



LUSALA

THE PAST WILL ALWAYS FIND YOU

ONE FINE DAY FILMS in co-production with GINGER INK FILMS in association with DW AKADEMIE presents
BRIAN OGOLA STYCIÉ WAWERU ALYCE WANGARI MKAMZEE MWATELA ALAN OYUGI in LUSALA
cinematographer EMMA NZIOKA supervising cinematographer CHRISTIAN ALMESBERGER production designer NATASHA KHANYOLA
supervising production designer NAIA BARRENECHEA editor KEVIN WANG'OMBE supervising editor CHRISTIAN KRÄMER
original music by ERIC WAINAINA RUSHAB NANDHA MBOGUA MBUGUA MBUGUA supervising composer XAVER VON TREYER
supervising screenplay IAN MASTERS MBITHI MASYA supervising director FELIX RANDAU
produced by SARIKA HEMI LAKHANI SIDBHAIN "GINGER" WILSON GUY WILSON TOM TYKWER MARIE STEINMANN-TYKWER
written by SILAS MIAMI WANJERI GAKURU OPRAH OYUGI directed by MUGAMBI NTHIGA

represented by RUSHLAKE MEDIA and THE FESTIVAL AGENCY



GINGER INK
FILMS AFRICA



Akademie
BMZ



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ARRI Media

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MEDIA



FILM STUDIOS

Artwork by Jay Richu



LUSALA

by Mugambi Nthiga

The Past Will Always Find You

Kenya / Germany – 2019 – 61 minutes 20 seconds – 2.8K Anamorphic -
24fps – DCP

Swahili & English with English and German subtitles

Festivals and Bookings

International Sales

THE FESTIVAL AGENCY, Paris

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SHORT SYNOPSIS



Lusala, a young man rescued from his abusive upcountry home, moves in with an affluent Nairobi family. Years later, when he comes of age, he is imposed upon to leave the nest and start out life on his own. Eager and acquiescent at first, he makes the most of his new life, until the demons from his past return, and he is forced to face them alone.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Lusala (22) is a young man who lives and works in two very separate parts of Nairobi. He occupies his days working in a garage in lower-class Nairobi. Every evening, he joins the city's working class masses making their journeys home, except he goes to the other Nairobi; upmarket neighbourhood, and the palatial home of his adoptive family. His uncle and aunt, Onesmus and Beatrice (late 40's), adopted him twelve years ago from rural Kenya, and raised him together with their daughter Joma (17).

When Lusala and Joma's unabashed sibling affection raises concerns with Beatrice, she imposes on her husband to make Lusala move out and start life on his own. Onesmus relents, and despite his apparent anxieties, so does Lusala. With his uncle's help, and with Joma's moral support, Lusala moves into a flat closer to his garage workplace.

As Lusala settles in, he attempts to fit in with his mechanic colleagues and shrug off his anxiety and dejection, but his troubles take a stronger hold of him.

Days later, Lusala's youngest sister Bakhita, who has been away in boarding school, runs away and unexpectedly shows up at his flat. When he takes her in and opts to return her to Onesmus and Beatrice's house, she begs him to let her stay. He begrudgingly agrees, telling her she can hide out in his flat for a while.

Word reaches Onesmus that Bakhita has returned to stay with Lusala, and he and the family approach Lusala at the garage to speak with him about it.

The resulting confrontation reveals that Lusala's mental state is fragile and in peril, and despite his family's best intentions, one bigger, more ominous confrontation lies ahead.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



LUSALA has been an adventure to make. The filmmaking convention has been that a film is written three times; on the page, in shooting, and in edit. We're writing the third story now. What has emerged is a drama film about the nature of broken people, as personified by Lusala, a Kenyan male in his early twenties, who has come of age a little late, and whose attempts are held back by baggage he has to loose himself of. The story of LUSALA shares many parallels with the making of film.

After I co-wrote KATI KATI and SUPA MODO, I considered myself mature enough to direct a feature. Like our titular character, I seemed to finally have my act together. What ended up happening was the classic director's debut: unnerving, errant, and relentless. When Lusala walks through the flurry of human and vehicular traffic in Nairobi's Dagoretti neighbourhood, he is a face in hundreds. When he's at the wealthy upscale residence of his adoptive family, it appears that he is seen, cared for and loved. He goes from faceless and unexpressive to open and affectionate and genuine. However, the prospect of being separated from the home he has known for a decade, starts to overwhelm him, and his anxieties start to bubble closer to the surface. This is why he leans more into caring for, and receiving the affections of his younger sister Bakhita, and disassociating more from his regular life. Eventually, when he unravels, and lashes out at those close to him, he is forced to face the traumas and iniquities of his past.

