

## Bringing the best of African cinema to African audiences

The inaugural Colours of the Nile International Film Festival (CNIFF) will run in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 7-11 November 2012, introducing the best of African cinema to African audiences

The festival will screen 58 titles, all of which will be African, East African or Ethiopian premieres. Films in competition come from Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Mali, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, and Tunisia.

"We're very proud of our line-up," says CNIFF president Abraham Haile Biru, a two-time Best Cinematographer winner at FESPACO for *Darrat (Dry Season)* and *Abouna (Our Father)*. "The titles show that a new wave of modern African cinema is coming of age; they present a new vision of the continent and its creativity."

Biru is the founder and manager of Blue Nile Film and Television Academy, a pioneering training institute in Addis Ababa that is organising the festival with The Ethiopian Filmmakers Association.

### Exciting line-up

"We've got an exciting line-up," says artistic director Alla Verlotsky, a Ukrainian-born, USA-based scholar and distributor of international cinema. "These films are daring, sophisticated, truly artistic, deeply honest and internationally accessible."

CNIFF has three competitive selections, dedicated to features, documentaries and short films by African directors and/or produced by African countries in the last two years. 11 prizes will be awarded, including The Great Nile Award for Best Feature Film Director.

The members of the jury are New York City-based documentary filmmaker Henry Corra; French film director and screenwriter Karim Dridi; Ethiopian director Solomon Bekele Weya; and South African producer Letebele Masemola-Jones.

Alla says, "In the past African cinema gave us gems that belong not only to the African film treasury, but the film treasury of the world."

One of the first restored projects of Martin Scorsese's World Cinema Foundation was *Touki Bouki* by the great Djibril Diop Mambéty. Today, a conversation on film culture is impossible without mentioning the symbolism of Souleymane Cissé's *Yeelen*, the poetic realism of Sarah Moldoror's *Sambizanga*, and the expressionism of Ousmane Sembene's *Moolaadé*. But as our line-up shows, African cinema of today is on the way to establishing a new identity, embracing digital technologies and urban culture, often living in multiple geographical locations, existing in a global context and thinking with universal references."

Alain Gomis is the 2012 filmmaker in focus, with his film *Tey*, a co-production between Senegal and France as the opening night film. American slam poet Saul Williams stars as Satche, a man who knows he'll die in the next 24 hours. After its world premiere in competition at Berlin, *The Hollywood Reporter* called *Tey* "an unusually serene, non-Western meditation on the inevitability of death... laced with surprising moments of lightness amid the melancholy tenderness."

To commemorate 50 years of Algeria's independence, CNIFF will host a special screening of *A Trip to Algiers/Voyage a Alger*, co-presented with Cinematheque Afrique.

CNIFF will also feature four non-competitive selections:

\*The Best of the Fest selection will showcase critically acclaimed films dealing with Africa, like Kim Nguyen's Berlin and Tribeca winner, *Rebelle (War Witch)*; Mahamet-Saleh Haroun's Cannes winner, *A Screaming Man (Un homme qui crie)*; Mika Kaurismaki's Miriam Makeba documentary, *Mama Africa*; Caroline Kamy's multi-award-winning *Imani*; Akin Omotoso's Nigerian/South Africa co-production about xenophobia, *Man on Ground*; and Wanuri Kahui's science fiction short, *Pumzi*.

- A showcase of Ethiopian cinema, curated by Abebe Beyene of The Ethiopian Filmmakers Association;
- A homage to Senegalese cinema, co-presented with Cinematheque Afrique;
- African documentaries from Al Jazeera English;
- Location Africa, a selection of African stories set in Africa, told by non-African directors.

CNIFF is made possible with the generous support of partners The Ministry of Culture and Tourism; Encounters South African International Documentary Film Festival; Addis Ababa Tourism Bureau; Seagull Films; and Institut Francais, as well as sponsors European Union; French Embassy; East Africa Audiovisu Alliance Francaise; Goethe-Institut Addis Ababa; EUNIC; Egypt Air; Italian Cultural Institution; FBC; and NISCO.

