and obliterate the different subcultures of videographic practices that are collectively referred to as Nollywood. There is also the question of who invented the brand name. For a while, Jonathan Haynes had thought it was Matt Steinglass in an article he wrote for the New York Times in 2002 (Haynes, 2007,
itself, something original and uniquely African. Many are opposed to the appellation because, according to them, it is a form of neo-

One of such reactions states that the term implies that Nollywood is an imitation of Hollywood and Bollywood rather than something in

From the nationalistic perspective, Olushola Oladele Adenugba has provided the following reasons why some Nigerians object to the

knowledge of the industry, and that they are not tainted by derogatory paternalism.

me hasten to state categorically that I'm one of those who would readily approve of critical comments on the Nigerian film industry from

fact that he claimed he was informed that Lagos is the nerve centre of Nollywood tells us how ignorant he was about the industry. Let

used in describing film cultures must similarly be derived, like that of the United States of America, from the name of a town. Also, the

Marc Wishengrad's remarks, as earlier noted, smacks of paternalism and ignorance because the fact that Hollywood derived its name

Since the late 1990s, Nigerian movies have found a place next to offerings from Hollywood and Bollywood, Bombay’s equivalent, in the

cities, towns and villages across English-speaking Africa. Though made on the cheap, with budgets of about only $15,000, Nigerian

movies have become huge hits, with stories, themes and faces familiar to other Africans. It is now, according to conservative estimates, a $45 million a year industry (Onishi, 2002, p.53).

On the issue of the person who invented the brand name, Matt Steinglass himself seems to deny the fact that he was the first person to

employ the acknowledgeably creative brand name when he submits:

Having written one of those NY Times stories, I'd like to respond. First, to coin the term “Nollywood” (which I did not use; that was the

other story) does not imply that the production and distribution system in Nigeria is the same as that of Hollywood; Hollywood, after all,

also has a different production and distribution system from Hollywood, and in any case the Hollywood system is itself in a state of flux,

and scarcely resembles the classic studio system of the 40s (Steinglass, 2002, p.53).

The debate on who coined the brand name, Nollywood, has been further complicated by Olushola Oladele Adenugba who has

maintained that “Nick Moran, a BBC reporter, who was in Nigeria to do a documentary on the ‘get-rich-quick-video’ came up with it”

(Adenugba, 2007, p.2). In the light of this claim, it would seem that the originator of the brand name could be traced to either Nomiritsu

Onishi or Nick Moran of the BBC, depending on who first used the term. This is an issue that needs to be further researched to lay to

rest the question of who invented the brand name. In a recent exchange between us, Haynes and I have agreed that Matt Steinglass

did not coin the term, Nollywood. But irrespective of who coined the name, commentaries on its emergence have been full of

ambivalences. Some art critics like Olushola Oladele Adenugba, have come to accept the term because it covers the diversity of

Nigerian films, whether they are “celluloid, video, short film, documentaries, film literatures, training projects, equipment and capacity

building of the industry and its highly secretive professionals.” According to Adenugba, the term covers the diversity of Nigerian film

production in the same way that Bollywood covers the production of Indian films in Tamil, Bengali, Telegu and other languages besides Hindi, in other parts of that huge country: “Nollywood covers Nigerian films in Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and English, although it is speculated that the Hausa filmmakers are trying to separate themselves by adopting the terms ‘Kaniwood’ and ‘Kallywood’” (Adenugba, 2007, p.1).

The Emmy Awards nominated American Director of Photography, Marc Wishengrad, who was one of the resource persons invited for

the annual Nigerian Film Corporation’s Cinematography Workshop, tagged “SHOOT 2005,” was downrightly paternalistic in his

objections to the brand name “Nollywood,” possibly because the term seemed to bring the Nigerian film industry to the same rankage

with its American counterpart, Hollywood. This is my personal interpretation to his paternalistic outburst against the term. His argument

is that the name Hollywood stems from a town in the United States of America known for film production. In this respect, he opines that

it would be stupid against this background to refer to your local film industry as Nollywood. It would be more understanding if it is called

Lagos, because I understand that is the nerve centre of film production in Nigeria, but not Nollywood. New York, where I come from,

has its own film industry, it is not referred to as Hollywood (as cited in Akpovi-Esade, 2005, p.66).

Marc Wishengrad was equally unsparing with respect to his assessment of the reputed claims to popularity of the Nigeria video film

industry. According to him, “an average American does not give a damn about Nigerian movies. They don’t watch you movies and that

is the truth.” He was however not charitable enough to qualify whether by “average American” he was referring to an average caucasian

American or whether he was speaking for all Americans. He was however definitive or why only the African community in the United

States of America watch Nigerian films: “because of the heavily accented English of Nigerians, no American will understand what actors

are saying, and nobody enjoys any movie when he has to strain his ears to hear what the actors are saying” (as cited in Akpovi-Esade, p.66).

Marc Wishengrad’s remarks, as earlier noted, smacks of paternalism and ignorance because the fact that Hollywood derived its name

from a town on the outskirts of Los Angeles where the major film production studios are located does not mean that all brand names

used in describing film cultures must similarly be derived, like that of the United States of America, from the name of a town. Also, the

fact that he claimed he was informed that Lagos is the nerve centre of Nollywood tells us how ignorant he was about the industry. Let

me hasten to state categorically that I’m one of those who would readily approve of critical comments on the Nigerian film industry from

scholars and practitioners from anywhere in the world so long as such critical commentaries are made from a position of a well-informed

knowledge of the industry, and that they are not tainted by derogatory paternalism.

From the nationalistic perspective, Olushola Oladele Adenugba has provided the following reasons why some Nigerians object to the

term, Nollywood:

One of such reactions states that the term implies that Nollywood is an imitation of Hollywood and Bollywood rather than something in

itself, something original and uniquely African. Many are opposed to the appellation because, according to them, it is a form of neo-
The first film scholar to intervene in the controversies surrounding the name “Nollywood” was Jonathan Haynes, in his article entitled, “Hollywood: What’s in a Name?” Haynes, in my opinion, gives us enough reasons why people need not split theirs hairs over the issue of the brand name, Nollywood: “I’m an American, and my continent is named after Amerigo Vespucci, a fifteenth-century Italian of no particular importance. He bumped into Brazil and then probably lied about it when he did it” (Haynes, 2005, p.1). If we worry so much about the name, Nollywood, we may just as well dump the name “Nigeria,” which Haynes reminds us was coined by Lord Lugard’s mistress. In this regard, I have used the term “Nollywood” throughout this work to represent the totality of film productions which are thematically and linguistically rooted in Nigeria’s belief systems and socio-cultural ambience, in which the stories may roam about from Nigeria to elsewhere in the world, back and forth, representing and showcasing the stoic and proud Nigerian national character and psyche, in all its hybrid forms, and whether such works were produced solely by Nigerian filmmakers or through co-productions. This definition is very much in tandem with the conception of Adenugba who uses the term to cover the diversity of Nigerian film production, whether they are in the video format or in the celluloid format. The term is certainly a handy one in referring to the popular film culture which has emerged in Nigeria since 1992.

Reconstructing the Socio-historical and Cultural Contexts of Nollywood.

