



SPECIAL EVENT



Kaddu Beykat lettre paysanne (Letter from My Village)

Sénégal, 1976

Director: Safi Faye

Dist—BFI. p.c/p/sc—Safi Faye. ph—Patrick Fabry. ed—A. Davanture. asst. ed—M.C. Rougerie, D. Saint-Cyr. sd. rec—Doudou Charles Diouf, Mayer Bracher. sd. re-rec—Robert Hamard. narrator—Safi Faye. subtitles—N.M. Kabir, Titra Film. l.p—Assane Faye, Maguette Gueye. 3,532 ft. 98 mins. (16 mm.). Subtitles.

Safi Faye has described the shooting of this remarkable film: "There are no actors in the film. The people are actual villagers. . . I left them free to do what they wanted: the only element that was directed was the speech. But it wasn't as if this was something I was imposing on them: during one of my research trips, I found the conversations I recorded returning again and again to the problem of groundnuts". Just as the story of the central couple, Ngor and Coumba, emerges without any sense of imposition from the life of the village, the film's political discussions emerge fluidly and smoothly from the daily conversations under the shade tree that are a central part of that way of life.

The first such set-piece, which is provoked by the arrival of an itinerant tradesman, is filmed with remarkable beauty and control. The camera moves around the group in such a way as to ensure that the viewer is made aware that each participant is both speaker and listener, an individual and a member of the closely knit group. One immediately compares this pivotal sequence with others in the same setting: the final discussion, and an intermediate one where a young man in smart clothes reads in French to the elders from *Le Soleil*, the national newspaper. He is seated somewhat incongruously on a chair, and rather than the precise and thoughtful language of the peasants, these readings are a stream of jargon which, despite certain key invocations—references to "economic integration and co-operation"; to policies "based on future prospects"; to a cultural politics, and one of "non-dirigism"—seems designed more to obfuscate than to enlighten.

This alienated and alienating bureaucratic discourse, a seeming parody of official pronouncements, largely ignores the basic conditions of peasant life: "For me, politics means I eat one meal a day for six months of the year" and: "My father offered a cow for my wedding. . . I cannot do the same for my son's marriage". The vicious circle of peasant indebtedness is articulated through conversation: loans provide fertilisers to grow groundnuts whose sale services the debts incurred in their production. The role of the state is reiterated in a game the children play, which also starts under the shade tree: "We're going to pretend we're the tax collectors who come for their money when the harvest's been poor. . .". The game is not a didactic device; such games emerge spontaneously, and they seem to confirm the conclusion Safi Faye reached after completing the original ethnographic research that led to the film: "I began to think it would be possible to make a film that showed you could talk about your own problems without having been to school".

There is concern, solidarity and unity in the village; the pressures of urban life, by contrast, are subtly articulated through sound and image. Visually and aurally, the town is oppressive, claustrophobic—the sound of a child crying seems on top of one in the city, quite different from the same sound in the village. Though lack of money drives young men to the city, life there is exhausting, and felt to be so by the spectator. Clearly, the village is a conservative antithesis to the town: though women are involved in productive labour, their voices are seldom heard.



Asking a fundamental question.

While the men engage in discussion under the shade tree, the distant sound of grain being pounded can regularly be heard, signifying that women's work is not yet done.

Nevertheless, the traditional way of life has much that commends it in contrast to the new way of the city. In this film, it is marriage that raises questions about the nature of the past and the future, just as, in the society the film depicts, marriage represents the attempt to ensure the continuation of the traditional way of life for another generation. Whether the attempt will be successful depends upon such apparent imponderables as government policies towards development and the peasantry, and the arrival of the rains. Though the latter represents an element of hope, the fundamental question remains: "If groundnuts weaken our soil, what use are they?"

JAMES LEAHY

Editor's Note: As you might expect, information on a film made in West Africa in 1976 is a bit thin on the ground. Therefore, I took the decision to reproduce a contemporary review instead of our usual original notes written by a WNCC member. The above review by James Leary was originally published in 'Monthly Film Bulletin' in 1987, the date of the film's original release in the UK.

