

The New York African Film Festival Returns For 31st Year



Mirah, After the Long Rains, Fight Like a Girl, Dynamite, and Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense

Film at Lincoln Center and African Film Festival have announced the lineup for the 31st New York African Film Festival. The festival's mission is to feature filmmakers from the African diaspora. This year's theme is the Convergence Of Time and it explores the intersection of historical and contemporary roles played by individuals representing Africa and its diaspora in art. More than 50 films from more than 25 countries invite the audience to look at the meeting of past and current experimentalism transcending space and time.

The festival's opening night showcases the North American premiere of *Over The Bridge*, Tolu Ajayi's feature about corruption in Lagos as Folarin, a successful investment banker whose company is contracted by the government to oversee a

high-profile project, searches for answers when the project goes awry, which leads him to a remote fishing village to put the pieces of the mystery together.

The Closing Night selection features the New York premiere of Dibakar Das Roy's riveting and uproarious *Dilli Dark*, which shows the boundaries Nigerian MBA candidate Michael Okeke will push to succeed as he lives a double life as a student and drug dealer amidst the backdrop of India's history of colonialism, racism, and xenophobia.

The festival will also host the North American premieres of Matthew Leutwyler's *Fight Like a Girl*, depicting the true story of a young Congolese woman (Ama Qamata from the hit Netflix series *Blood and Water*) who finds liberation after joining an all-women's boxing club in Goma, led by an ex-child-soldier coach; and Oyiza Adaba's biographical documentary *DELA: The Making of El Anatsui*, which delves into the life of El Anatsui, the world-renowned sculptor from Ghana, and triumphantly acknowledges the importance of Africa's rich artistic and cultural heritage.

Three festival features are U.S. premieres: Yajaira De La Espada's documentary *Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense*, showcasing the life and empowering legacy of the founding father of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, and the recent presidency of Dr. John Pombe Magufuli; Clive Will's *Time Spent with Cats Is Never Wasted*, a stark piece of slow-burning cinema featuring a small-town worker who finds success after selling a helicopter he made out of scrap and found objects, while having to fight off the local townsfolk who insist on a cut of the profits; and Perivi Katjavivi's *Under the Hanging Tree*, a hard-boiled crime thriller following police officer Christina, as she seeks to uncover details of a murder on a German-owned farm in present-day Namibia, set against echoes of the country's history of genocide.

Five features making their New York debut are: Damien Hauser's *After the Long Rains*, a touching account of 10-year-old Aisha, who longs to become a fisher so she can travel to Europe, and befriends an alcoholic fisherman who promises to teach her; Uche Aguh's musical romance *Dynamite*, which finds musician Kiki in an unhappy marriage with her husband/manager and beginning a whirlwind romance with a replacement bassist in her band; Osvalde Lewat's documentary *MK: Mandela's Secret Army*, the little-known story of the military avant-garde founded by global icon Nelson Mandela, screening for the 30th anniversary of South African Freedom Day; *This Is Lagos*, Kenneth Gyang's dark comedy featuring aspiring rapper Stevo navigating the dangers of his criminal past after an escape from a heist goes wrong; and *The Rhythm and the Blues*, the true-life story of legendary bluesman Eddie Taylor and his fight against obscurity, industry corruption, and cultural appropriation, starring actor and musician Leon.

An exciting addition to this year's festival is *La Chapelle*, Jean-Michel Tchissoukou's surreal take on the relationship between Africa, Christianity, and colonialism. A classic feature shot in 1980s Congo, this enchantingly bizarre and bitingly funny satire leaves one questioning the relevance of space and time.

Among many shorts premiering at NYAFF, not to be missed is Harold George's *Making Men*. In a first for NYAFF, the screening of George's film will be accompanied by a live dance performance from George and members of his dance troupe, as well as a discussion afterwards. A brilliant question of masculinity, visually probed via imagery of traditional customs, the film supplies modern questions with ancestral answers. Another, *Love Taps*, directed by Derrick Woodyard and executive produced by Spike Lee, offers another comment on

masculinity, secrets, and family ties.

NYAFF will present an “Art & Activism” Town Hall at The Africa Center on Thursday, May 2, at 6:00pm, featuring artists Christian Nyampeta, Adama Delphine Fawundu, and Taiwo Aloba, moderated by cultural anthropologist, curator, and scholar Paulette Young.

This year’s Master Class presented by AFF will feature veteran independent filmmaker Ngozi Onwurah, who will discuss the craft of utilizing cinema as a tool for unmasking the dynamics of the socioeconomic status quo. The event takes place in the Amphitheater at the Elinor Bunin Munroe Film Center with tickets available through africanfilmny.org.

“A litany for past suns labeled rituals / A star lit any and all possible futures,” a digital art exhibit of the work of Zainab Aliyu, will run in the Amphitheater at the Elinor Bunin Munroe Film Center May 9–14 beginning 30 minutes before the first NYAFF screening of the day. The exhibit is inspired by Nikki Giovanni’s “A Litany for Pepe” (1970) and Audre Lorde’s “A Litany for Survival” (1978), two poems written years apart, yet converging thematically through time. As the title suggests, the piece is structured as a litany, a repetitive and rhythmic form often used in ceremonial settings. In this context, Aliyu’s litany serves as a call to action for her communities to alchemize their shared histories toward shared futures.

Tickets go on sale Thursday, April 11 at noon ET. Ticket prices are \$17 for the general public; \$14 for students, seniors, and persons with disabilities; and \$12 for [FLC Members](#). See more and save with a 3+ Film Package (\$15 for general public; \$12 for students, seniors (62+), and persons with disabilities; and \$10 for FLC Members), the \$99 All-Access Pass, or the \$79 Student All-Access Pass.

Contact info@africanfilmny.org for information about attending the Opening Night Party.

The festival continues at Maysles Documentary Center in Harlem from April 17 to 19 and culminates at Brooklyn Academy of Music under the name Film Africa from May 24 to May 30 during Dance Africa.

The programs of AFF are made possible by the generous support of the National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, New York Community Trust, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, Bradley Family Foundation, Domenico Paulon Foundation, NYC & Company, French Cultural Services, Manhattan Portage, Black Hawk Imports, Essentia Water, South African Consulate General, National Film and Video Foundation, and Motion Picture Enterprises.

For more information, visit filmlinc.org and follow @filmlinc on [X](#) and [Instagram](#).

More information about AFF can be found on the Web at www.africanfilmny.org. You can follow AFF at @africanfilmfest on [X](#) and [Instagram](#).