The story of the factors that led filmmakers to start experimenting with the video medium as means of film production in the place of celluloid is too well documented to warrant any detailed mention here. In brief, we know that after the International Monetary Funds (IMF) and World Bank prevailed on the military government of President Ibrahim Babaginda, the Nigerian Naira was massively devalued, the argument being that it would make our manufactured goods cheaper at the international market, thereby driving expansion of our manufacturing base, increasing our exports and providing employment for the teeming unemployed youths. Of course, many patriotic Nigerians knew that the country was not manufacturing anything, they also knew that the World Bank and IMF forced devaluation of the Naira was intended to hoodwink us, and tailor our economy into an import substitution economy, totally dependent on importation of raw materials from the industrialized countries for the production of goods. The immediate effect of the devaluation of the Naira on the film production sector of the economy was that it brought to a dramatic end, the production of films using the celluloid format. In the 1980s this sector had witnessed a tremendous growth thanks to the efforts of filmmakers like Ola Balogun, Eddie Ugbomah, Sanya Dosunmu, Ladi Ladebo, Brendan Shehu, Hubert Ugunde, Adamu Halilu, Afolabi Adesanya, and others. The devaluation brought the growth of the sector to a halt because as an import substitution based industry, filmmakers could not get enough foreign currency to buy raw stock, hire equipment and technical staff and so on. This all too well known history is not what I intend to do in this section. Rather, I intend to reconstruct the socio-historical and cultural ambience which formed the basis for the production of the video films which replaced film production in the celluloid format. My interest in focusing on the production context of the video films is driven by the desire to account for the nature of Nigerian culture projected by certain genres which predominated the industry in the early years of its emergence.

Over the years, Nigerian art, literature and film have offered us a great insight into the socio-political and cultural traumas that Nigerians are passing through. Works such as Wole Soyinka’s The Man Died, Season of Anomy and The Interpreters; Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart, No Longer At Ease and Anthills of the Savannah; Christopher Okigbo’s Labyrinth; Isidore Okpewho’s The Last Duty; Festus Iyayi’s Violence, Heroes and Victims; Femi Osofsian’s Kolera Koleg and Once Upon Four Four Robbers; Ola Rotimi’s The Gods Are Not To Blame, If… and Hope of the Living Dead; I.N.C. Aniebo’s Anonymity of Sacrifice; J.P. Clark-Bekederemo’s The Raft and Wives Revolt; Tunde Fatunde’s No More Oil Boom; Ben Okri’s The Landscapes Within and The Famished Road; Chimamada Ngozi Adiche’s Half of a Yellow Sun; Helon Habila’s Oil on Water; and works by so many other Nigerian writers, have helped to chronicle the social traumas caused by bad leadership in our country.

As an art form, the film medium, like our literature, have historically documented the social mentality, fears and desires of the Nigerian society through the works of our major filmmakers. Ola Balogun’s works such as Amadi, Cry Freedom, Money Power; Sanya Dosumu’s Dinner with the Devil; Jab Adu’s Bisi, Daughter of the River; the critical realist films of Eddie Ugbomah such as The Rise and Fall of Dr. Oyenusi, The Mask, Oil Boom, Vengeance of the Cult, Death of a Black President; Ade Folayan’s Mosobolatan/ Hopelessness, directed for Moses OlaIya Adejumo’s Alawada Movies; Wole Soyinka’s Blues for a Prodigal; Ladi Ladebo’s Vendor, all have chronicled the social anxieties of Nigerians in the age and time of their productions. So, essentially what one has tried to do in this work is provide the socio-political and cultural contexts within which Nigerian video films emerged on the entertainment scene. Excavating the production contexts of the video films will provide us a handle into the social anxieties and fears which predominated in the Nigerian society of the 1990s and into the first decade of the twenty-first century. It will also help to shed light on the peculiar aspects of Nigeria culture which have been projected through the video films.

If it is true that Nigerian literary writers did not write in a vacuum, and if there is an agreement that their literary works provided us a barometer for understanding how our society was organized and led by politicians of all colourations, be they people in military uniforms or civilians at a particular historical epoch, then the same can equally be said of our filmmakers whose works mirrored the crisis ridden
Nigerian society of the 1990s. In his analysis of the social history which is reflected in contemporary Nigerian fiction of the same period, Charles Nnolim has the following to say regarding the temperament of the age:

It is, therefore, the position of this study that contemporary Nigerian fiction depicts a society adrift and a people lost in the imbecilities of futile optimism, hoping that materialism and the pursuit of dirty lucre will compensate for the loss of the nation’s soul; for the Nigeria we encounter in its contemporary fiction is a nation without a soul, without direction, without a national ethos – it is a rudderless ship a-sail amidst the jetsam and floatsam of a directionless voyage to nowhere (Nnolim, 2009, p.230).

Without doubt, Nigeria of the 1990s fits smugly into the above inimitable characterization by Charles Nnolim. It was a period in which the ship of state was set adrift by political experimentations that were intended to sail to a dead end. The political experimentations started with the military President, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, who founded political parties for the state, Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC). When the experiment produced his bosom friend, M.K.O. Abiola, as the democratically elected president, President Babangida refused to hand over power to Abiola until a mass uprising by the people forced him to step aside. As a stop gap to douse the mass uprising, the Interim Government of Earnest Shonekan was inaugurated. It hardly stayed upto a year before it was toppled by General Sani Abacha who instituted a reign of terror in the country which led to the killing of several journalists thereby driving a portion of the Nigerian press underground and equally resulted in the formation of the pro-democracy coalition, the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) headed by the late veteran politician, Anthony Enahoro. These were dark days in Nigeria’s social history. Many journalists, scholars and pro-democracy activists went on voluntary exile. The nation was cowed and General Abacha set about the crudest form of public looting of the national treasury that has not been witnessed in recent history in Nigeria, and he did it with impunity. The mass of the population was mired in poverty and hunger. Many families experienced broken homes. The people became so poor that stories of cannibalism surfaced in the Nigerian press, especially with relation to the “Otokoto” saga in Owerri, Imo State. This period also witnessed the mass exodus of Nigerian girls to Italy and other European countries, especially girls from Edo State, for prostitution, to support their poor families back in Nigeria. The tabloids of the period were also awash with stories of ritual killings, harvesting of body parts for monetary charms. The cities of Lagos and Warri were notorious for such ritual killings in the 1990s. It was in the midst of this political and economic quagmire that Ken Saro Wiwa began his grassroots movement, the Movement for the Survival and Emancipation of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in which collaborators with the Abacha regime were characterized as vultures by the mass uprising in Ogoniland. In the midst of this social upheaval, popular culture in the form of yellow journalism, and poster/calendar production flourished, with many pictures of collaborators being beaten who then turn to vultures and fly away. I remember arguing with an aunty who hung such a poster-calendar on her wall who swore she bought it from an Onitsha trader who himself swore he witnessed such an event in which thieves or political collaborators turned into vultures and flew to avoid instant justice by the poverty ridden Nigerian masses. There is need to reconstruct this social history so that we don’t fall into the trap of misjudging harshly the popular video film culture which exploited the social nightmares which Nigerians were facing in the 1990s. In fiction, these social nightmares were properly characterized through the generic format of magical realism in Ben Okri’s novel, The Famished Road. It is only through a proper reconstruction of Nigeria’s social history of the 1990s that will place Nollywood video film culture in its proper production context thereby avoiding the type of quasi-historical comments which we are subjected to by armchair critics on the pages of many Nigerian tabloids.

