

THE BODA BODA THIEVES

SHORT CUT, WRONG TURN, DEAD END

ANOTHER YES! THAT'S US FILM

A FILM BY DONALD MUGISHA AND JAMES TAYLER "THE BODA BODA THIEVES"
SWITCH FILMS WITH DEDDAC, HOT SUN FILMS, AUGENSCHNEIN FILMPRODUKTION, KNOW YOUR CITY AND FIXER
STARRING HASSAN 'SPIKE' INSINGOMA, PROSSY RUKUNDO, MICHEAL WAWUYO AND SAUL MWESIGWA
CINEMATOGRAPHY CAROL BURANDT VON KAMEKE ORIGINAL MUSIC PETER MILES
FILM SCORE GRAEME LEES SOUND DESIGN PETE O'DONOGHUE MONTAGE JAMES TAYLER
ART DIRECTOR SHAKIRA KIBIRIGE PRODUCTION MANAGERS ROBERT NYANZI WANJIKU S. MUHOHO
PRODUCED BY JAMES TAYLER DONALD MUGISHA WANJIKU S. MUHOHO
CO-PRODUCERS JONAS KATZENSTEIN MAXIMILIAN LEO NATHAN COLLETT JEREMY BEAN
STORY BY DONALD MUGISHA AND JAMES TAYLER SCREENPLAY BY JAMES TAYLER
DIRECTED BY YES! THAT'S US



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National Film and Video Foundation
Kenya



SYNOPSIS

Even though he is only 15 years old, when his father is injured in a road accident Abel takes up the responsibility of manning the family boda boda to provide for the family.

Abel however, is always on the lookout for a shortcut and when a local hustler offers him the chance of being a snatch and grab get-away driver, he lurches headlong into a world of easy money and quick thrills.

It all turns sour though when Abel himself is robbed of his father's boda boda. He is now forced to pile lie upon lie to his parents and the authorities as he searches for the stolen motorbike through the underbelly of Kampala.

WHAT IS A BODA BODA?

In Kampala, Uganda, the city streets are always congested with traffic and the fastest way to travel is on motorbike taxis we call "boda bodas." The men who drive these boda bodas have a reputation as tough hustlers, cowboys of the dusty roads, after all you have to be sharp to survive Kampala traffic.

Like most African cities Kampala is heaving under the influx of people streaming to the city in search of a better life. The greatest migration in human history is happening right now in sub-Saharan Africa. People are leaving the land and villages in a mass exodus to stream into the metropolises. Their numbers swell the burgeoning ghettos that surround the urban centres.

Our story deals with this huge issue from the perspective of one small family trying to make it in the city.

THE BICYCLE THIEF REMIXED?

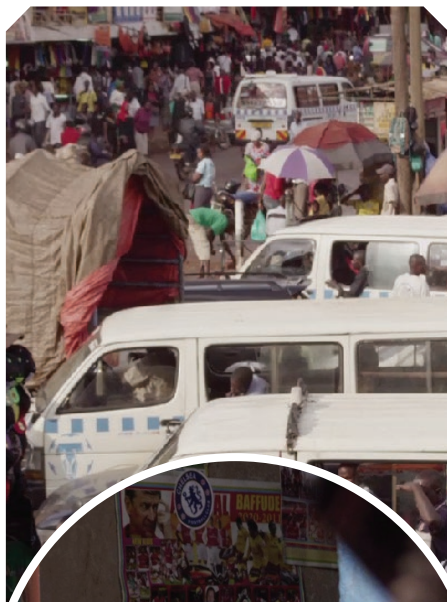
The Boda Boda Thieves deals with the theme of corruption and the tension between traditional communal values pitted against the prevalent ideology of "dog eat dog" individualism.

The film is an African homage and tribute to the great Italian Neo-realist film "The Bicycle Thief" (1948) directed by Vittorio de Sica. We must stress that this is definitely not a remake and that "The Boda Boda Thieves" is an original work that is freely inspired by the great classic. We use the classic as an armature and work to emulate the focus and kinetic simplicity of the original.

This is another Yes! That's Us film and as such we stayed true to our working method of using a small mobile crew of multi-tasking people.

Uganda has received a lot of bad press lately due to a raft of repressive laws against homosexuality, freedom of expression and even miniskirts. Not all Ugandan's have fallen for these cheap political stunts and many see these outrages for what they are: smokescreens to draw public scrutiny away from the real problem of government kleptocracy.

