

Pan African Film Festival: 2011 Filmmakers Awards

Best Picture (Narrative Feature)

Besouro (Brazil), directed by João Daniel Tikhomiroff. *Besouro* (<http://www.besourofilme.com.br/>) is an action movie set in 1920s Bahia, the story of a legendary capoeira fighter who uses the power of Candomble to fight the harsh conditions which, even post-abolition, the black population endured in Brazil.

Best Picture-Honorable Mention

The Athlete (Atletu) (Ethiopia), directed by Davey Frankel & Rasselas Lakew. Marathoner Abebe Bikila, the first African to win an Olympic gold, ran his gold medal marathon barefoot. Impressive, sure, but Bikila's story becomes truly remarkable following an accident that leaves him unable to walk. From Bikila's early Olympic triumphs that made him a national hero, to the aftermath of the accident that left him unable to walk, Bikala's determination never wavers. *The Athlete* is a well-crafted character study couched in a compelling sport biopic. In Bikila's struggles to redefine his life after the accident, the film thoughtfully considers the meaning of the drive to compete. Switching between archival footage of the real Abebe Bikila and breathtaking scenes starring Ethiopian Rasselas Lakew, the film's visual metaphors cements this film in the runner's movie pantheon. This well-acted and strikingly photographed true story will come as a welcomed tribute to those who know Bikila's story, and as an unforgettable introduction to those who do not.

Best Documentary Feature

Thunder Soul (<http://thundersoulmovie.com/>) (USA), directed by Mark Landsman, tells the true story of Conrad O. Johnson and the legendary Kashmere Stage Band. It was Afros and pleated shirts; James Brown and Bootsy Collins. It was the '70s, and an inner-city Houston high school was about to make history. Charismatic band leader, Conrad "Prof" Johnson would turn the school's mediocre jazz band into a legendary funk powerhouse. Now, 35 years later, his students prepare to pay tribute to the man who changed their lives, the 92-year-old Prof. Some haven't played their horns in decades, still they dust off their instruments determined to retake the stage to show Prof and the world that they've still got it.

Best Documentary Feature-Honorable Mention

War Don Don (<http://www.wardondonfilm.com/>) (USA), directed by Rebecca Richman Cohen. In the heart of Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, United Nations soldiers guard a heavily fortified building known as the “special court.” Inside, Issa Sesay awaits his trial. Prosecutors say Sesay is a war criminal, guilty of heinous crimes against humanity. His defenders say he is a reluctant fighter who protected civilians and played a crucial role in bringing peace to Sierra Leone. With unprecedented access to prosecutors, defense attorneys, victims, and, from behind bars, Sesay himself, *WAR DON DON* puts international justice on trial for the world to see — finding that in some cases the past is not just painful, it is also opaque.

Best Short Film (Narrative Short)

The Abyss Boys (South Africa), directed by Jan-Hendrik Beetge. The film is set in the slums of a small fishing community on the southern coast of South Africa, where the world of illegal abalone poaching has become so dangerous life that Jimmy, a legendary ex diver, decides he has to escape. Wanting to save A.B, his rebellious young brother from Gonyama, the violent but charismatic gangster who A.B admires, Jimmy devises a plan to give him and A.B a new beginning and a new life. But on a stormy winter’s day when Jimmy gets his chance to escape, nothing can prepare him for what happens when his plan leads to a tragic and brutal ending.

Best Short Film (Narrative Short) -Honorable Mention

Hear Me (USA), directed by Kenn Michael
(<http://www.kennmichael.com/2010/09/17/hear-me-trailer/>)

First Feature Film by a Director (Narrative Feature)

I Will Follow (<http://www.iwillfollowfilm.com/>) (USA), directed by Ava DuVernay. Richardson-Whitfield portrays Maye, a successful artist who has taken leave from work to care for her ill aunt, Amanda (played by Beverly Todd). As the film begins, Maye is moving out of the home she once shared with Amanda after her death and contemplating her relationships, her career, her past and her future. The film is a character study, proceeding at a leisurely pace and interspersed with twelve visitors - family, friends and strangers - who help Maye move on emotionally and physically. The film was shot in 15 days on location in Topanga Canyon, California.