In view of the social upheavals and economic depression experienced by the populace, one would have expected that the emergent video films would reflect the turbulent social history that the country was going through. Ironically, this was not the case. The bad leadership and corruption which had brought about mass poverty in the society and which had been well accounted for in Nigerian prose fiction, drama and film production in the celluloid format were absent in the new video film culture. The question to pose at this point is this: were the filmmakers in the video format blinded to the mass poverty and suffering in the land? Absolutely not. It seems to me that rather than bore the populace with the tales of woes in the land, they decided to sell what Charles Nnolim has characterized as the “imbecilities of futile optimism, hoping that materialism and the pursuit of dirty lucre will compensate for the loss of the nation’s soul; for the Nigeria we read about daily in the soft sell Nigerian tabloids. In fiction these were the days in which rumours sold like wild fire. Newspapers carried banner headlines without substantial content to back them up, and the more lurid the stories, the more free readers and potential buyers of newspapers clustered around a vendor. In the midst of this social hysteria, it is therefore understandable that films of the ritual murder genre kick started the commercial
Apart from ritual killings for monetary charms, which, by the way, our sociologists and anthropologists, are yet to fully investigate, the next perceived source of quick financial reward was prostitution. Newspapers in the late 1980s and early 1990s were awash with stories of Nigerian girls migrating to Italy for prostitution. In an age of mass poverty in the land, escape to Europe, by any means, was a glamorous adventure which many girls were prepared to undertake. This adventure seemed to attract new recruits regularly, especially with stories making the round that many of the flashy cars and buildings springing up in Benin City in the early 1990s were products of repatriated funds by the migrant girls. It is therefore easy to understand why works such as Glamour Girls and Italian Connection became video hits when they were released. In her article entitled, “Appearing Fabu-lous: From Tender Romance to Horrifying Sex,” Frances Harding explains the reasons why narratives woven around sex sold the way they did:

Video movies focus on sex as a vehicle and strategy for bringing about economic change in an individual’s life. As far as the narrative goes, representing illicit sex with one or more partners is not the end in itself, rather it is the exposure of the acquisition, by any means, of wealth and power that is the motive for the ensuing sexual and violent acts suggested in the video. The agency for change is the putative efficacious relationship between transgressive sex and a consequent supernatural power to bring about a specific result: the acquisition of wealth and/or power (Harding, 2007, p.11).

Incidentally, most of the stories that sold during the early years of Nollywood, were tales exploiting the themes of transgressive sex and violence, by means of which the patriarchal hold of the family is reasserted and the female gender is subjected to personal sacrifices to ensure the survival of the family. Whether through acts of self-sacrifices such as prostitution or in terms of gender violence directed mostly at women as objects of ritual sacrifices, the endgame is to empower man as the source of power and authority in the African family set up. Thus in video films like Living in Bondage I & II, Circle of Doom I & II, Glamour Girls I & II, Taboo I & II, Jezebel I & II, Evil Passion I & II, Nneka: The Pretty Serpent I & II, Rattle Snake I & II, Fatal Desire, and many others, the issue of transgressive sex and violence is marketed as fast and alternative routes to wealth and power, irrespective of the moral opprobrium they attracted. Another important issue which Frances Harding mentions as the source material for Nollywood narratives is “the articulation of the fear of the imagined,” which is represented through stories founded or ritual murders:

the use of sex as the driving narrative engine and which overarches the whole enterprise, is the articulation of fear of the imagined, of the semi-known: the putative disappearance of individuals, the putative availability of limbs, sexual body parts, heads, for esoteric putatively supernatural ritual directed towards the acquisition of wealth and sexual prowess. Evidenced in visual, material features such as dress, cars, housing, furnishings, social behaviour, such manifestations are part of the daily gossip of real people (Harding, p.14).

However one wants to look at it, the problem of ritual killing for supernatural acquisition of wealth and power was in vogue at the time the video films were preoccupied with this thematic issue. Ritual killing is also a subject that instills fear and anxiety in the populace. In this respect, the films were merely exploiting an aspect of our social history, however obnoxious it may seem, which provokes fear and anxiety in the society. I should like to equally add that the issue of ritual sacrifices of human beings for purposes of propitiation of angry deities, gods and goddesses or as part of burial rites of kings or powerful warriors has been an obnoxious practice in traditional African societies. Its modern practice for supernatural acquisition of wealth, prestige and power is, I presume, part of the mutation of this obnoxious practice in the age in which the brute strength of power has been replaced by the power of the intellect, in a modern economic system driven by money, wealth and power. No doubt, the problem of ritual killing is a law and order problem which deserves proper investigation by the law enforcement agencies so that our judicial system can be in a position to tackle it. It equally needs proper investigation by scholars in Social Anthropology and Sociology to enable us to fully understand the rational and irrational forces sustaining the practice.

Most of the criticisms which Nollywood faces in the Nigerian press can be traced to films of the ritual genre. In his article entitled, “Love, Love Everywhere in Moviedom,” in which he attempts to trace the advent of genres in Nollywood, Justin Akpovi-Esade, in October 16, 2003, has reported how the offensive odour of films dealing with the theme of ritual killings became so unbearable to the delicate nostrils of officials of the National Films and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), that they had to intervene by bringing down the hammer of censorship hard on them due to an incidence in Accra, Ghana, where some Nigerians were reported murdered because the Ghanaians attributed the ritual killing of a little girl in the city of Accra to Nigerians because many Nollywood films have represented it as an aspect of our social practice. Permit me to quote this article at some length because it brings forcefully home the power of the film industry and the ambivalent reactions which could attend a filmmaker’s altruistic representation of his culture:

When Living in Bondage produced by Kenneth Nnebue came into the market, its success led other producers to come out with works that had identical story lines… Vulture, Rituals among other films celebrated rituals and the act of making money through dubious means that includes using human being for money-making rituals. It got to alarming degree, drawing concerns from all quarters including the federal government. The National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) had to step in when some Nigerians were murdered in a mob action in Accra, Ghana in the late 90s. Offence: Nigerians were accused of being responsible for the death of a little girl that had her head severed after she was murdered, presumably for ritual purposes. The conclusion reached by the angry Ghanaians was that Nigerians being ritualists as portrayed in our home videos, must have been responsible for the death! (Akpovi-Esade, 2003,
Nigeria is a vast country made up of over 250 ethnic nationalities, with their peculiar competing political, socio-cultural and economic issues. Issakaba series of crime and punishment stories. The point being made here is that Nollywood genres do not emerge in a vacuum. People around the world mistake the fictional representation of aspects of our culture to be the same with our culture. The issue of this responsibility was very much in the mind of Femi Osofisan when he submits that practically every Nollywood directors seems to have been caught in the spell — mix a diet of grotesque murders and cacophonous chants and bizarre incantations, and smile all the way to your bank! (Osofisan, p.30).

Though, in general, Femi Osofisan's main concern in the essay in question is on the need to enrich the content of Nollywood films, the vexatious issue of films of the ritual genre was not far from his mind as the following remarks show:

"I will not, as you know, be the first to make this complaint. Even our friends outside have voiced the same unease about the ambiguity of Nollywood. The common question that people ask, as you know, is — why this unceasing preoccupation with juju, this relentless celebration of dark rituals and diabolical cults? Practically every Nollywood directors seems to have been caught in the spell — mix a diet of grotesque murders and cacophonous chants and bizarre incantations, and smile all the way to your bank! (Osofisan, p.30)."

Admittedly, there is much to be vexatious about in films of the ritual genre which feed us a constant diet of ritual killings for supernatural acquisition of wealth and power, and which highlights an aspect of our culture we would not want the rest of the world to know about. These film evidently portray us as superstitious people trapped in the web of traditional African belief-systems in the age of modernity when the instrumental power of rational reasoning should prevail. They no doubt make us uncomfortable like the proverbial psychoanalytic return of the repressed which continue to torment us however hard we try to banish them to the subconscious realm. As self-professed moderns, we may hate the mumble jumble of the native doctor and his monotonous chants, but the truth of the matter is that they still command the imagination of millions of our compatriots who patronize them daily. In this regard, in representing them in Nollywood video films, the industry, being a commerce-driven entity, is merely exploiting another money spinner, which is our imaginative fear of the unknown, resulting from the failure of our modern institutional bodies to rise to the needs of our claims to modernity by meeting our basic needs and necessities.

