The 21st New York African Film Festival - Revolution and Liberation in the Digital Age

Revolution is not always synonymous with the overthrowing of a government or head of state. In Africa and its Diaspora, it is also the relentless search for liberation of the body and the mind that characterizes the history of African people. Aising as a chain of movements led mostly by youth and women, revolution is a force against unfair systems, an impulse for people to follow their dreams, and a shared experience of empowerment. In the Digital Age, the struggle for liberation has found a resilient ally in technology, which has exerted multiplier effects in and outside the Continent.

This is the core of the 21st New York African Film Festival: the experience of revolution and liberation in Africa in the 21st century. All of the films featured will tackle the path to liberation or the feeling of freedom itself – its impact and its agents, but first and foremost its visual splendor.

Under this heading, this month-long, multi-venue event will present a unique selection of contemporary and classic African films, running the gamut from features, shorts, and documentaries to experimental films, along with supplementary educational programs. Filmmakers and actors will also be on hand at select screenings and Q&A sessions.

This year, Nigeria celebrates the centenary of its unification. To mark this special occasion, the 2014 NYAFF will highlight films that have been produced, inspired by, and made in Nollywood, the world’s second largest movie industry. We are proud to present our NYC audience with the winners of last year’s “African Oscars” (AMAA): Kenneth Gyang’s frenetic dark comedy Confusion Na Wa and the poetic short Kwaku Ananse by Akosua Adoma Owusu. We will also premiere Biyi Bandele’s highly anticipated film Half of a Yellow Sun, a rendition of Chinamanda Ngozi Adichie’s best-selling book on the Biafran war that glows thanks to the leading performances by Thandie Newton, Anika Noni Rose and Oscar-nominee Chiwetel Ejiofor.

Our shorts program is a fresh selection devoted to the richness and experimental elements of the genre and its special ability to convey this year’s festival theme. Young filmmakers use a wide range of approaches from sci-fi to social melodrama, with a special focus on comedy Soko Sonko. Wooden Hands, and Beleth.

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The animated film adaptation of the acclaimed comic series AyA of Yop City by Marguerite Abouet and Clement Oubrie is not just an ode to young romance in West African cultures, but a nod to animation in its golden age, encompassing every region of the world, including Africa. Victor Iyiuh’s Ninth’s Dowry carries in its poignant story of women’s empowerment the elements of a revolution.

The 2014 NYAFF will also screen Mahamat-Saleh Haroun’s latest movie is a story of love and solidarity between two outcasts against the backdrop of present-day Chad. Narratives of struggle and liberation from all around Africa and the Diaspora abound, expanding the festival’s human scope: the incisive documentary Mugabe: Villain or Hero? and the Kenyan fantasy Winter of Discontent.

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To honor the 20th anniversary of South Africa’s independence, we will feature the controversial neo-noir Of Good Report by Jehmil X.T. Qubeka, which is exemplary of the vigor of South Africa’s present-day film industry. One of the most poignant epics of revolution and liberation ever filmed on the continent, Mod Hondo’s masterpiece Sarafina! winner of the first prize at FESPACO, will be the crowning jewel to round out the Lincoln Center portion of the festival.

A wide-ranging selection of some of the best African documentaries and docudramas, with a particular focus on Sudan, will be presented at the Mayesles Cinema Institute. Then the festival will conclude in spectacular fashion with the presentation of AFF’s Travelling Series and a carefully selected group of films proudly showcasing the rich history and cultures of Madagascar at BAMcinematek.

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER/NYAFF THREE-FILM PASS:
GENERAL PUBLIC - $30, STUDENTS/SENIORS - $24, FILM SOCIETY MEMBERS - $21