I am drawn to this type of story because it shows the duality of humanity; the co-existence of two selves: an inauthentic self, constructed by us so we can get by and fit in, and our real self, the imperfect and guileless, yet necessary person that enables the full experience of being human. One is ran by ego, and blots our weaknesses and follies with fabrications we've learnt to wear. The real self, though, is where stories are made. It exists, powerfully, underneath it all, and should it be revealed—via affliction or affection—it shows us for who we really are. LUSALA experiences the woes of a human whose authentic self must be revealed, and when he survives this upset, that is enough of an ending, even if it's just for a moment in time.

Lusala and I had this in common; as shooting took its stride, I needed to find a fortitude that I wouldn't have found any other way, and I had to make peace with my naïve, edgy, unschooled, but *authentic* self. This ended the daily struggles to find my intuitive voice. It had been there all along.

In LUSALA, all three writing periods have revealed a story of reaching one's end, where one's carefully constructed sense of self is called to question, and with the support of one's own tenacity, and the support of loved ones, a new normal can be found. Or lost.

The visual treatment of the film follows a classic, with frequent use of locked-off camera, moderate use of steadicam and dolly shots, and minimal use of handheld. The images are mostly wide and rooted, with intentional and sparing use of extreme close-ups. We intend to make full use of the power of cinemascope, with wide shots and city vistas. The viewer is an observer keeping a respectable distance in most conversations, allowing an organic empathy to be developed with the characters, mostly uninterrupted by cutaways, establishers or master shots.

We are still finding the sound of the film. The soundtrack reflects the pulse of our lead character's experience of Nairobi (a balance of the gritty sound of the streets with more upbeat, carefree party music), while the score will incorporate mood-based music (which you will notice in the temporary music we have placed)

combined with experimental uses of more traditional vocal and instrumental sounds. The mood of the film, as you will observe, is varied. We will cut from moments of private brooding to public displays of joy; and vice versa. This will form the tapestry of the film, which will not resort to the archetypal happy ending. It will, however, bring with it the reassurance that life can, and will carry on.

I am excited about the film we are making. It is becoming as present to me as I am to it. An opportunity to exercise vulnerability with my work and the pains of learning and growth would be invaluable; not just to the film, but to its makers.

by Mugambi Nthiga

BIOGRAPHIES

Mugambi Nthiga (Director)

Mugambi Nthiga is a Kenyan actor, writer and director. His career began in the Nairobi theatre scene in the early 2000's, where he worked on a range of stage plays and musicals, after which he landed principle roles in M-Net's Pan-African TV drama CHANGES, in the celebrated Kenyan films NAIROBI HALF LIFE (2012) and STORIES OF OUR LIVES (2015).



Mugambi then went on to co-write KATI KATI (2016), which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and won the FIPRESCI Prize.

He was headwriter on SUPA MODO (2018), which premiered at Berlinale 2018, and went on to win over 50 prizes worldwide, including the ECFA Award for Best European Film For Children. Mugambi is also part of Kenya's premiere improv comedy collective, BECAUSE YOU SAID SO, which hosts sold out improv shows every two months.

Brian Ogola (Lusala)

Brian Ogola is a Kenyan film, stage and television actor. He discovered his passion, love and appreciation for performing arts in high school but begun acting professionally in 2012. His break through role was in the hit Kenyan television series JANE AND ABEL produced by Dorothy Ghattuba, where he was cast as the lead. In 2015, he was cast in the movie KATI KATI, a feature film nominated in the 90th Academy Awards (Oscars) in the category "Best Foreign Language Film." In 2017 he graciously stars alongside Joyce Maina in the only African short film NEOPHOBIA, LUSALA 2019



selected for screening at the prestigious 70th Cannes Film Festival in France. On stage performances, Brian takes the city by storm with the TOO EARLY FOR BIRDS play series based on odd stories from Kenyan history as featured on the blog OWAAAHH.

Through his art, Brian is committed to projects that spark conversation and shift opinions on vital social issues affecting Kenya today. He was cast as a lead role in the award-winning movie 18HRS, which aims to give perspective to not only the Kenyan Health Care System but Africa's as a whole. The film won "Best Overall Movie in Africa" in the 6th Annual AMVCAs. His role in the 2018 film POACHER got him a few nominations in the 2018 Kalasha Awards, one of them being "Best Lead Actor" in a film. Brian Ogola is a seasoned, ethereal and risky actor that enjoys intentional healthy living, music and some alone time.

Mkamzee Mwatela (Aunt Beatrice)

Mkamzee Mwatela's passion for storytelling is evident in her illustrious career spanning just over 16 years. In that time she has been an Actor, Director, Choreographer, Writer, 2nd Camera Assistant, Casting Director and Acting Coach.



She has moved fluidly from stage, to television and the big screen, exploring the different forms of story. Her starring roles have included shows like SIRI, MALI, SHIGA-LOVE/SEX/MONEY, and STAY.

Mkamzee is co-founder of the boutique film company 8278A Film Studio. The last few years have been spent with a focus of learning the ropes behind the scenes, and she is delighted and honoured to return to her performance roots in a film as important as Lusala- with a Cast, Crew and Director who embody the warmth and passion that matches this seminal film.