First Feature Film by a Director (Narrative Feature)-Honorable Mention

Hopeville (South Africa), directed by John Trengove. When his ex-wife is killed, Amos, a reformed alcoholic, begins his mission to forge a relationship with his estranged son Themba. When father and son arrive in the dusty town of Hopeville, they discover a mean little community where apathy, fear and suspicion are the order of the day. When Amos decides to restore the public swimming pool so that Themba can pursue a swimming career, he is met with skepticism and resistance from the town's authorities and its inhabitants. Through patience, determination and above all courage, Amos' selfless act ripples through Hopeville, inspiring others to take action and do what they know is right. However, slowly but surely, good ripples through Hopeville, transforming the town and its inhabitants.

Audience Award Narrative Feature

The First Grader (<http://www.thefirstgrader-themovie.com/>) (Kenya/UK), directed by Justin Chadwick. In a small, remote mountain top primary school in the Kenya, hundreds of children are jostling for a chance for the free education newly promised by the Kenyan government. One new applicant causes astonishment when he knocks on the door of the school. He is Maruge (Oliver Litondo), an old Mau Mau veteran in his eighties, who is desperate to learn to read at this late stage of his life. He fought for the liberation of his country and now feels he must have the chance of an education so long denied - even if it means sitting in a classroom alongside six-year-olds. Moved by his passionate plea, head teacher Jane Obinchi (Naomie Harris), supports his struggle to gain admission and together they face fierce opposition from parents and officials who don't want to waste a precious school place on such an old man. Full of vitality and humour, the film explores the remarkable relationships Maruge builds with his classmates some eighty years his junior. Through Maruge's journey, we are taken back to the shocking untold story of British colonial rule 50 years earlier where Maruge fought for the freedom of his country, eventually ending up in the extreme and harsh conditions of the British detention camps.

Audience Award Documentary Feature Film (Documentary Feature)

Gang Girl: A Mother's Journey to Save her Daughter (USA), directed by Valerie Goodloe. A hard-working, middle class mother finds her life in turmoil when she discovers that her daughter has joined the infamous L.A. Bloods gang. Determined to get answers on how she and her daughter ended up on this path, Valerie Goodloe takes it upon herself to increase awareness about the girls involved in gang life. In the process, Valerie's struggle highlights universal themes of belonging, hopelessness and gang activity's negative societal impact.

Audience Award Short Film

The Black Mozart in Cuba (Guadeloupe), directed by Steve James. Born in Guadeloupe from the love between an enslaved African woman and a French nobleman, Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, became one of the most remarkable figures of the 18th century. Best fencer in Europe, violonist virtuoso and genius composer, but also the first African free mason and general in the army, he influenced the music and the political life of his time. After his very existence had been erased from history by Napoleon for 200 years, he is now rediscovered by a few dedicated writers and musicians. In this documentary, Cuba, an exceptional island on the artistic level, dedicates a week of cultural activities to his memory and welcomes Saint Georges as “a great hero of the Caribbean.”

Pan African Film Festival Board of Directors Awards

Best Short Film

Precipice (UK), directed by Julius Amedume. Roman is flown in to do a job, maybe his last. It is the evening before Jasper's financial wrong doings become public and Jasper's co- conspirators are unsure if Jasper will talk or take the fall. What should be a straightforward pick up and drop off for Roman is not, it seems Jasper wants to make one last stop along the way.

Best Documentary Film

The Manuscripts of Timbuktu (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llnjws8jHA0>) (South Africa), directed by Zola Maseko. All but forgotten by the West, the life of powerful Black icon and one of Africa's greatest scholars, Ahmed Baba, is examined in the context of his life in Timbuktu along with the thousands of remarkable manuscripts of Timbuktu. Once a center of world scholarship and learning, Timbuktu was at the crossroad of trade and ideas. Hundred of universities, run by scholarly families, hosted students from the world over. None, however were held in higher esteem than Ahmed Baba. Beautifully shot on location in Timbuktu, this dramatization of the life of Ahmed Baba bring to the fore his revolutionary and unwaivering attitude as well as his written works, an inspiration to all. Stars Eriq Ebouaney (*Lumumba*).