IAN SOWERBY

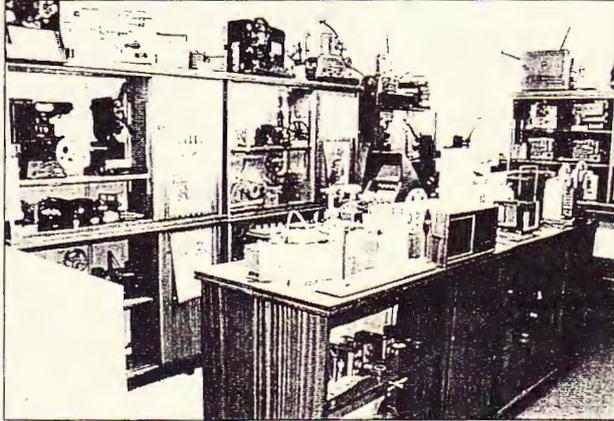


THE MAGIC OF CINEMA

from the

The Projected Picture Trust

The invention of motion pictures 100 years ago has done much to shape the society in which we live. It has also given untold pleasure to billions of people throughout the world. Consider the technical developments that made it all possible. They are a vital part of our rich cinema heritage. Can we allow them to be pushed into oblivion by the new, dazzling products of image technology? Cinema enthusiasts think not ...



The small group of dedicated people who founded the Projected Picture Trust were appalled at the wholesale destruction of cinemas and cinema equipment. That is why this small band of them founded The Projected Picture Trust in 1979. The Trust's aims are quite simple: *To locate, renovate, preserve, exhibit and demonstrate* the apparatus that, from early days up to modern times, has been used to make and show movie magic.

Over the years the Trust has restored scores of historically important machines that would otherwise have been scrapped. Items from this collection are displayed, whenever opportunities arise, at both private and public exhibitions. There are now permanent displays and demonstrations at the *PPT National Museum of Cinema Technology* in Bletchley Park, Buckinghamshire. The collection here includes a large selection of narrow gauge home cinema machines, to accompany the professional cinema display.

There are more venues at the Imperial War Museum Cinema at Duxford in Cambridgeshire, the Wessex Film Archive in Winchester, the Williamson Museum in Birkenhead, the Kershaw Museum in Leeds, the Museum of the Moving Image in London, and at many more locations.

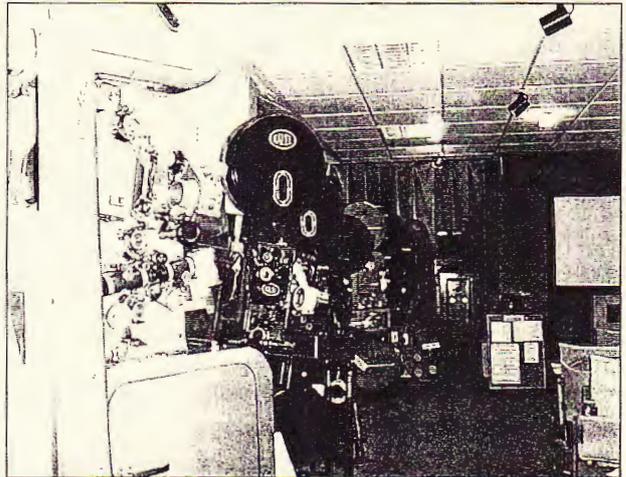
There are no technical or occupational qualifications, and no age limits. Many, however, are in professions and other occupations totally unconnected with the film industry. What drew them to the Trust was simply their love of the cinema.

The Trust is also involved in the conservation and running of classic cinemas, and in presenting very special film shows. Cinema visits give 'lay' members a unique

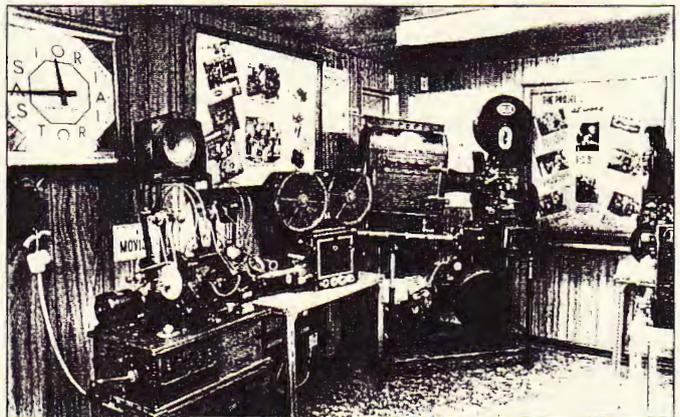
chance to see what really happens in the Projection Box.

