

PANEL 2007

“Personal cinema and popular cinema in Africa”

The aim of these kinds of cinema is to raise the issue of the African film industry before its audience. Recently, and thanks to the digital video which has caused production costs to reduce noticeably, directors are increasingly making films that fall under the umbrella of this genre. (The case of Aboubacar Diallo from Burkina Faso is a striking example.) However, countries like Ghana and Nigeria have already adopted this kind of films that use the same formula as the American ones or gender films, by adjusting them to local realities.

The Egyptian cinema, unknown to critics but often distributed in our countries, has been a blockbuster. They are famous in Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria and even beyond the Arab countries in the Gulf. (Retrospective: the Egyptian popular cinema?).

Henri Duparc, who has broken the box office records, could also be considered as the forerunner of this kind of cinema. Some of his films: “Ballon d’or”, “Hold up à Kossou” and comic films like “Petit à Petit” aimed only at conquering the audience again.

Now than ever, the issue of the audience must be our main concern, knowing that

- Films are expensive;
- Distribution networks are still in their early stages;
- Cinema theatres are shutting down one after the other;
- Unauthorised reproduction is a common practice and the audience must be sensitised;
- illegal video clubs are opening in shanty towns;
- Competition with other films (American ones mainly) is tough.

Raising the issue of audience implies raising many other issues such as: Which stories to tell? Is personal cinema outdated? What is the place of actors in the film? What is the role of festivals? How can TV help the African film industry? And so on.