Best Feature Film (Best Feature Narrative)

Viva Riva! (<http://vivariva.com/>) (DR Congo/France/Belgium/South Africa), directed by Djo Tunda Wa Munga. "Viva Riva!" is unprecedented: a story set in contemporary Democratic Republic of the Congo full of intrigue, music and a surprisingly frank approach to sex. Riva is an operator, a man with charm and ambition in equal measure. Kinshasa is an inviting place. With petrol in short supply in DRC's capital, he and his sidekick pursue a plot to get hold of a secret cache – barrels of fuel they can sell for a huge profit. Of course they're not the only ones who want the stuff. Cesar is a ruthless, sharply dressed foreigner thriving in Kinshasa's lawless streets. A female military officer joins the fray. Even the church will betray its tenets for a piece of the action. But Riva's main nemesis is Azor, a crime boss in the classic style: big, decadent and brutal. He's not a man to mess with, but his girlfriend, Nora, may just be the most seductive woman in all of DRC. Riva catches sight of her dancing at a nightclub and it's not long before Nora matches the fuel cache as a coveted object of his lust.

Best Feature Film (Best Feature Narrative)-Honorable Mention

The Child, (Nigeria), directed by Izu Ojukwu. 'The Child' revolves around a Benin town's expectation of a 'child' promised the community by the gods. The advent of the child will see to the end of the town's problems which include drought and recurrent war defeats, especially against the strong army of Ijogun. Two children, at least as far as we can tell, are born on the said night; one is by the widowed queen Ifueko, played by Joke Silva, whose uncle the Iyase (Alex Usifo) is the regent. Another woman gives birth to a son. The rains return, wars are won and a basket mysteriously retains water after the boys are born. As long as the basket holds water, the community knows their special one is still alive. As both boys grow up, so does the competition between them as both are intent to prove their 'childship,' despite the fact that all have accepted the crown prince Nosa (or Omo as his mother calls him) as the special one (Edaeke).

The Figurine (Nigeria), directed by Kunle Afolayan. The synopsis of *Figurine* (Araromire) shows that it is a story of two buddies and a girl...all down on their luck have their lives changed when one of them discovers 'Araromire' a mysterious figurine in an abandoned shrine which, according to legend bestows seven years of good luck. But no one told them about the next seven years.

Pan African Film Festival-British Academy of Film and Television Arts/LA (BAFTA/LA) Festival Choice Award

I Sing of a Well (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67eVQijlxb4>) (Ghana), directed by Leila Djansi.

The Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute

The Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute (TMALI) will be offering a short course on *Introduction to Thought Leadership for Africa's Renewal* in the second semester of 2011. Approval for the course was received from the University Senex on the 18th of November 2010. The stringent quality assurance processes in place to ensure the highest standards for the programmes have meant that refinement of the content and materials will take longer than initially envisaged, and consequently are not ready for distribution in the first half of the year. Information regarding courses to be offered in the second semester will be available on 1 May 2011. Applications will be open for the second semester courses on the 20th June 2011. Applications for admission to the second semester courses will close on 15 July 2011. Fees are payable at any Unisa offices. The cost for the Short Course is R 2400, R 1200 is payable on registration.

TMALI is a programme for the training of Africans for the political, economic, social and cultural renewal of the African continent and its people, based on the all-Africa policies already agreed through the OAU and the AU. It is also a vehicle to enable Africa to respond on time to new developments which impact on the continent, which will also help to ensure that Africa's voice is heard in both the local and global contexts. To achieve these objectives, TMALI will invest in thought leaders who will work to help ensure that adopted African policies are both accepted by the people and are implemented. It therefore aims to contribute towards the empowerment of as many Africans as possible with a view to achieving the African Renaissance, which includes the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment in Africa, and the evolution of new African policy initiatives.

It will offer short learning programmes aimed at empowering its students to become thought leaders who are committed to the Renaissance of Africa. TMALI also aims to generate new knowledge about Africa and Africa within the global context, by hosting focused seminars and conferences and conducting research. These findings would be communicated expeditiously to Africa and the rest of the world. It will actively take steps to cooperate with other institutions, especially in Africa, which relate to its field of activities, to help ensure that our continent pools its limited resources to achieve the shared objectives.

Information about registration and other developments will be communicated through www.unisa.ac.za/tmali. For further enquiries please contact:

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