What has sustained the mystique and popularity of Nollywood is the fact that it has always reinvented itself through the rendition of genres. These genres are themselves fictional representations of aspects of our social history. Take the issue of insecurity in our country as an instance. As Justin Akpovi-Esade has noted, when the censors board began to crackdown on films of the ritual genre, filmmakers switched to the problem of insecurity in the land, especially as it relates to armed robbery:

"Violence came quickly on the heels of ritual films. Overnight, Nigerian movies became a reverse of violent American Hollywood films. The difference was that our local films were just cheap imitations of Hollywood movies. Titles such as Day Light Robbery, Executive Crime, Godfather, Executive Robbers, Silence, Most Wanted (an imitation of Queen Latifah’s Set It Off) among others invaded most homes. The censors board again came down hard on these kind of movies sometimes banning them outright or in most cases causing the producers to remove portions considered too violent for the viewing public (Akpovi-Esade, p.66)."

It must be emphasized that these films have not appeared from a vacuum. As earlier noted, the 1990s was a dark chapter in Nigeria’s history. The annulment of M.K.O. Abiola’s electoral victory at the presidential elections in 1993 precipitated mass uprising in the country. The country was set adrift. Many people lost faith in the Nigerian state, resulting in the formation of groups such as the Odua Peoples’ Congress (OPC), Arewa Youths, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Ijaw National Congress (INC), etc. All these groups were purportedly set up to protect the interest of the ethnic nationalities that floated them due to feelings of alienation from the Nigerian state. These were days when cries of marginalization by various ethnic groups filled the air. In the midst of this political crisis, corruption and lack of proper political leadership resulted in economic depression in the country. Many factories, especially the mass employing ones like those of the textile industry sector closed down, resulting in mass retrenchment. Retrenchment also took place in the public sector. In the midst of mass pauperization of the populace, the security agencies became demoralized. Even the Nigeria Police started embarking on regular strikes, especially those of the rank of inspectors and below. Youth unemployment and mass poverty boosted armed robberies. The failure of the security agencies to arrest the situation made the people to take their destiny in their own hands by setting up neighbourhood watches. This resulted in vigilante activities which inspired the Issakaba series of crime and punishment stories. The point being made here is that Nollywood genres do not emerge in a vacuum. Their roots can be traced to the social anxieties, fears, dreams, aspirations and demands of members of the Nigerian society. Since Nigeria is a vast country made up of over 250 ethnic nationalities, with their peculiar competing political, socio-cultural and economic
Before the emergence of the highly popular epic genre, there had been a brief season of the highly controversial Christian video genre. The scene, Nigerian video films were already means of popular entertainment in households across Africa.

In an earlier work which I carried out on Nollywood, I had stated that the cycle of epics started with:


The epics were essentially costumes and period dramas which afforded the filmmakers the opportunity to showcase the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria. Most of them were set in pristine pre-colonial agrarian societies, with the narrative action taking place in the open country.

Before the emergence of the highly popular epic genre, there had been a brief season of the highly controversial Christian video genre. With respect to the rendition of genres, when criticisms of the ritual films became too loud for all to bear, the industry then switched to epic genres which represented Nigerian culture in a much more palatable way. The epic videos are in many respects totally different from the ritual genre. Here, one finds that there are no cult-related ritual killings that required the sacrifice close of a family member, especially a wife, in order for the newly recruited member to supernaturally acquire wealth and power. Even though there are ritual activities in the epics, such rituals are community sanctioned and are publicly carried out by the chief priest of the community and such rituals take the form of fortifying members of the community who have volunteered or are chosen to carry out an important duty, such as embarking on a perilous trip in search of means of safeguarding the community or participating in a patriotic conflict to secure the territorial integrity of the community. The intention is usually to restore some form of spiritual or physical balance where some acts of omission or commission had created an imbalance in the universe of the society.

In Igodo (Andy Amenechi and Don Pedro Obaseki, 1999) a prototypical epic film, the story revolves around the unlawful killing of Ikewumere, who was dedicated as a child to Amadioha the god of thunder. At birth, it had been predicted that he would be the next Igwe. The jealousy arising from this prediction made his parents to be killed and Ikewumere had to escape to Umuoka where he is adopted by a childless hunter. He grew up to be a very wealthy man in his adopted town and his wealth becomes a source of jealousy. A group of seven men conspires to steal the staff of the Igwe, a crime punishable by death, and they hide the staff in Ikewumere’s house to implicate him. In anger, the Igwe decrees that whoever is found with the stolen staff should be buried up to the neck and beheaded to serve as a deterrent to others. Of course, when the staff of office is traced to Ikewumere, he is made to face the punishment despite his protestation of innocence. His death therefore invokes the anger of Amadioha, who causes mysterious deaths on all first born of Umuoka. The diviner’s investigation traces the deaths to the unlawful killing, in years past, of a stranger in their midst. The machete used for the crime had found its way to the shrine of Amadioha. It is only that matchete which can be used to cut down the giant tree in the community in order to bring restitution to the community. The whole story therefore revolves around the adventure undertaken by seven men of Umuoka to retrieve the machete from the shrine of Amadioha. The machete is successfully brought back by Igodo, the flutist (Norbert Young) in a perilous adventure in which Egbonula, the hunter (Sam Dede), Okonta, the climber (Ignis Ekwe), Nwoke, the drummer (Prince James Uche), Agu, the warrior (Charles Okafor), Ikenna, the wrestler (Obi Madubogwu) and Izu, the farmer (Chidi Mokeme) meet various forms of mysterious deaths.

It terms of thematic emphasis, the video film stresses the need for collective responsibility and sacrificial leadership. The young men of Umuoka community were not forced to undertake the perilous trip to retrieve the machete. Rather, they freely volunteer their services in order to salvage their community; something that is very much lacking in the Nigerian society where those in positions of leadership use such privileges to loot the nation’s treasury to enrich themselves. This work is therefore a subtle critique of the selfish leadership in the country.

Invariably, the epics were very popular when they appeared on the scene. In a detailed study carried out by Barclays Ayakoroma on Nollywood genres, he submits that “the epic genre in the Nigerian video film industry could be categorized into three main subgenres, namely, historical epics, legendary epics, and fantasy epics (Ayakoroma, 2007, p.156). He argues that the categorization is based on the themes of the video films, hence “historical epics… are mostly dramatizations or recreations of identifiable histories of the people,” while “the legendary epics… are dramatizations of legends and legendary figures,” that deal “with known stories of the people or individual heroes of history” (Ayakoroma, pp.156-157). With respect to the third category, Ayakoroma submits that the fantasy epic genre deals with subject matters that exist in folktales and folklores. In the real sense, fantasy is a product of the creative imagination of an artist (or writer), who creates situations that may or may not have existed. That is why the fantasy subgenre in epic video films is mostly impressionistic and surrealistic in its representations. In it, there is great dependence on folktale, folklore, myths, and legends. The intention may be to inculcate morals in society based on the theme of the story or to eulogize and stamp a notion about the valour and the strength of the community… (Ayakoroma, pp.157-158).

In an earlier work which I carried out on Nollywood, I had stated that the cycle of epics started with:


The epics were essentially costumes and period dramas which afforded the filmmakers the opportunity to showcase the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria. Most of them were set in pristine pre-colonial agrarian societies, with the narrative action taking place in the open country. This setting invariably imposes a preponderance of long leisurely shots that are overlaid by nostalgic feeling of childhood innocence or unpolluted purity. There is therefore a tinge of Negritudian romanticism in the way in which society and culture is represented in the epic videos. There seems to be an understated suggestion that the colonial intrusion with its modern gadgets and institutional practices are socio-cultural pollutants of some sorts. One should also add that by 1999 when the epics began to appear on the scene, Nigerian video films were already means of popular entertainment in households across Africa.

