
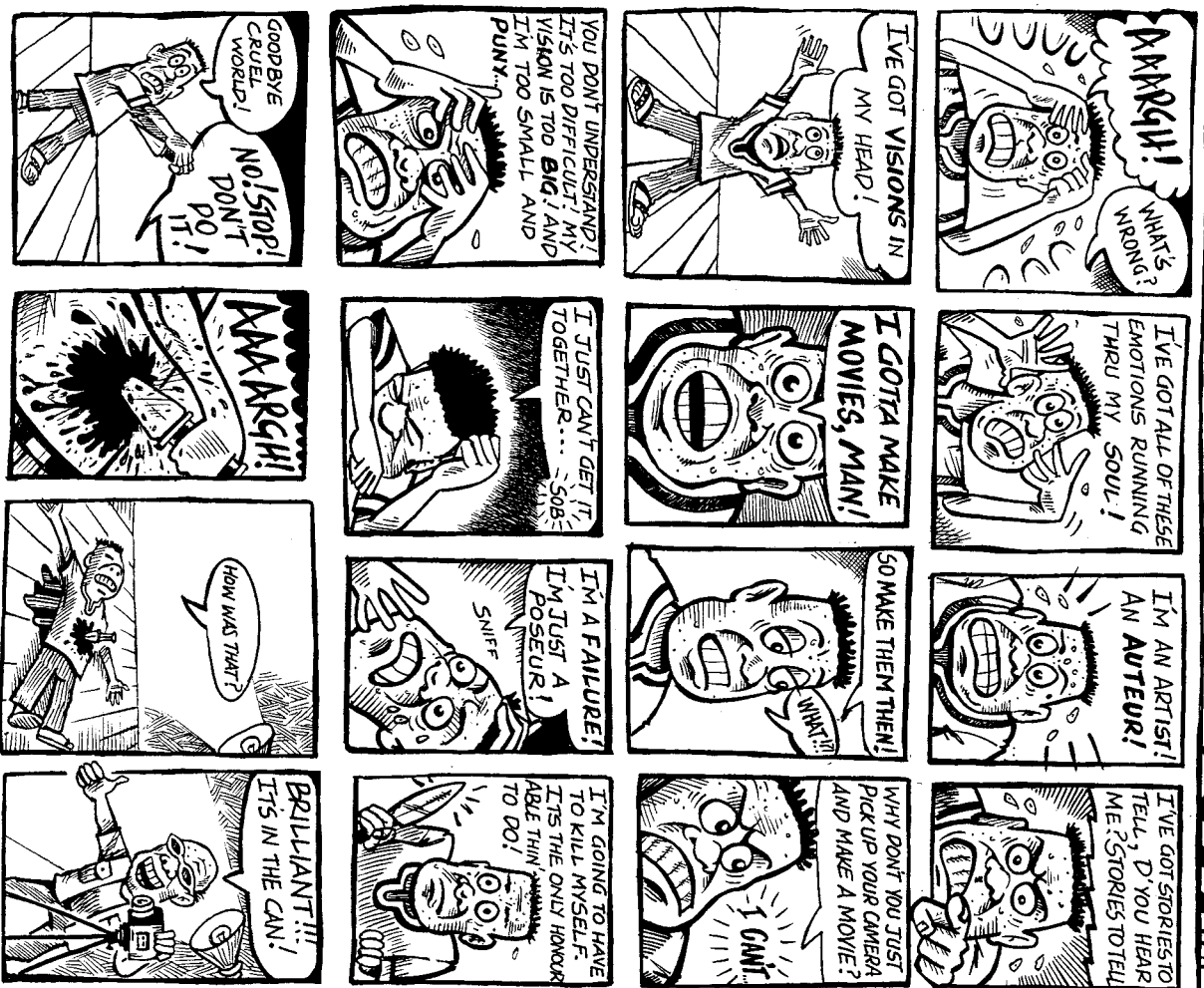


CINERPHILE

WITH SOME POINTS TO SHOOT

BY N.D. MAZIN & THEMBA SWEELA

THE 1ST ENF!

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Reel Times is sponsored by
Artworks Communications and Art Printers




Reel Times

NEWSLETTER OF THE

25TH DURBAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

ISSUE # 4 25 JUNE 2004

FREE

A Meeting of Minds

One of the key objective of DIFF is to provide an annual forum for the continuation of an ongoing discourse amongst the leading filmmakers of our time. Here our local directors, scriptwriters and producers are able to engage in debate with our visitors, all of whom are making an impact on the international film scene. But it is not only amongst established professionals that important interactions are taking place. Amongst the students and aspirant filmmakers attending the workshop programme are some of the future stars of South Africa's film renaissance.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF



From left: Kim Hawkins and Vaughn Sadi (Imagination Lab), Rajiv Vijay Raghavan (director - *The Path*), Partho Sen Gupta (director - *Let the Wind Blow*), Rakesh Sharma (director - *Final Solution*), Hakeem Kae-Kazim (actor - *The Sunflower and Coming to South Africa*), Naretha Pretorius and Kira Erwin (Imagination Lab), Teboho Mahatsi, (International Judge) and kneeling Monica Forvik (Durban International Film Festival).

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Yesterday I had the privilege as a 'wannabe' filmmaker, to be able to participate in two of the Imagination Lab's film workshops, and to get the chance to converse with established and emerging directors about the filmmaking process, writes GENEVIEVE AKAL.