This film examines the issue of crime and corruption, the generation gap and the cult of machismo. As artists we believe in the power of cinema to mirror society for all its imperfect beauty. Slowly but surely positive changes are happening. Despite hardships the people endure they find new ways to make things work. We believe that The Boda Boda Thieves makes commentary on a society in transition.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



Since the inception of this film we set out to make something in the spirit of the classic neo-realist film "The Bicycle Thief". Little did we realize at the time that we had set ourselves up to be compared to one of the greatest films in the history of Cinema. It has been a daunting, humbling and ultimately inspiring task.

So, how do you make a film inspired by Vittorio de Sica's classic "The Bicycle Thief" without ruining the original or being compared to it? Our strength lies in the fact that from the very beginning we were clear that we were not doing a remake the original but rather that we would freely be inspired by it to create an African "remix". "The Boda Boda Thieves" is therefore an

original story that stands on its own merit with a "borrowed soul."

The question was always – where to start and whose point of view? Our story belongs to the son, Abel. Considering the fact that 80% of Uganda's urban population is youth under 30, we felt it important to tell this story from the point of view of a young man in transition to adulthood. Our protagonist, Abel, is a typical ghetto kid who is given a responsibility he is not yet ready for.

The themes we explore with this film are primarily around the culture of machismo in Africa, the generation gap between rural migrant parents and their city born children and the nature of crime and corruption in contemporary African society. The city, Kampala, itself has a beautifully dysfunctional character constantly on the move and we share its pulse and life blood with you.





We believe that realism has come of age for African cinema and that "African Realism" as a cinematic aesthetic and an ideology is as relevant to African's and world cinema audiences today as Italian Neo-realism was to audiences in the 50's. African Cinema is currently saturated with images of middle class and wealthy people and their important problems. There has been a deliberate attempt to entertain but not engage with audiences.

We take inspiration from the filmmakers of old who sought to tell real stories of ordinary people without melodrama or artifice and in this way articulate an indigenous sensibility and non-consumerist understanding of the realities that shape society.

Much as "The Boda Boda Thieves" highlights many social issues, above all we ask the question: "Why do the right thing when no one else does?" For us this is a very relevant question not only for our main character but also for ourselves as a filmmakers, artists and world citizens.

This is also a question without a neat answer or easy conclusion.

Whether our film is compared to the original or not, we hope that our viewer will enjoy the journey when they watch the "re-mixed" classic. Africa is alive with possibilities right now. As artists we believe in the power of cinema to mirror society with all its imperfections and all its beauty.

We feel compelled to share "The Boda Boda Thieves" as a comment on the values and ideals that hold us together. A society knows itself through its art is a self-aware society, better equipped to deal with an uncertain future.

Donald Mugisha & James Tayler
YES! THAT'S US

BEHIND THE **SCENES**



The making of “The Boda Boda Thieves” has been almost as dramatic as the film itself. To begin with a few weeks before the shoot Donald had to travel to the town of Goma in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to help with a film festival there, however this coincided with increased violent rebel activity and the eventual capture of the town by the M23 rebels. This meant the airport was closed and that Donald had to brave the long perilous journey home by bus. Thankfully he made it home safely.

Then a few days before our German, Kenyan and American collaborators were due to arrive in Kampala the Ebola virus surfaced in Uganda. Pretty soon it was detected in the capital and the headline “Deadly Ebola Outbreak Hits Uganda” was circulating across all the major new

networks. Thankfully our crew was very brave and with a few basic precautions honored their commitment to the shoot.

Our Zimbabwean editor was arrested and deported at the airport as we tried to leave South Africa and it cost a good deal of time and money to bust him out.

Once everybody had arrived we had to work through a few cultural differences between the German, American, South African, Kenyan and Ugandan way of doing things.



The shoot went fairly smoothly after that and we wrapped with only a few pickup shots but then we got news that Isingoma, our lead actor playing the part of Abel had been arrested and although he was only 16, he was incarcerated in the adult prison for the crime of theft.

We had first worked with Isingoma and his crew "The Beach Boyz" on our debut film "Divizionz" when he was 8 years old. He had a hard ghetto upbringing; his father was a petty thief who had been killed by mob justice at a taxi rank whilst his mother sold marijuana to support them. As a teenager it seems that he fell in with the wrong crowd; a gang who had developed a modus operandi of using the younger boys as bait to start a fight which was used as justification to beat up the victim and rob them at the same time.