Invariable, the epics were very popular when they appeared on the scene. In a detailed study carried out by Barclays Ayakoroma on Nollywood, he submits that “the epic genre in the Nigerian video film industry could be categorized into three main subgenres, namely, historical epics, legendary epics, and fantasy epics (Ayakoroma, 2007, p.156). He argues that the categorization is based on the themes of the video films, hence “historical epics… are mostly dramatizations or recreations of identifiable histories of the people,” while “the legendary epics… are dramatizations of legends and legendary figures,” that deal “with known stories of the people or individual heroes of history” (Ayakoroma, pp.156-157). With respect to the third category, Ayakorma submits that the fantasy epic genre deals with subject matters that exist in folktales and folklores. In the real sense, fantasy is a product of the creative imagination of an artist (or writer), who creates situations that may or may not have existed. That is why the fantasy subgenre in epic video films is mostly impressionistic and surrealistic in its representations. In it, there is great dependence on folktale, folklore, myths, and legends. The intention may be to inculcate morals in society based on the theme of the story or to eulogize and stamp a notion about the valour and the strength of the community… (Ayakoroma, pp.157-158).

In an earlier work which I carried out on Nollywood, I had stated that the cycle of epics started with:


The epics were essentially costumes and period dramas which afforded the filmmakers the opportunity to showcase the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria. Most of them were set in pristine pre-colonial agrarian societies, with the narrative action taking place in the open country. This setting invariably imposes a preponderance of long leisurely shots that are overlaid by nostalgic feeling of childhood innocence or unpolluted purity. There is therefore a tinge of Negritudian romanticism in the way in which society and culture is represented in the epic videos. There seems to be an understated suggestion that the colonial intrusion with its modern gadgets and institutional practices are socio-cultural pollutants of some sorts. One should also add that by 1999 when the epics began to appear on the scene, Nigerian video films were already means of popular entertainment in households across Africa.

Aspirations, there will always be plenty of stories to tell.
The season started with:


Foluoke Ogunleye advances the argument that “Christian Video producers address the problem of cultism in Nigeria by constructing a milieu of moralism and seeking to eliminate fear from the psyche of the people” (Ogunleye, 2003, p.16). She equally argues that the “Nigerian Christian Video film strives to positively transform the society and to advocate social salvation through social reform action” (Ogunleye, p.16). As she puts it:

Africa religious terrain presents a polytheistic picture and religious groups can be categorized into the benevolent and malevolent classes, based on the gods or goddesses who form the nucleus of the particular group. On the benevolent side, we have the worship of God, the Supreme Being, Olodumare, and gods who are not really ‘gods’, but heroes and heroines who died and became apotheosized in honour of their great deeds while alive. Belonging to the malevolent category are gods or goddesses whose worship is attended by violence and rituals requiring human sacrifices or other non-human-friendly practices (Ogunleye, p.16). She equally submits “that people searching for power, fame, or any other thing in a diabolic way can obtain such by becoming members of secret cults. The high occurrence rate of kidnappings and ritual murders in Nigeria seem to point to the fact that these evil cults are very active” (pp.16-17). Though Ogunleye believes that Christian videos “advocate social salvation through social reform action,” art critics like Justin Akpovi-Esade seems to think otherwise, arguing that by targeting large orthodox or better established churches with large numbers of worshippers, such video films are capable of precipitating religious crisis:

A film like Redeemed no doubt, was targeted at a church (or churches) that bears similarity in name. The Catholic Church was not spared either. Later, producers turned to attacking these organizations especially the Catholic sending the message, that only a ‘Holy Ghost’ Church (Bible Believing Church as they call it) is capable of offering salvation to the people. The censor board again stepped in. The board led by Mrs. Roseline Odeh wielded the big stick, banning the movie Rapture, produced by female Evangelist Helen Ukpabio (Akpovi-Esade, p.66).

No wonder then that in his analysis of Rapture I & II (Fred Amata, 2002), John Yeseibo writes that in the film, “The Catholic Pope is seen presiding as the self-styled, self-imposed President of the world. All initial oppositions from defiant heads of other countries are crushed by his fierce occultic powers. In the end, all are cowed into acceptance of the reign of the Antichrist” (Yeseibo, 2004, p.68).

Evidently, it was the representation of the head of the Catholic Church as the Antichrist that may have made the censors board to ban the film. Though in the legal battle which ensued, Helen Ukpabio, the producer of Rapture won, the board had made the point on the need for sensitivity, especially in matters of religious faith which can easily precipitate crisis in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like ours.

Of all the genres which helped to project Nigerian culture globally and establish the Nollywood brand as a world acclaimed film culture, the comic genre stands out as a unique vehicle in the projection of Nigerian culture, and in this respect, one must acknowledge the immense contribution of Nkem Owoh (known internationally by his screen name Osuofia) in popularizing the genre. According to Egbuche Eme, the comic genre started with the production of Marcus Wuzoigwe (1994), starring Nkem Owoh. After this initial outing, no serious comic films were released until the production of Pam Pam (1997), Sawaam (1998) and He Goat (1998) which also starred Nkem Owoh. However, what looking like a revolution in the comic genre started with the production and release of Ukwu (1999) and the blockbuster comedy, Aki Na Ukwa (2003), …directed by Chika Onu and Amayo Uzo Philips respectively (Eme, 2009, p.47). The outstanding comedian who have contributed to the development of the comic genre includes Nkem Owoh (Osuofia or Ukwu), the midgets, Chinedu Ikedieze and Osita Iheme (Aki and Pawpaw), John Okafor (Ibu), Patience Ozokwor (Susu or Mama G.), Sam Loco Efe, Chiwetalu Agwu, Camilla Mberekpe, Stella Ikwegbuz (Madam Boniface), Amaechi Mounagor, Larry Koolsweat, Francis Odega, Victor Osuagwu, and many others. Some of the video films which helped to establish the genre includes Pam Pam (Sadik Daba & Akwes, 1997), Ukwa (Chika Onu, 1999), Taskforce (Amayo Uzo Philips, 2001), Spanner I & II (Moses Ebere, 2002), Minimum Wage (Amayo Uzo Philips, 2002), Osuofia in London (Kingsley Ogoro, 2003), My In-Law (Chika Onu, 2003), 2 Rats (Andy Chukwu, 2003), Aki Na Ukwa (Amayo Uzo Philips, 2003), Mr. Trouble (Sunday Nnajude, 2003), Mr. Ibu (Andy Chukwu, 2003), Money Yab Man (Moses Ebere, 2003), Mr. Ibu in London (Adim William, 2004), Daddy Must Obey (Sunday Nnajude, 2004), Village Boys (Chika Onu, 2005), Chop Money (Ernest Obi, 2006), Johnbull and Rosekate (Tchidi Chikere, 2006), Bizzy Body (Amayo Uzo Philips, 2006), Koboko (Rahim Kas, 2007), Bafana Bafana (Shola Fregene, 2007), Recharge Cards (Amayo Uzo Philips, 2008), Osuofian and the Wise Men (Chika Onu, 2008), Koko Masters (Stan K. Amadi, 2008) etc. (see Eme, pp.49-51). It is instructive to note that the bulk of the comic video films flourished in the dark years of political crisis and economic depression in Nigeria. In this respect, these films were very helpful in assuaging the anxieties, fear and sadness weighing people down throughout the crisis ridden and economic depressive years of the 1990s. Besides creating comic relief and diffusing tension through laughter, the comic genre, as earlier pointed out, was quite instrumental in projecting Nigerian culture. For instance, when Osuofia in London was released in 2003, it gained international acclaim and recognition as “the highest
gross and best selling movie” in the video format for that year (as cited in Eme, p.48).

