Film Lab Africa Showcase at Film Africa 2024: “Unleashing the Potential of the African Cinema Value Chain through Development Programs

Thursday 7 November, 2024

London, UK – Film Africa 2024– **Film Lab Africa** took center stage at this year’s FilmAfrica festival with a groundbreaking panel, *“Unleashing the Potential of the African Cinema Value Chain through Development Programs.”* This session explored pivotal challenges and transformative opportunities within African cinema, emphasizing sustainable growth and the sector’s impact on Africa’s creative economy. This event, held at the annual Film Africa festival, spotlighted a unique blend of education, mentorship, and creative expression, uniting top African filmmaking talent with influential industry leaders. Through engaging panel discussions moderated by **Gbolahan Peter Macjob,** screenings, and impactful networking sessions, the event underscored Film Lab Africa’s mission to develop and amplify African voices on a global stage.

Morning Panels and Insights

The day opened with an insightful panel featuring esteemed speakers, including Julian Alcantara, Colette Otusheso, Don Omope, Sukanmi Adebayo, and Nigerian government representatives. Project delivery partner Olasunkanmi Adebayo of Afrowren Productions and UK support partner Yemi Daramola of Darimedia led sessions covering topics from distribution strategies to leveraging cultural diplomacy for the African film sector.

Industry veteran Don Omope, a mentor to this year’s participants, emphasized the importance of storytelling rooted in authenticity, stating, *“African filmmakers have the power to reframe global narratives about our continent. Programs like Film Lab Africa are crucial in providing the platform and support needed to achieve this.”* Julian Alcantara echoed this sentiment, sharing, *“It’s time for African cinema to own its space on the world stage. With the right infrastructure and policies in place, African cinema can not only thrive domestically but also establish a significant presence internationally.”*

The panel opened with impactful speeches by program leaders and stakeholders, each underscoring the critical need for international support and structured growth in African cinema.

The Honourable Minister of Arts, Culture, Tourism, and Creative Economy, Nigeria, Barr. Hannatu Musa Musawa, represented by Mr. Kingsley Bash, reiterated the Nigerian government’s commitment to the film industry. He underscored the importance of public-private partnerships, saying, *“Our government recognizes the vast potential of the creative industry, and we are dedicated to fostering an environment that supports filmmakers. We call upon the private sector to join us in this mission to elevate African cinema.”*

Colette Otusheso, who is the CEO of Accelerate TV, highlighted the broader impact of such initiatives on Africa’s creative landscape: *“Empowering young filmmakers and storytellers is essential to building a thriving creative economy across the continent. Programs like this one provide a platform for African talent to shine, transforming passion into impactful careers that resonate globally.”*

Evening Showcase and Audience Reactions

As the evening transitioned to the screenings of Film Lab Africa participant films, the British Council’s Director of Cultural Engagement for Sub-Saharan Africa, Sally Robinson, spoke on behalf of the British Council. She applauded the filmmakers’ accomplishments and celebrated the program’s role in bringing African stories to an international audience. Robinson expressed, *“These filmmakers are not only talented; they are changemakers whose work contributes to the global cultural landscape. The pride and passion they bring are palpable, and we are honored to support their journey.”*

Audience reactions were overwhelmingly positive, with viewers lauding the films for their depth, innovation, and cultural richness. The showcase highlighted Film Lab Africa’s essential role in fostering talent and establishing a foundation for the sustainable growth of African cinema. The evening concluded with a round of applause and a commitment to continue this journey of cultural exchange, innovation, and

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cinematic excellence.

The Journey to Film Africa

The success of the Film Lab Africa program began earlier this year with a cohort of 60 emerging filmmakers from diverse African countries. Since January, these filmmakers have received rigorous training in both the creative and business aspects of the film industry, mastering skills in screenwriting, production, and financial planning. Following the training, each filmmaker applied for grants that required the practical application of their newfound expertise, resulting in 20 films that were funded and produced. Among these, 10 short films received grants of £5,000 each, while 10 microfilms shot on smartphones were funded with £500 each. These 20 films were initially showcased in Lagos over the summer with the 10 short film recipients invited to London for the FilmAfrica 2024 to showcase their skills at London's own biennial film festival for black filmmakers in the United Kingdom.

Featured Films

The evening session captivated audiences with a screening of the 10 short films selected from the cohort, each representing a unique and authentic African narrative. Featured films included:

- ***Toll Free*** – Produced by Mel Rouge
- ***Ireti*** – Directed by Temi Ami-Williams
- ***Ekun Iyawo*** – Directed by Moses Ipadeola
- ***Nepa*** – Directed by Sandra Adaora Anyanwu
- ***Femi*** – Directed by Stephanie Coker
- ***Adunni*** – Directed by Jemima Pearl Marcel-Udoh
- ***Blood & Rope*** – Directed by Twamsen Danaan
- ***Ralia's Secret*** – Directed by Faustina Okomayin
- ***She Sees*** – Directed by Akah Nnani
- ***Salamatu's Rhapsody*** – Directed by Shimataver Igbawua

These films, created by a new generation of African storytellers, showcased diverse themes ranging from resilience and hope to cultural identity and social change. *Salamatu's Rhapsody*, directed by Shimataver Igbawua, emerged as a crowd favorite for its poignant narrative and compelling visuals. Shimataver shared her enthusiasm for the journey, stating, *"Film Lab Africa gave me the tools and confidence to tell stories that are personal yet resonate universally. Seeing the audience's reaction to Salamatu's story was incredibly rewarding."* Sandra Adaora Anyanwu, producer of *Nepa*, added, *"This platform brings our stories to a global audience, and I am thrilled to be part of a movement that amplifies African cinema."* Meanwhile, Temi Ami-Williams, the producer of *Ireti*, reflected on the evening, saying, *"FilmLab Africa empowered me to create with vision and purpose, and to see that resonate with audiences here in London is a dream come true."*

Program Outline

Since its inception, Film Lab Africa has been committed to fostering talent and strengthening the infrastructure of African cinema. Supported by the British Council, the program has been instrumental in equipping young African creatives with resources, training, and international visibility. By bringing diverse African narratives to global platforms, Film Lab Africa aims to cultivate a thriving ecosystem where African cinema can flourish on the world stage.

Industry Impact

The response from the audience was overwhelmingly positive, as emerging filmmakers brought fresh perspectives and rich African stories to the screen. Sukanmi Adebayo of Afrowren Productions, the programme's Nigerian partner, expressed pride in the filmmakers' achievements. *"This initiative empowers young Nigerian filmmakers to tell authentic stories that resonate both locally and globally,"* he remarked, capturing the event's supportive and celebratory atmosphere. This level of investment in African cinema not only elevates individual careers but also strengthens the industry's infrastructure and economic footprint over time. By empowering new talent with resources and platforms, initiatives like Film Lab Africa contribute to the long-term growth of a global-ready Nollywood, currently estimated to generate around $7 billion annually, with a projected growth rate of 15% year-on-year. The industry produces over 2,500 films annually, and support like this ensures continuous innovation, skill development, and international reach, vital for Nollywood's rise as a cultural powerhouse on par with Hollywood and Bollywood.















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Future FLA Short Film Screenings in 2024

Following its London premiere, the films will continue to reach wider audiences with upcoming screenings at the **Lagos Fringe Festival** and the **Barbados Film Festival**. These screenings are facilitated by the British Council, alongside other catalytic support to support these filmmakers.

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