It took some time, money and convincing but eventually we were able to secure his release and schedule the pickup shoots and ADR. A few weeks passed in the interim as

arrangements were made for the shoot. Donald and I now realize that a youth at risk, such as Isingoma, needs constant mentorship and that there is often a disconnect between what they say is going on and the reality. We thought that with a film shoot to look forward to and some money in his pocket he would stay out of trouble but we were wrong. The day before the pickup shoot he was rearrested for a string of new offences.

Sometimes crisis forces innovation and in hindsight we can see how the problem at hand forced us to look at the script in a new light and wrestle for the heart and soul of the story. By giving a bit more time to some of the other characters, using a body double and some clever ADR we able to devise a way to not only rescue, but we believe improve the film using the resources we had.



ABOUT **YES! THAT'S US**

Yes! That's Us is a filmmaking collective and pan-African statement which affirms the collaborative nature of filmmaking and of the importance of finding indigenous working models and distribution solutions that suit conditions on the ground.

Africa is uniquely poised to benefit from the impact of new digital filmmaking and film distribution technology, coupled with a largely untapped local market hungry for local product as well as a renewed international interest in a continent rich in the raw material of human ingenuity. We recognise that the demographic of sub-Saharan Africa is predominantly young and urban and have identified the insight we have into this subculture as our competitive advantage. We are excited by the possibility of new technologies to affect change.



DONALD MUGISHA

Donald Mugisha is the founder member of Yes! That's Us. He studied Mass Communication at Kampala University but attributes his 'real life' education to the making of hundreds of music videos for the East African music scene. Mugisha went on to direct a documentary about the method and reach of these music videos which garnered numerous awards and accolades both locally and internationally and helped turn his attention to filmmaking.

Mugisha grew up on a farm in Western Uganda and watched a lot of kung-fu movies growing up, as he matured he discovered the work of Rossellini, Truffaut, Fernando Meirelles, adopting their neo-realist style as his own. He describes his first introduction to filmmaking as a child when his father bought a small VHS video camera which he started experimenting with. At university he met a range of 'frustrated' artists from a cross section of disciplines.



JAMES TAYLER

James Tayler has worked in the film and television industry since 1997 as an editor and director prior to turning his focus to features and their production. With bursary assistance from South Africa's National Film and Video Foundation, Tayler graduated with a Masters of Fine Arts degree in motion picture film with the focus of his research thesis being "The Impact of Digital Technology for african Filmmakers and Distributors."

"African at the moment is undergoing a seismic shift. The changes we will see in our lifetime will be comparable to those that shaped post-war Europe. The continent regularly achieves growth rates of 6% and above despite the global economic climate. I believe in South-South collaboration and that Africa has to accept responsibility for it's own development. International creative exchange in all it's forms is the vanguard of a strong civic society. As storytellers we have a duty to hold a mirror to our societies and help grow a positive self awareness that serves as a defense against exploitation both from without and from within."

JONAS KATZENSTEIN

Jonas Katzenstein (b. 1980) founded 2004 the recording studio "artaudio" in Cologne. In 2008 he founded together with Maximilian Leo augenschein Filmproduktion and in 2009, he completed a postgraduate education as a fiction producer at the Cologne Filmhaus.

Furthermore he participated in several further education and networking programs in order to widen the company's network and expertise in international coproduction: Cannes Producers Network 2012; Rotterdam Lab 2012; EAVE Marketing-Workshop 2011; Producers Workshop Cannes 2011; AV-Gründerzentrum Stipendienprogramm 2011; etc. Since then he produced several national and international projects in various countries like France, Belgium, Brasil, Uganda, etc.

MAXIMILIAN LEO

Maximilian Leo (b. 1979). From 2002 to 2004, he shot documentaries in different parts of the world, including Afghanistan and Africa. In 2005, he took up study at the Cologne Academy of Media Arts with a focus on feature film direction, where he obtained his diploma in 2009. In 2008 he founded together with Jonas Katzenstein augenschein Filmproduktion. At augenschein, he is responsible for developing new projects of his own as well as supervising other directors and writers projects. In 2014 his debut feature film MY BROTHER'S KEEPER premiered at the Berlinale 2014 as the opening film of the Perspektive Deutsches Kino. Furthermore he produced several national and international projects.