Alan Oyugi (Uncle Onesmus)

Alan Oyugi is a Kenyan actor who has featured in several local and international productions. His passion for acting started in school and he later honed his skills on stage at the Phoenix Players Theater Group in Nairobi. He has featured in Kenyan television series such as LIES THAT BIND (2012) and BLOCK D (2014) as well as several local feature films like REMEMBERING LAWI (2015) and THE TENNANT (2015) among many others.



His talents do not lie in acting only. He has also directed the highly acclaimed Spielworks Media and MNET TV production “Jane and Abel” and several other feature films with Ebru TV Africa.

Currently Alan Oyugi produces documentaries based on environmental and human interest stories, notably part for the series GIVING NATURE A VOICE in conjunction with the Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media Communications, where he has produced the film PLASTICS ARE FOREVER (2017) and, MURKY TIDES (2018) that deal with matters pollution.

He is also a fine artist who paints, draws and makes metal sculptures.

Alyce Wangari (Joma)

Alyce Wangari is a recent graduate of Multimedia University of Kenya with a degree in Film Production.

During her time in school, she was actively involved in writing, directing, shooting, and editing a number of films. One such student film, BEAUTY WITH BRAINS was nominated in the Best Student Film category in the Coast Film Festival in 2015.



In 2016, PARTY HATS a short film which marked Alyce's directing debut, participated in the first edition of Machakos Film festival. Alyce first acting role was in a high school play. In university, she embarked on her acting career through playing numerous roles in student films.

Alyce is now working as a photographer and actively seeks out acting opportunities. She is exploring new story telling avenues through social media while taking advantage of every chance to learn more about film.

Stycie Waweru (Bakhita)

My name is Stycie Waweru and I am twelve years old. My friends call me Supa Stycie. I had just turned ten when I played the lead in the film SUPA MODO. The movie was the official Kenya's submission to the Oscars 2019 for the 'Best Foreign Language Film'. It had its world premiere at the 68th Berlin International Film Festival in the category "Generations".



During the production, I had to shave all my hair to portray the terminally ill 'Jo' in the film. I have featured in other major films like LUSALA and JINN, the former a feature film and the latter a short film. The two movies are expected to premiere in mid this year.

I am also a talented voice over actor and my voice has been featured in different projects. One of them is voicing the main character SEMA in the SEMA KUKUA learning products for children. SEMA is Africa's first super heroine character on a mission to help millions of children acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills and begin a magical, life-long, learning journey.

I am also a TV host and am currently hosting NTV's GENERATION NEXT on Saturdays. My future dream is to professionalize my acting career and possibly one day see myself in Hollywood.

THE PROJECT



Following the success of feature film SOUL BOY, ONE FINE DAY FILMS and Kenyan-based production company GINGER INK partnered with DW AKADEMIE to design a two-module training initiative: ONE FINE DAY FILM Workshops.

The first module, a classroom-like "mini film school", deepens and expands the skill set and cinematic language of already practicing African filmmakers. It widens cinematic perspectives, exposure and vocabulary.

Treasuring African Stories and wanting to enable talented filmmakers from the continent to reach a larger amount of viewers is what ONE FINE DAY FILMS are working for.

In 2012, the second feature film to come out of the ONE FINE DAY FILM Workshops, NAIROBI HALF LIFE by Tosh Gitonga, was the first ever Kenyan entry to the Oscars. In 2018 KATI KATI had also been selected to compete within the Oscars Best Foreign Language Film Award category.

THE PARTNERS



LUSALA is the result of a joint training initiative by ONE FINE DAY FILMS, DW AKADEMIE and GINGER INK FILMS AFRICA.

The production of LUSALA has kindly been supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ), the Goehde Foundation and ARRI Media.

CAST

Lusala BRIAN OGOLA
Bakhita STYCIE WAWERU
Joma ALYCE WANGARI
Beatrice MKAMZEE MWATELA
Onesmus ALAN OYUGI

CREW

Directed by MUGAMBI NTHIGA

Original Screenplay by SILAS MIAMI
WANJERI GAKURU
OPRAH OYUGI

Based on a Story by MUTHONI GARLAND

Produced by SARIKA HEMI LAKHANI
SIOBHAIN "GINGER" WILSON
TOM TYKWER
MARIE STEINMANN-TYKWER
GUY WILSON

Cinematography by EMMA NZIOKA

Production Design by NATASHA KHANYOLA

Edited by KEVIN WANG'OMBE

Costume by ESTHER WANJIKU GICHERU

Make-up by NJERI E. GATHERU

Original Music by ERIC WAINAINA, RUSHAB NADHA &
MBOGUA MBUGUA MBUGUA



TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Format	2.8K Anamorphic
Ratio	Cinemascope
Sound	5.1 Surround
Running Time	61 minutes 20 seconds
Country of origin	Kenya, Germany
Date of Production	2019

CONTACTS

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