The morning workshop at Ekhaya in KwaMashu consisted of screenings of excerpts from *Final Solution* by Rakesh Sharma (India) and *TriLOGY of Love* by Laurence Attali (France).

Sharma's hard-hitting documentary is set in Gujarat, a town in Western India, where a great deal of South Africa's Indian population originated. This political film emphasises that one must constantly reflect and learn from history so that oppressive circumstances do not repeat themselves.

Attali's film centres on the symbolism of the baobab tree to Senegal and its people. She speaks about how difficult it was to portray a truthful and accurate picture of an ephemeral subject that remains a vital part of Senegalese culture. So too, in South Africa, our film-makers are offered an assortment of cultures but the complexity arises when the film-maker must select one image over another in order to portray the truth without standardising cultural phenomena by overlooking their subtleties.

The afternoon workshop took place at the



Hakeem Kae-Kazim: "Once you plant the seed, it will grow!"

'Imagination Lab' in Westville and the entire session consisted of a Q&A on the topic of directing in the New Age. The panel of experts included Rakesh Sharma (India), Hakeem Kae-Kazim (Nigeria), Teboho Mahlasi (South Africa), Jafar Panahai (Iran), Partho Sen Gupta (India) and Rajiv Vijay Raghavan (India). This stimulating end to the day closed with each professional encouraging the students to just "pick up a camera and get started". They brought to attention that South Africa has poignant and significant stories to tell and it is up to the emerging film-makers to bring these stories to life. As Hakeem Kae-Kazim said: "Once you plant the seed, it will grow!"

The Radical Rakesh Sharma

Rakesh Sharma began his film/and television career in 1986 as assistant director on Shyam Benegal's *Discovery of India*. His industry experience includes setting up and launching three broadcast channels in India, but he has now returned to independent documentary film-making and his last film, *Aftershocks: The Rough Guide to Democracy*, won the Best documentary film award at Fribourg, amongst many other awards, and has been screened at over 90 international film festivals. GENEVIEVE AKAL spoke to him.

Sharma's new documentary, *Final Solution*, takes a raw and unprecedented look at the politics of hate. Set in Gujarat, in Western India, it spans the political activity from the beginning of 2002 until mid 2003. This heart-felt assessment of the consequences of



Rakesh Sharma: Not everybody's cup of tea.

Hindu-Muslim polarisation in the state exposes right-wing cadres committing genocidal violence against Muslims. The film is a four-part shocker and the footage reeks of inhumanity and violence. One would think that in the modern era such violations would not be able occur but images of carnage, orphaned children, dead bodies and the extreme ghettoisation for both Muslims and Hindus prove otherwise.

Various accounts point to the state as a suspect in supporting if not sponsoring the genocide. *Final Solution* premiered at a Mumbai film festival organized by Campaign against Censorship, but has since been banned in India. It has however been widely accepted and highly acclaimed outside its home country, winning various awards including the Humanitarian Award (Best Documentary Category) at the Hong Kong International Film Festival.

Discussing his film with aspiring students, Sharma speaks of his willingness to sacrifice technical perfection in order to capture the truth of the moment. This is his reason for working in digital format during the shooting of the film. "There is no time to set up aesthetically pleasing images with tripods and clumsy rigs because the reality of the surrounding situation can be lost," he says. "The first two minutes of an interview are usually the most useful. I tend to keep the camera running, just in case."

When questioned about his safety as a filmmaker amidst massive political hostility he comments that he films openly because "it is when you are most visible that you are most hidden." One could argue that Sharma's film is journalistic in that it reports honestly and without censorship, but as a filmmaker he is not recognised and accorded the same benefits and protections as journalists are.

Quite accustomed to this predicament, Sharma is nonchalant as he reflects humorously on the absurdity of being arrested and interrogated. Having been in the film industry for nearly twenty years his dedication is very apparent and so is his message: "Those who forget history are condemned to relive it."

..... SITE SEEING

Looking for more info on the individual films? Visit www.cca.ukzn.ac.za and read the synopses of all the films.

Memories of the Struggle

By Ed Zingru



Gisela Albrecht, Jenny Cargill and Angela Mai.

Wednesday night saw the South African premiere of the German documentary *Memories of Rain* – Scenes from the *Underground*. Filmed and produced by Angela Mai and Gisela Albrecht, the film is an emotional story about the underground struggle, and the lives of Jenny Cargill and Kevin Qhobosheane, who fought as commanders in the intelligence branch of the ANC.

Though the film follows the two through their time with the ANC, the documentation of this is secondary to the effects of the struggle. The film does not delve into the TRC-like retelling of events, but rather lets us in on the life of an underground operative and the loneliness of it.

In the months leading up to the June 16 riots, at a time when it seems everyone was on edge, Kevin Qhobosheane was one of the few people who was indifferent to politics.

Talking of her longing to want "do something", Jenny voices some of the film's most honest and painful insights into the times. She talks of the sacrifices made in the early days and of her eventual breakdown and departure from the struggle. Even then, after 10 years of fighting alongside the likes of Jacob Zuma and Dr Zwelli Mkhize (who both attended this South African Festival Premiere), Jenny could still feel guilty about walking away from the struggle and picking up her life again, while others had to live on in exile or worse.

"We were armed and taught to fight in the struggle, but there was never any thought to what would happen if we won." Even once the tide had turned and visible progress was being made, the answers to many questions still proved elusive. Now, we all look to the future for the answers.