For more information, visit <http://www.coloursofthenile.net/>.

### **The eight films in the feature film competition are:**

*Burn It Up Djassa / Le Djassa a Pris Feu* (Ivory Coast),

*Burn It Up Djassa*, which screened in the Discovery section of the 2012 Toronto International Film Festival is a journey into the ghettos of Abidjan just before the country's civil war.

TIFF programmer Rasha Saiti called it "a raw, noir-tinged urban legend set to the cadence of slam poetry and the beat of street dance," adding that it "signals the arrival of an exciting new artistic movement from Africa's Ivory Coast."

Sadly debut director Lonesome Solo lost everything in the Ivorian civil war, which broke out just months after filming, and has been missing since earlier this year when he disappeared while travelling overland across West Africa to Europe.

Watch and embed the trailer at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wLKphVX8YI>.

*Fragrance of a Lemon / Lomi Sheta* (Ethiopia)

World premiere: Details to be announced.

*Grey Matter / Matière Grise* (Rwanda)

Kivu Ruhorahoza's debut film is the first feature directed by a Rwandan filmmaker living in his homeland. A self-referential film about filmmaking, *Grey Matter* won Best Actor for Ramadhan Bizimana and a Special Jury Mention for Best New Narrative Director at Tribeca 2011 "for its audacious and experimental approach

As the Tribeca jury said, "This film speaks of recent horrors and genocide with great originality. We wanted

to give a special commendation to this filmmaker for his courage and vision."

Watch and embed the trailer at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kK1mSaSdFQo>.

#### *On the Edge / Sur la Planche* (Morocco)

Winner of seven international awards, *On The Edge* is the story of two factory workers flirting with crime in Tangiers. It's the debut film from Moroccan writer/director Leila Kilani.

*The Guardian* said the film "should appeal to audiences everywhere, with bags of energy, a team of explosive young actresses and a poetic hold-up... suffused by the Arab spring."

Watch and embed the trailer at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uvYfdfDfgs>

#### *Otelo Burning* (South Africa)

Directed by Sara Blecher, *Otelo Burning* was the most nominated film at the 2012 Africa Movie Academy Awards, where it won Best Cinematography (Lance Gewer) and Best Child Actor (Tsephang Mohlomi).

Telling the story of a group of township teenagers who discover the joy of surfing, *Otelo Burning* was also named Best Film at The Cape Winelands Film Festival and won the Audience Award at CineramaBC in Brazil.

Watch and embed the trailer at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gek4b3x0TTQ>.

#### *Restless City* (Congo / USA)

The story of an African immigrant surviving on the fringes of New York City, Andrew Dosunmu's *Restless City* was an official selection at Sundance, Dubai and BFI London film festivals.

*Variety* called it "extraordinarily beautiful," while *The Hollywood Reporter* said it was "stunning... an intense twist on the American dream."

Watch and embed the trailer at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4VjY0h4Yul>.

#### *The Repentant / El Taaib* (Algeria)

*The Repentant* tells the story of an Islamic terrorist who takes advantage of a national amnesty to return to society. The winner of Label Europa Cinemas at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival, it's the latest film by multi award-winning Algerian writer/director Merzak Allouache (*Bab El-Oued City*).

#### *Virgin Margarita / Virgem Margarida* (Mozambique)

In this feature film inspired by true stories, veteran documentary filmmaker Licio Azevedo focuses on the post-independence Mozambiquan re-education camps that aimed to develop the proper revolutionary spirit in sex workers.

TIFF programmer Rasha Saiti called it an "evocative exposé of a little-known chapter in the contemporary history of Mozambique" and a "dramatic and inspiring elegy to the insurgent spirit of women across nations, histories and cultures."

Watch and embed the trailer at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFIAFCcpJYU>.

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