NATHAN COLLETT

NATHAN COLLETT is an American-Australian filmmaker resident in Kenya. He is motivated to tell authentic and compelling film/TV stories of a high artistic & technical quality. He has worked with Facebook, Africa Channel (USA) and others to pay the bills. He is most passionate about making films & helping others to make innovative films about life in East Africa-past, present and future. Nathan's films have screened at Berlinale, Palm Springs, Santa Barbara, Verona, Italy and many other film festivals. He won numerous awards with his films Kibera Kid and Togetherness Supreme. Nathan is currently working on a new feature entitled New Eden, set in a post-apocalyptic East Africa.

Nathan is the founder of Hot Sun Films and its non-profit arm, Hot Sun Foundation – both located in Nairobi, Kenya. He believes in giving back through the foundation which has trained over 200 youth from Kibera, East Africa's largest slum, and other disadvantaged, talented youth to become filmmakers. A majority are now gainfully employed in the East Africa TV/film industry. Nathan has a B.A. in African Studies, Stanford University, California, USA and an MFA in Film from the University of Southern California, USA. He was a Fulbright Fellow in Nairobi in 2006-2007 and received the New Leaders Group award in 2008 for his work promoting international understanding through youth video exchange.

JEREMY BEAN

Jeremy Bean is a creative “fixer” and producer, through his boutique studio FIXER he developed the KNOW YOUR CITY campaign for Shack Dwellers International which was launched at the World Urban Forum in Medellin Columbia. Jeremy has worked on various campaigns cutting across government, corporate, FMCG, sports marketing and NGO clients. He has a passion for communications and extensive practical knowledge in both a management and creative capacity. Jeremy is equally passionate about using media as a catalyst to affect social change, his role in this project was both as a co producer and facilitating the collaboration of The Boda Boda Thieves film and the KNOW YOUR CITY campaign.



WANJIKU MUHOHO

Wanjiku's love of story has carried her through 9 years of working in the film and advertising industry as a writer, producer and actress. She is an Alumna of the 2012 Talent Project Market and the winner of the VFF Highlight Pitch Award during the Berlinale Co-production Market award at the 2012 Berlin International Film Festival for "The Boda Boda Thieves." She is also an alumni of the 2013 Durban Talent Campus.

Wanjiku has a Master of Fine Arts degree in Filmmaking and a Bachelor of Commerce degree in Business and Marketing. She regularly freelances as a Script Editor/ Story consultant and is currently working as a Film Producer in South Africa on various projects that are in development, as well as other progressive film development initiatives, aimed at growing global audiences for progressive pan-African content, film skills enhancement and job creation within the film and media industry for disenfranchised youth in Africa.





(KNOW)
YOUR CITY

ABOUT **KNOW YOUR CITY**

To solve poverty, the poor need to link up, because as individuals they have no power. But when they organize their communities and form citywide networks, they can develop so many things together that they could never do alone. When communities link with other communities they learn from one another. They get the information and the knowledge they need to change their lives, their communities and their cities.

Once they know how to organize new perspectives open up and these perspectives show them how to solve poverty.

When the poor have their own information and their own solutions, their hand is strengthened when it comes time to negotiating with the government and the formal system for the things they need like land, housing, access to public services, credit and other entitlements. Structural issues like land use, finance policies, building regulations and city planning norms are never engraved in stone - these issues are all highly political. If the poor can come to that bargaining table knowing their settlements and their cities, they are more likely to be taken seriously as viable development partners.





Switch Films, Deddac, Augenschein
Filmproduktion, Hot Sun Films, Know Your
City and Fixer Films
present another a Yes! That's Us film
The Boda Boda Thieves

Countries of Production: Uganda, South
Africa, Kenya and Germany
Language - Luganda
Duration - 85 Min
Shooting format - Red Epic 4K
Sound – 5.1 Surround
Aspect Ratio - 1:85: 1

Contact: James Tayler
Website: www.bodabodathieves.com
email: yesthatsjames@gmail.com
phone: +27 82 485 0054

The Boda Boda Thieves

another a Yes! That's Us film

Starring:
Hassan 'Spike' Insingoma as Abel
Prossy Rukundo as Rosa
Saul Mwesigwa as Lex
Micheal Wawuyo as Goodman

Directed by
Yes! That's Us
(Donald Mugisha - Credited Director
James Tayler - Collaborating Director)

Producers
James Tayler
Donald Mugisha
Jonas Katzenstein
Max Leo
Nathan Collett
Sarah Wanjiku Muhoho
Jeremy Bean

Cinematography
Carol Burandt von Kameke

Montage
James Tayler

Sound Design
Pete O'Donaghue

Film Score
Graeme Lees

Original Music
Peter Miles

