

New York African Film Festival Returns to Film Society of Lincoln Center Wed. May 7-Tue. May 13



NEW YORK (March 31, 2014)â€”The Film Society of Lincoln Center (FSLC) and African Film Festival, Inc. (AFF) will present the 21th New York African Film Festival (NYAFF) May 7-13. Organized under the banner theme â€œRevolution and Liberation in the Digital Age,â€ the initial leg of the festival includes eleven features and eight short films from various African nations and the Diaspora. The NYAFF continues throughout May at the Cinema at the Maysles Documentary Center and the Brooklyn Academy of Musicâ€™s BAMcinÃ©matek.

â€œThere are long and proud cinematic traditions in countries all over the African continent, and at the same time there are new voices and new means of expression. We are happy that the festival this year will be able to share the work of these artists, who are exploring both myth and modernity,â€ said FSLC Associate Director of Programming Marian Masone.

â€œWhile American cinema started from popular films and progressed to art house, film in Africa went in reverse, garnering international interest through the art house genre before moving to popular cinema. Consequently, most of the films about Africa during its â€˜art houseâ€™ phase cornered African cinema into a genre in itself, one that was perhaps not easily accessible,â€ said AFF Executive Director and NYAFF Founder Mahen Bonetti. â€œToday, the golden era of technology not only allows the African public to see films made about their own realities but also exhorts each

generation of filmmakers to raise the bar with the stories they tell about the continent and its diaspora, resulting in a veritable digital revolution.â€

With a gracious nod to Nollywood, the worldâ€™s second-largest film industry, and to the 100th centenary of the unification of Nigeria, the festival Opening Night presentation will be *Confusion Na Wa*, the dark comedy by Kenneth Gyang. Winner of Best Picture at the 2013 African Movie Academy Awards, the film stars OC Ukeje and Gold Ikponmwo as two grifters whose decision to blackmail a straying husband (played by Ramsey Nouah) sets in motion a chain of events leading to a shocking conclusion. The screening will be preceded by the Opening Reception at 6pm. Regular festival prices apply for the screening, and tickets can be purchased on FilmLinc.com. Tickets for the movie and Opening Reception are \$50 and available online at www.africanfilmny.org.

NYAFF audiences will get a sneak peek before the May 16 theatrical release of the critically acclaimed film *Half of a Yellow Sun*, based on the internationally best-selling novel of the same name by National Book Critics Circle Award-winning Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Directed by Biyi Bandele, the Centerpiece selection stars Thandie Newton and Anika Noni Rose as glamorous twins navigating life, love and the turbulence of the Biafra (Nigerian Civil) war in 1960s Nigeria. The Monterey Media release also includes a powerful performance by recent Oscar-nominee Chiwetel Ejiofor. Directly following the New York premiere of the film on Friday, May 9, the Centerpiece Gala will be held at the DiMenna Center for Classical Musicâ€™s Mary Flagler Cary Hall (450 West 37th Street, between 9th and 10th Avenues). Regular festival prices apply for the movie, and tickets can be purchased on FilmLinc.com. Tickets for the screening and benefit are \$200 and available online at www.africanfilmny.org.

A crop of films take up this yearâ€™s theme of revolution and liberation. In the documentary *Mugabe: Villain or Hero?*,

director Roy Agyemang gets unprecedented access to the Zimbabwean leader and his entourage and lays bare the fight between African leaders and the West for African minerals and land. Ibrahim El Batout's narrative feature Winter of Discontent takes viewers inside the Tahrir Square protests that were so central to the Arab Spring. And Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine's timely experimental short Kuhani features a conflicted priest, just as Uganda's Anti-Homosexual Act is grabbing headlines.

As a part of this, women's rights and issues are again in the spotlight. In her documentary Bastards, director Deborah Perkin follows a single mother, beaten and raped at 14 and discarded as she fights in Moroccan court to legitimize her sham marriage, thus ensuring a future for the daughter born out of her nightmare. In Cameronian director Victor Viyouh's drama Ninah's Dowry, the title character flees an abusive marriage only to be pursued by her husband to retrieve either his property (her) or the dowry he paid. The short Beleh, by Eka Christa Assam, turns gender roles on their head as a bullying husband gets a taste of his own medicine. The wounded central characters in the narrative films Of Good Report by Jahmil X.T. Qubeka and Grigris by Mahamat-Saleh Haroun are allegorical to the societal shifts and legacy of post-independent Africa.

On the lighter side, the festival will also present comedies, including Confusion Na Wa and It's Us (Ni Si Si), as well as the U.S. premiere of the short Soko Sonko (The Market King). The Tunisian short Wooden Hands, also a U.S. premiere, delights as a willful five year-old's act of rebellion takes on a life of its own. Additionally, writer Marguerite Abouet and illustrator Clément Oubrerie have brought their popular cartoon to life as directors of the animated feature Aya of Yop City, which follows the adventures of a 19-year-old and her girlfriends in Ivory Coast.

The Closing Night film on Tuesday, May 13, will be Sarraounia,

Med Hondo's sweeping epic based on historical accounts of Queen Sarraounia. Feared for her bravery and expertise in the occult arts, the fierce warrior leads the Azans of Niger into battle against French colonialists and enslavement at the turn of the century. The historical drama took first prize at the Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO) in 1987. Regular festival pricing applies.

From May 8-13, the Frieda and Roy Furman Gallery will host the exhibition Digital Africa, featuring the works of Congolese and American photographers. "Congolese Dreams" is a series of works by acclaimed photographer Baudouin Mouanda and a collective of artists, a companion to Philippe Cordey's film of the same name, which will be screened during the festival. It will be paired with Adama Delphine Fawundu's stunning portraits capturing the residents of Tivoli Towers in Crown Heights, Brooklyn—home to more than 350 families, who are mostly of African descent—as well as portraits of young musician-activists from Nigeria and the U.S.

All screenings will take place in the Walter Reade Theater, 165 West 65th Street (between Broadway and Amsterdam) and the Elinor Bunin Munroe Film Center, 144 West 65th Street (between Broadway and Amsterdam). Tickets for the New York African Film Festival screenings go on sale April 17 at the Film Society's box offices and online at www.FilmLinc.com. Pre-sale to Film Society members begins on April 15. Single screening tickets are \$13; \$9 for students and seniors (62+); and \$8 for Film Society members. Discount packages start at \$30; \$24 for students and seniors (62+); and \$21 for Film Society members. Discount prices apply with the purchase of tickets to three films or more. Visit FilmLinc.com for additional information, and to purchase tickets.

NYAFF then heads to the Cinema at the Maysles Documentary Center in Harlem May 15-18. As is the tradition, the NYAFF closes over Memorial Day Weekend May 23-26 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music BAMcinematek as part of the dance and music

festival DanceAfrica. For details, visit African Film Festival
online at www.africanfilmny.org.