



Big Screen Classics

A Screaming Man

A Screaming Man Un homme qui crie

Directed by: Mahamat-Saleh Haroun

Production Companies: Pilifilms Productions,
Goi-Goi Productions

Produced by: Florence Stern

Co-producers: Diana Elbaum, Sébastien Delloye

France Production Manager: Claude Gilaizeau

Chad Production Manager: Sekou Traoré

1st Assistant Director: Benjamin Blanc

Written by: Mahamat-Saleh Haroun

Director of Photography: Laurent Brunet

Stills Photography: Frank Verdier

Supervising Editor: Marie-Hélène Dozo

Editor: Marie-Hélène Dozo

Art Director: Ledoux Madeona

Costume Designer: Celine Delaire

Make-up: Nadine Otsobogo-Boucher

Original Music: Wasis Diop

Original Songs: Djénéba Koné

Sound Recordist: Dana Farzanehpour

Cast:

Youssef Djaoro (Adam)

Diouc Koma (Abdel)

Emile Abossolo M'Bo (chef de quartier)

Hadjé Fatimé N'Goua (Mariam)

Marius Yelolo (David)

Djénéba Koné (Djénéba)

Li Heling (Mme Wang)

Rémadjji Adèle Ngaradoubaye (Souad)

John Mbaiedoum (Etienne)

Hadre Dounia (young injured soldier)

Fatimé Nguenabaye (the neighbour)

Sylvain Mbaikoubou (the new cook)

Abdou Boukar (the maître d')

Gérard Ganda Mayoumbila (first officer)

Mahamat Choukou (soldier)

Tourgoudi Oumar (soldier)

France-Chad-Belgium-Cameroon-Burkina Faso-
Netherlands 2010

91 mins

Digital

Mahamat-Saleh Haroun on 'A Screaming Man'

'A Screaming Man is not a Dancing Bear' is the title of a poem by Aimé Césaire, the French-Martiniquan poet, politician and champion of Négritude. Was it his poem that inspired the film, or did your idea arise another way?

It was more the situation I twice found myself in, filming in Chad with my crew of foreign technicians, who were French, Burkinabé, Belgian. In 2006, while filming *Daratt*, we were caught in an attack by the rebel forces and couldn't move, and in 2008 the same thing happened when we were filming *Expectations*, the short film I was making for a commission by the Jeonju Film Festival in Korea. I felt completely responsible for all these people who were around me – who had come all the way from Paris and from Ouagadougou. I wanted to scream my rage, but against who? And what would that have changed other than making myself feel better?

It was then that I found I had a scream inside me that I couldn't get out, and afterwards I thought about Césaire. I reread the book [*Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*] and found this extraordinary passage, and I said to myself, 'Voilà! Perhaps it's that – a screaming man is not a dancing bear.' There is a form of civility in Africa that consists of showing the positive side even while people are living incredibly difficult lives, and it is that idea that brought me to the verses of Aimé Césaire.

When I was watching this film it felt like the end of a trilogy that you had started with Abouna and Daratt, which both trace the stories of fathers and sons. The first two are about the absent father, and this one is centred on the father who sends his son away, so it is inverted.

Absolutely. It's like a triptych around the same themes. I centred *A Screaming Man* around the father, but was really inspired by being taken hostage by this civil war. Then I looked at how I could treat the theme with something very intimate and familiar, and I took the situation of a Chadian family – and in particular the relationship of father and son. Because in this situation [the civil war in Chad], which has gone on for over 45 years, there seems to me to be a transmission which is going on from father to son: the war is essentially fought by men and young men, and it continues – we push them forward into it.

In A Screaming Man there is also the fascinating character of the Chinese hotel owner, representing the way China is buying up Africa.

Well yes, things are happening quite discreetly, as the Asiatic idea of propagation has it: we don't make a lot of noise, we move in, install ourselves discreetly. It's happening in Chad – there are lots of Chinese moving in, though maybe not as many as in Senegal or in Mali. I was inspired by a Chinese woman who lives in N'Djamena [the capital of Chad] and bought a hotel, and it was in thinking of her that I created Madame Wong.

It is these different fronts of combat that little people like Adam are confronted with. Not only is there the civil war, but there is also globalisation and how to deal with the political, economic and social situation. People like Adam become immobilised – simply because they live in societies that have no organised unions, or any kind of organisation that gathers people in collectives.