Aside from the comedies which have helped to popularize Nollywood productions globally, of recent, there have been some high value productions which are attempting to chart a new course for the industry in the sense that the directors and producers are assuming the characteristics of independent productions in terms of proper thinking through of the productions, from conception, through production and distribution. Also, quite sometime is spent at each stage of the production process to ensure that the end product is a high quality film. Some of the productions which Mike Ekunwo has outlined in his article entitled, “The New Cinema: Nollywood or Not,” fit this description. They include works like Figurine (Kunle Afolayan, 2009), Inale (Jeta Amata, 2010), Anchor Baby (Lonzo Nzkw, 2010), Kajola (Niyi Akinmolayan, 2010) Champions of Our Time (Mak Kusare, 2009), Home in Exile (Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, 2009), etc. Beside being high budget films, the works show evidence of research, detailed attention to the craft of film production, and the stars were in their elements. The fact that they are high budget films also presupposes that the producers of these works have cinema theatre release in their mind hence the drive to bring out high quality productions. These productions, besides helping to project Nigeria’s rich cultural heritage have also added value by elevating the quality of Nollywood productions.

Nollywood and the International Projection of Nigerian Culture.

I have been arguing thus far that the main production framework which Nollywood has used to project Nigeria’s cultural heritage globally was genre oriented productions. Evidently, not all genres were popular with the elites. From the analysis which I have given thus far, it is clear that the ritual genre has attracted a lot of opprobrium from the elites. It is also clear that even though the elites are not the greatest patrons of Nollywood films, by virtue of their education and exposure, they have assumed the moral high grounds by presenting themselves as spokespersons for the larger voiceless Nigerian masses who patronize and sustain the industry. Historically speaking, the criticisms which have trailed the ritual genre is a replay of what obtained in Hollywood in the great depression years of the 1930s in the United States of America, where mass poverty and urban crime in metropolitan centres across America gave birth to what Richard Griffith refers to as the “gangster film cycle” (Griffith, 1976, p.111). The films which helped to define the cycle according to Griffith were The Racket (1928), The Big House (1930), Little Caesar (1930), The Secret Six (1931), Quick Millions (1931), Smart Money (1931), The Public Enemy (1931), all of which of the dealt with the theme of the gangster as a popular hero. As he puts it, the “last big gangster films of this cycle made explicit the emergent fact that the gangster had become a popular hero because only an outlaw could achieve success in the economic chaos of depression in America” (p.112). Incidentally, the highly popular Hollywood gangster genre of the 1930s, like the ritual genre of Nollywood in the 1990s, were greatly hated by the American upper middle class which considered such films as washing America’s dirty linen in the open before the whole world. What happened then is what is happening now in the sense that even though the American upper middle class of the 1930s was not the greatest patrons of Hollywood, by virtue of their education and position in society, they were able to mount pressure on Hollywood to stop the production of the gangster cycle of films. Giving reasons why the gangster film had to be dropped by Hollywood, Griffith submits as follows:

Its disappearance marked the first instance of a paradox which has plagued the Motion Picture Industry, ever since. A story ‘theme’ becomes popular enough with general audiences to warrant a cycle of films to be built around it. But the ‘theme’ itself is repugnant to the upper middle-class who, though they form only a small percentage of total motion picture patronage, are organized and articulate. Then, although the cycle’s box-office warrants its continuance, it is abandoned in deference to the pressure groups… The gangster as stencil disappeared, but his influences remained. The crime films brought the habit of a naturalistic approach to the screen. Their best-known contribution was a new swiftness of continuity which lifted the movies out of the dialogue doldrums of the photographed play (Griffith, p.113).

In the case of Nollywood, I should like to argue that prior to the production of Living in Bondage and the cycle of ritual films which it helped to inaugurate, most Nigerian films had been weighed down by too much dialogue at the expense of cinematic narration. In a sense, the popularity of Living in Bondage rests in the fact that even though the first editions released were in Igbo language before English sub-titled editions came out, non-Igbo speaking spectators were able to follow the narration effortlessly because the emphasis was on visual narration rather than a dialogue driven narration. As anyone who has taken time to carry out a detailed screening of films in the cycle would find out, most of them equally adopted the visual narration driven narrative technique in which the camera tells the story and not the dialogue. Herein lay the basis of their popularity.

As earlier stated, even though the ritual videos were very popular with the masses, the elites were ashamed of them in the sense that they portrayed Nigerians as superstitious people engaged in ritual killings and other types voodoo activities aimed at gaining supernatural access to wealth and power. For instance, one time Minister of Information, Dora Akunyili, accused the Nigerian film industry of contributing to the nation’s poor international image. At a training and community film production workshop organized by the Nigerian National Volunteer Service and Del York International in Abuja in 2009, she expressed concern about “the penchant of Nollywood to focus on voodoo, crime and advance fee fraud (419) in their plot to the exclusion of positive attributes of Nigerians in a bid to market their films (as cited in Onyekakeyah, 2009, p.67). Her remark which was made as part of her nationalistic drive to rebrand Nigeria’s image under the slogan: “Good People, Great Nation,” has evidently not taken cognizance of the fact that Nollywood is regarded by many of her copatriots, and indeed by the international community, as the best brand to emerge out of Nigeria, beside the
The celebrated visit of Rita Dominic to Malawi in 2009, courtesy of Multichoice/DSTV satellite television, which virtually brought the
Nigeria's major telecommunication firms, Globacom, is using Nollywood stars such as Funke Akindele, Ramsey Nouah, They are also being used by numerous companies to endorse and promote their products. It is common knowledge that one of
These stars are recognized nationwide by both the government and people of Nigeria as roving Cultural Ambassadors of the country.
These stars are recognized nationwide by both the government and people of Nigeria as roving Cultural Ambassadors of the country. They are also being used by numerous companies to endorse and promote their products. It is common knowledge that one of Nigeria's major telecommunication firms, Globacom, is using Nollywood stars such as Funke Akindele, Ramsey Nouah, Desmond Elliot, Jim Iyeke, Nonso Diobi, Mike Ezuruonye, Rita Dominic, Nuhu Aliyu, Monalisa Chinda, Ini Edo, and Kate Henshaw-Nuttal to promote their telecom network. When Nollywood stars visit other countries in Africa, they are treated like royalties. A case in point is the celebrated visit of Rita Dominic to Malawi in 2009, courtesy of Multichoice/DSTV satellite television, which virtually brought the
A work such as this would be considered incomplete if a proper tribute is not paid to two institutions which have done a lot to promote the Nollywood brand throughout the world: they include the South African satellite television station run by Multichoice Nigeria Ltd and Peace Anyiam-Osigwe’s film festival outfit, Africa Movie Academy Award (AMAA). Multichoice/DSTV had been operating in Nigeria for a while, but on Monday, December 8, 2003, cashing on the growing popularity of Nollywood across Africa, the satellite television station decided to launch a special film channel known as Africa Magic in the Reception Hall, of the Lagoon Restaurant of Eko Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos. According to the General Manager of Multichoice Nigeria Ltd, Willem Hatting: “Africa Magic is set to showcase the very best of the indigenous Nigerian film and entertainment industry, alongside other countries from across the African continent (as cited in Bayagbon, 2003, p.60). Soon after its launching, Africa Magic was totally colonized by Nollywood and Multichoice/DSTV was forced to create an alternative channel, Africa Magic Plus for the rest of the African continent. As a result of the sheer volume of productions by Nollywood, the satellite television station has since launched two new channels for the Hausa and Yoruba languages sub-brands of the Nollywood industry. Since its launching in 2003, Africa Magic has been a cash cow for its mother station, DSTV, but it has also been at the forefront in the projection of Nollywood and Nigeria’s cultural heritage globally. Today, the channel is watched throughout Africa and in the Middle East.