There is a continuous program of research. The Trust's archives are a major source of information on cinema history and technology. Such information is freely available to the members.

One of the Trust's prime activities is the restoration of projectors and other equipment. Much of this is done by small groups on the *workdays* regularly held in the regions. Some is done by individuals in their own homes and workshops. There are many opportunities for individuals to participate and acquire new skills.



An illustrated quarterly magazine is sent to all members. It contains research papers and other technical features, as well as news of the Trust's activities in all the regions and articles of historical and general interest.



For further information please contact: Harold G. Brown (Hon. Membership Secretary), 2 Eleanor Gardens, Aylesbury, Bucks HP21 7LT, Telephone: 01296 23646



Woking's Civic Concert 1998

Carl Davis and the Live Cinema Orchestra

accompany two of Charlie Chaplin's
outstanding silent comedy films

THE IMMIGRANT

CITY LIGHTS



New Victoria Theatre

The Ambassadors
Peacocks Centre, Woking

Sunday 22nd November 1998

at 7.30pm

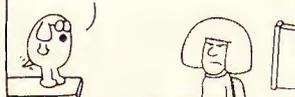
Tickets: Royal Circle £22 (under 18's £17)
Rear Stalls & Front Upper Circle £20 (under 18's £15)
Front Stalls & Rear Upper Circle £15 (under 18's £10)
Boxes £10 (under 18's £7.50)

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DILBERT
BY SCOTT ADAMS

DOGBERT TWEAKS TINA THE
BRITTLE TECH WRITER.

WHAT DO YOU
THINK OF THE
MOVIE "THELMA
AND LOUISE"?



I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE
TRYING TO SAY. YOU
THINK ALL WOMEN
ARE BAD DRIVERS.
THAT'S REALLY THE
POINT OF THE MOVIE,
ISN'T IT??



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Twelve Monkeys (8/10/98)

23 reactions, average score 6.00

Comments

Rubbish!

Brilliant!

Not my kind of film.

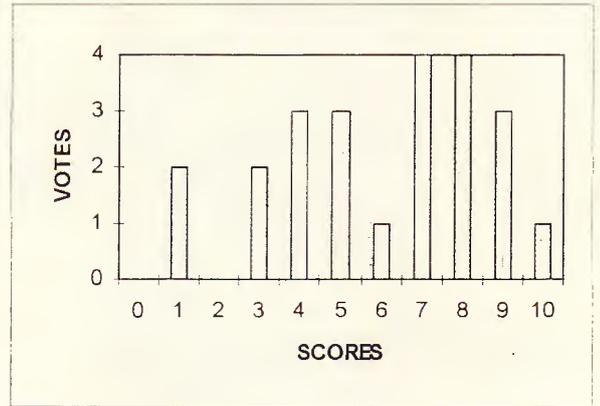
A clever but confusing film - and I do so love a happy ending!!

I'm no fan of science fiction but it got better as it went along.

Not being a Bruce Willis fan I was pleasantly surprised. Great atmosphere.

One of those films where I would not have persevered with it on TV but it was well worth waiting until the plot made sense.

Helen Saye



**COMING
NEXT MONTH**

12th November

at Mayford Village Hall,
commencing at 8.00 pm

A romantic comedy cum thriller is a rare thing, and a film that genre hops as easily and enjoyably as *Grosse Pointe Blank* is even rarer still. John Cusack is a disillusioned professional killer returning to his home town for one final hit and his high school reunion. Meeting up with jilted prom partner Debi (Minnie Driver), his past and present collide with funny and violent repercussions. With a fresh style and pace which allows a complicated plot to unravel in time with its audience, this film is a constant treat.

Programme ends at 10.25 pm (approx)

EVEN A HIT MAN DESERVES A SECOND SHOT.

GROSSE POINTE **BLANK** 15

"A delicious black comedy." - The Daily Mail

JOHN CUSACK MINNIE DRIVER ALAN ARKIN and DAN AYKROYD

"MISS THIS AND NEVER HOLD YOUR HEAD HIGH IN A CINEMA AGAIN." - Select

"A SPARKLING COMEDY... the script is littered with crackling one-liners."

-The Independent

"The blood-splattered black comedy thriller of the year. No contest."

-NME



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