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Big Screen Classics

Burning an Illusion

Mon 19 Oct 18:20; Tue 27 Oct 14:40;
Thu 12 Nov 20:50

Young Soul Rebels

Tue 20 Oct 20:50; Sat 24 Oct 20:40;
Sun 8 Nov 18:20

Pressure

Wed 21 Oct 18:05 (+ intro by Xavier Alexandre Pillai,
BFI TV Programmer); Sat 7 Nov 20:30;
Fri 27 Nov 14:40

Mandabi

Thu 22 Oct 14:40; Fri 13 Nov 21:00;
Sun 29 Nov 12:10

A Dry White Season

Fri 23 Oct 20:40; Mon 2 Nov 18:20;
Wed 25 Nov 18:10

Babymother

Sun 25 Oct 12:40; Tue 3 Nov 21:15;
Mon 16 Nov 18:15

Bamako

Mon 26 Oct 18:10; Tue 10 Nov 20:30

Tongues Untied + pre-recorded intro by writer
Jason Okundaye

Wed 28 Oct 18:45; Sun 22 Nov 12:10

A Screaming Man

Thu 29 Oct 18:20; Tue 17 Nov 20:55

Ganja and Hess

Fri 30 Oct 20:30; Tue 24 Nov 18:10 (+ intro by
Gabriel Leavey, film curator, presenter and
BFI Studio Coordinator)

Daughters of the Dust

Sat 31 Oct 18:10; Wed 11 Nov 18:10 (+ intro by
Rógan Graham, BFI Film Programmer);
Sat 28 Nov 15:00

Belle

Sun 1 Nov 15:10; Sun 15 Nov 18:20;
Thu 26 Nov 20:40

Yaaba

Wed 4 Nov 18:10 (+ intro by Awa Konaté, Founder
of Culture Art Society); Fri 20 Nov 20:40

Crooklyn

Thu 5 Nov 14:40; Mon 9 Nov 18:00;
Sat 21 Nov 20:30

Touki Bouki

Fri 6 Nov 18:15; Thu 19 Nov 20:40

The Watermelon Woman

Sat 14 Nov 20:40; Wed 18 Nov 18:15 (+ intro by
Grace Barber-Plentie, BFI Festivals Programmer)

Yeelen

Mon 23 Nov 20:30; Mon 30 Nov 18:10

25 & Under

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The more Africa – or at least Chad – embraces modernity, the more it loses what solidarity in itself it had. Globalisation and capitalism isolate people, so there is no common force [against it], and that's how it wins. And in Africa this goes against the fundamental culture of the society there, because people show a lot of solidarity in their daily lives, and it is their solidarity – used against the problems they are confronted with on a daily basis in many countries in Africa – that enables them to survive situations that would be catastrophic in other countries and other cultures. If globalisation is putting that solidarity in danger, the situation is serious enough for it to be filmed.

What's also very powerful in your films is the space you create with colour and light, even in urban scenes, where you locate your characters in the enclosed space of the domestic compounds – and here also the hotel's enclosure.

This enclosure is also reality – it shows how my characters are caught in a trap. And they are not sure how to escape from it. They are like lions in a cage, and at some point lions who are kept locked up for a long time in a circus lose their minds. We crack, and this is what happens to Adam. His horizon is limited, and when our horizon is limited we are forced to invent something to escape from this daily grind and imprisonment.

In the scenes around the [hotel] swimming pool with Adam, it's like a theatre stage with different actors, and it gives him the illusion that he is not enclosed and not threatened. It creates a window for him that opens on to other things, and he clings to it like a means of breathing. It's his oxygen, and when it's taken away from him he feels he will suffocate.

Who are the cinematic influences on your films?

In this film there are influences in the editing, in the sense of ellipsis, in the stripped-down style of the directing, in the absence of artifice – there's something very bare which I really owe to Bresson. I'm really happy, as I was given the Robert Bresson Prize during the Venice festival. I'm really proud of that. But I also owe an aesthetic to certain kinds of Asian cinema. With the meal scene with the father, son and mother, I render homage to Ozu.

The western is also an important genre for me, because it was all I could see in the cinemas when I was growing up in Abéché. In westerns there is the sense of space, and there is this same space in this part of Chad, which is so desertified. In the last few years I've been rediscovering John Ford. His simple stories are still quite layered. Even in films when he was given the story and told to go and make it, he goes off like a good soldier to complete his mission. I am like that: I've got a story to tell, and I go off with the same ethic.

Interview by Suzy Gillett, *Sight and Sound*, June 2011