The film festival, Africa Movie Academy Awards (AMAA) founded by Peace Anyiam-Osigwe had its first outing at the Bayelsa State Cultural Centre, Yenegoa, in 2005, under the sponsorship of the Bayelsa State Government. The festival has since held yearly in Yenegoa, except for the 2008 edition which was taken to Abuja. The sponsorship has also been broadened to included the United Bank for Africa (UBA) and other corporate bodies. It is fair to say that currently AMAA is considered Africa’s foremost film festival, being a yearly event where African film stars compete for continental recognition. It is equally fast becoming the African version of the yearly Hollywood Academy Awards, the Oscars. The festival has grown so big that a new category for African diaspora films has now been added. Each year, a Hollywood star of African descent is usually invited as a special guest of honour. Some of the Hollywood stars who have graced the events included Danny Glover, Cuba Golding Jnr, Louise Gossett, Forest Whitaker and Angela Bassett. The presence of these stars has often added glamour and ensured that the world press covered the events. Additional live coverage is usually provided by Africa's primal satellite television station, DSTV, thus making the events available to the global audience. In comparison to the Festival Pan Africaine du Cinema Ouagadougou (FESPACO) which is more Francophonie in orientation, AMAA is unabashedly Pan African in orientation, open to everybody and without discrimination in terms of format of film production. No wonder then that the arts critic, Shaibu Hussein, drew the conclusion that “AMAA has become the biggest singular film show on the continent” (Hussein, 2009, p.24). Considering the role which AMAA is playing to project the activities of Nollywood on the African continent, and indeed around the world, it has become one of major medium for the projection of Nigeria’s cultural values globally.

A lot of foreign commentators have acknowledged the global significance of Nollywood, beside the now acclaimed UNESCO’s rating of the industry alongside Hollywood and Bollywood, which has helped to project the brand globally. One such commentator is the Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization, based in Geneva, Francis Gurry, who delivered the 20th Anniversary Lecture of the Nigerian Copyright Commission, on September 1, 2009, at the NICON Luxury Hotel, Abuja. At that lecture, Gurry acknowledged the fact that “Nigeria is rich in tradition and folklore,” and that the country is “known for being at the heart of African music, and for possessing a well developed music industry which has achieved international acclaim.” He equally stated that Nigeria has a “vibrant book publishing industry, with more publishing houses than any other African country and an influential literature, including a Nobel Prize Laureate.” With respect to Nollywood, the following is his assessment of the industry:

For the past 15 years, “Nollywood” has fuelled an insatiable appetite in Africa’s most populous country for home grown films made by Nigerians, about Nigerians. It is an industry made possible by affordable digital technology, and is driven by the ingenuity, resourcefulness and keen business sense of Nigeria’s people. It is an example for many developing countries that seek to foster domestic creative industries. These films do not just find their way into the home viewing market and video outlets. Dedicated satellite channels with significant portions of Nigerian and Ghanaian programmes are being broadcast to consumers as far a-field. Some estimates even put “Nollywood” productions at well over 1,000 films annually. Nollywood generates hundreds of millions of US dollars per annum in revenues which directly benefit Nigerians and the Nigerian economy (Gurry, 2009, p.70).

Another commentator whose views, I should like to cite, is Rob H. Aft, an international film consultant and member of the Advisory Board of Nollywood Foundation, a US-based non-profit group that promotes Nigerian cinema. Though he wrote on a wide range of issues dealing with Nollywood, the portion which I have quoted here is from his overview of the industry:

Estimates are that between 2,000 and 3,000 films are made there each year. This particular industry was launched in 1992 and is
Conceptually speaking, is the audience and the spectator equal terms of describing the viewing experience? What role does the star vehicle or the individual’s personal desires, aspirations, fears or anxiety play in ensuring the success or otherwise of a production? The psychological dimension of what drives an audience to become fascinated with a production.

The problem needs serious research attention (Odugbemi, 2010, pp. 46 – 47).

The tertiary audience made up of Nigerians and Africans across the continent and in the diaspora may be a signal that this vexations Odugbemi’s categorization of Nollywood audience base into three categories, with the primary audience constituting of housewives, with only N6 million? N100 million well packaged science fiction production perform poorly compared to Jennifa (Funke Akindele 2009), which was produced with only N6 million?

Getting the distribution right is a panacea to taking the industry to the next level of growth. It will provide assurance to the banking sector, on the basis of which loans can be provided for high value productions. The issue of content, with respect to what the audience wants is a problem that needs to be properly addressed. Femi Odugbemi’s foray into the issue highlights the dilemma which Executive Producers and Directors face daily in the industry. It possess a lot of rhetorical questions. Why should Kajola (Niyi Akinmolaijan, 2009), a N100 million well packaged science fiction production perform poorly compared to Jennifa (Funke Akindele 2009), which was produced with only N6 million?

Odugbemi’s categorization of Nollywood audience base into three categories, with the primary audience constituting of housewives, maids and unemployed; secondary audience consisting of the educated and upwardly mobile tuned to DSTV’s Africa Magic and a tertiary audience made up of Nigerians and Africans across the continent and in the diaspora may be a signal that this vexations problem needs serious research attention (Odugbemi, 2010, pp. 46 – 47). Odugbemi’s categorization is helpful but it doesn’t address the psychological dimension of what drives an audience to become fascinated with a production. For instance, what role does the star vehicle or the individual’s personal desires, aspirations, fears or anxiety play in ensuring the success or otherwise of a production? Conceptually speaking, is the audience and the spectator equal terms of describing the viewing experience? This brings me to the last
issue of importance in this discourse, the provision of quality institutional support for the industry. Aside from the issue of film fund which government has occasionally responded to, we know that government institutions such as the Nigerian Film Corporation and the National Film and Video Censors Board, headed by our colleagues Afolabi Adesanya and Emeka Mba, have risen to the challenges of the industry by providing quality leadership. It seemed like a long time ago that most stakeholders in the industry were up in arms against the NFVCB, with respect to the overzealousness of the censors board. These days, filmmakers are looking forward to the anticipated growth which the new National Distribution and Exhibition Framework will bequeath the industry. At the NFC, the National Film Institute has been transformed into the only degree awarding programme in film in the country, with its programmes fully accredited. The NFC is also running its fast growing biannual Zuma Film Festival.

The question that begs for answer is this: what role is the Nigerian academia playing in institutionalizing the study of film in this country? Though little has been said on this matter, I should like to remind us how the seeds of Nollywood were sown more than 50 years ago by the little acknowledged role played by Wole Soyinka in 1960. We know that when he returned from studies at the University of Leeds, he helped to found the School of Drama at the University of Ibadan. He had an option of going to teach Drama at the English Department but he founded the School of Drama which metamorphosed into the present Department of Theatre Arts which trained the academic staff or inspired those who founded similar Departments across the nation. The renaissance which we are enjoying today in the form of a popular film culture known as Nollywood is the fruit of Soyinka’s early vision of moving beyond trite drama into the fertile soils of Theatre Arts. A cursory look at the bulk of stars who sustain Nollywood will reveal that they are products of the Departments of Theatre Arts inspired by the mother department in Ibadan. The shame of the nation now is that close to two decades after the founding of Nollywood, the Nigerian academia has failed the nation in providing the specialized institutional supports in developing the human capital needed to take the industry to the next level, in terms of setting up Departments of Film and Television Studies for purposes of manpower development. Could you imagine where modern Nigerian drama would have been if Wole Soyinka had not assisted in founding the School of Drama? Today, Nigeria is a proud nation of world acclaimed prize winning dramatists, with a Nobel Prize for Literature to show for it. Let it be on record that it would be wishful thinking to expect an Oscar Award in our country without proper investment in academic programmes in the related fields of Film/Television. Many of the problems plaguing the industry today arise from the fact that there is no institutionalized training programme in place to respond to the sophisticated needs of a technology driven industry such as Nollywood. The generic experimentations and schools will emerge when a new crop of human capital is developed to respond to the peculiar needs of the industry.

**Conclusion**

The Nigerian video film industry is a product of the ingenuity of the Nigerian in the face of debilitating obstacles to social development. I have been arguing thus far that Nollywood’s rendition of genres should not be appraised in a vacuum. Such analysis need to be anchored in the socio-historical and cultural experiences of Nigerians which nurtured such genres. The ritual film, the epic, the crime story, ala Issakaba, the Christian video, the comic genre, the romance, and the others, are products of what we desire, fear, or are anxious about as a people. Nollywood was not invented in a vacuum. It grew out of the peculiar needs and aspirations of Nigerians and has been largely sustained by them. Nollywood is a prototypical cameleonic industry which changes colours, unabashedly in pursuit of what needs to be borrowed locally or globally to enrich its coat of many colours. With the introduction of a new distribution and exhibition system, if the Nigerian academia rises up to its developmental challenges by helping to cultivate a new crop of human capital what needs to be borrowed locally or globally to enrich its coat of many colours.

**REFERENCES**


Visually Ethnographic Productions.


CANNES 2011: “Unlawful Killing” the Documentary on Princess Diana

Posted on May 9, 2011 by admin — No Comments ↓

PROFESSOR FEMI OKIREMUETTE SHAKA’S PROFILE

Professor Femi Okiremuette Shaka studied at the Universities of Benin and Ibadan respectively in Nigeria, and undertook his doctorate degree in Film Studies at the University of Warwick, Coventry, UK, as a Commonwealth Scholar. He was equally a Visiting Senior African Fulbright Scholar at the Africana Studies Programme, New York University. He is the author of the book, Modernity and the African Cinema, published by the Africa World Press, Lawrenceville, NJ, USA, in 2004. He has been Coordinator of Certificate Programme, Head of Department, and Dean, Students Affairs, University of Port Harcourt. He was appointed Nigeria’s first Professor of Film Studies by the University of Port Harcourt in April 2009.

Postal Address: Department of Theatre Arts
Faculty of Humanities
University of Port Harcourt
PMB 5323
Choba-Port Harcourt.

Home Address: 11 Brikama Drive, Gambia-Ama
University of Port Harcourt
Choba-Port Harcourt.

Email: femishaka@yahoo.com
Cell Phone: 0806-442-1567 or 0805-456-3387.

Posted in Featured, Kulturati, News, World | Leave a reply

CANNES 2011: “Unlawful Killing” the Documentary on Princess Diana

Posted on May 9, 2011 by admin — No Comments ↓
Dark forces and suspected establishment cover-up explored in damning documentary on the inquest into the deaths of Dodi Fayed & Diana, Princess of Wales

Keith Allen’s “Unlawful Killing” To Screen In Cannes May 13.

LONDON, 9TH MAY, 2011: Three years in the making, UNLAWFUL KILLING – a searing exploration into the violent death of Princess Diana and the alleged subsequent cover-up by the British Establishment – will make its Festival debut at Cannes, the world’s leading film festival.
Acclaimed British actor and filmmaker Keith Allen (KEITH MEETS KEITH, ROBIN HOOD, SHALLOW GRAVE, TRAINSPOTTING, THE COMIC STRIP PRESENTS…..) has today announced his plans to screen his directorial feature-documentary debut at the celebrated film market and festival.

The film premieres in what would have been Diana’s 50th birthday year and just as Prince William, Diana’s beloved first son and future King, embarks on married life under the watchful glare of the world’s media.

This potentially controversial documentary – set to screen on Friday 13th May in Cannes – mixes candid interviews with recreations of some of the key moments from the official inquest, shockingly not held until a decade after the event. The questions the film asks, as it seeks to uncover the truth about the world’s most famous car crash, will inevitably shake the public’s perceptions of how Diana and her partner Dodi Fayed died – and where responsibility ultimately lies for this apparent Establishment cover-up perpetrated by “Dark Forces”.

Locomotive Distribution’s Colleen Seldin will handle worldwide sales efforts for UNLAWFUL KILLING, which will commence in Cannes and will be supported by the attendance of the filmmakers.

On making today’s announcement producer/director Allen commented; “Screening this film in Cannes for the world’s media will be both exhilarating and terrifying for me. As far back as 2004, I had been intrigued by Mohammed Al Fayed’s unrelenting determination to seek answers to the questions surrounding the death of his son, Dodi and Princess Diana. By going ‘undercover’ at the inquest, I hoped to reconcile some of my own suspicions too- but what I experienced was horrifying. This film is, in short, the inquest of the inquest.”

With today’s announcement, the filmmakers are simultaneously launching first-look materials globally – most notably the first official trailer for UNLAWFUL KILLING. In addition, three clips are available for download, as well as a selection of stills and artwork, all of which can be accessed at www.unlawfulkilling.com.

UNLAWFUL KILLING has an original score by Dave Stewart and guest contributors include Tony Curtis, Howard Stern, Kitty Kelley, Mohamed Al Fayed, Piers Morgan and Michael Mansfield QC, amongst others.

ENDS//

UNLAWFUL KILLING – SYNOPSIS

Unlawful Killing was finished on 9 March 2011, after three years of research and production, culminating (after a decade of delay) in an Inquest held at the Royal Courts of Justice in London.

Keith Allen (father of Lily Allen) was at the centre of the inquest, covertly observing proceedings in the courtroom and amongst the press. His groundbreaking documentary recreates key moments from the inquest, and demonstrates how the cover-up was perpetrated. It shows how vital evidence of foul play was hidden from public scrutiny, how the royal family was exempted from giving evidence, and how journalists, particularly those working for the British media, systematically misreported what was happening.

This is not about a conspiracy before the crash, but about a provable cover-up after the crash.

ENDS//

For access to the UNLAWFUL KILLING official trailer:

www.unlawfullkilling.com

For further information about UNLAWFUL KILLING Cannes events and to request materials, please contact:
EKO HOTELS & SUITES - Updated 2020 Prices, Hotel Reviews, and Photos (Lagos, Nigeria) - Tripadvisor. Book Eko Hotels & Suites, Lagos on Tripadvisor: See 486 traveller reviews, 388 candid photos, and great deals for Eko Hotels & Suites, ranked #12 of 234 hotels in Lagos and rated 3.5 of 5 at Tripadvisor. Uwa Paul-Ebiai. Oh The Places You'll Go Places To Visit Hotel Victoria Island Diabetic Recipes Continents Tourism Restaurants Africa. ★★★★★ The Federal Palace Hotel and Casino, Lagos, Nigeria. The Federal Palace Hotel and Casino is located in Lagos, 0.9 mi from Mega Plaza Century 21 Mall. Around 0. Jellof Rice Nigerian Fried Rice Caribbean Recipes Caribbean Food Ghanaian Food Nigeria Food Heritage Recipe Fresh Eats West African Food. Located in Lagos, 5 km from Red Door Gallery, The Landmark Hotel Victoria Island provides accommodation with a restaurant, free private parking, a shared... 5B Water Corporation Road, Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria – Great location - show map. After booking, all of the property’s details, including telephone and address, are provided in your booking confirmation and your account. 7.8. Famous throughout the island for the outstanding quality of its accommodation and the excellence of its cuisine, the Bay 4)……. 30 guest suites, each with a charm and character of its own. Each suite looks 5) ……. Falmer Beach, commanding breathtaking views of the four miles of white sand, which gently shelves into the 6) ……. clear waters of the Crepuscan Sea. At the heart of the Bay Hotel is personal, efficient and unobtrusive service. 7) ……. Staff anticipate your every need in an atmosphere of quiet professionalism and genuine friendliness.