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Felicite (Gomis, 2017): Senegal

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Felicite, a new film written and directed by Alain Gomis, set in Senegal in modern time, paints a portrait of a community through the trials and tribulations of a full-figured female singer, Felicite, played convincngly by VÃ©ro Tshanda Beya. The film received funding from the World Cinema Fund and participated in the Venice Final Cut Program.

Felicite opens with low-key lighting, handheld camera work providing a cinema verite feel characters breaking the fourth wall inviting the viewer into their world.Celine Bozon is credited as the Director of Photography. Slowly, the scene reveals a night club and a Singing begins. Drinking ensues. Mayhem rears its face as the nightclub erupts with brawling instigated by a massive male, Tabu (Papi Mpaka).

When not clubbing, Tabu is a handy man, selling and servicing Feliciteâ??s newly purchased second-hand refrigerator in side Feliciteâ??s sparsely furnished flat. Oumar Sall (le grand) is the filmâ??s Production Designer.

Vera Tshanda Beya, above, as lead character, Felicite, is on a mission in Alain Gomis new meserizi
Felicite. (Photo credit: Andolfi)

In addition, the culture depicted has an undercurrent and Gomis stunningly reveals it in the form of religious zealousness, classically trained musicians and singers rivaling any found on the planet. Interestingly, Gomis juxtaposes diagetic and non-diagetic music in convincing fashion melding the worlds into one. The KasaÃ¯ Allstars are credited with the music. Jean-Pierre Laforce and Fred Meert are responsible for the Sound Design. And, Benoit De Clerck crafted the filmâ??s sound.

Outside the streets are strewn with trash, scooters dominate the dirt thoroughfares as the towns inhabitants navigate the market area. Not exactly Shangri La. In many respects quite the opposite. Yet, the community has its redeeming virtues and long-standing cultural nomes often found missing in larger, modernized communities..

However, tragedy is quickly introduced as Feliciteâ??s son has been involved in a motor scooter accident. Frantically, Felicite finds her son, discovers he needs medicine and an operation she canâ??t afford. The love a mother has for a child radiates as Felicite reaches out to those closest to her to generate the monies necessary for the operation. But, itâ??s not enough. Felicite is not a woman who takes no for an answer. She manages to get the necessary funds. Unfortunately, the hospital proceeded with an amputation drawing laughter from a patron seated directly behind me.

Vero Tshanda Beya, left, and Papi Mpaka merge and meld in as Felicite and Tabu inAlain Gomisâ?
film, Felicite. (Photo credit: Andolfi)

While, I didnâ??t find a mother discovering her son had an amputation humorous, I did find a warmth in Feliciteâ??s acceptance of her evolved condition after her experience and seeing Tabu bring her son out of despair following his amputation. At her most basic essence, Felicite is a deeply committed woman in a community that values itself, its culture and one another.

Felicite is an artistic delight with surreal mise-en-scen and heartfelt emotions. While, the film delves into the religious aspect too deeply for comfort, Gomis makes his point â?? spirituality is the driving force behind the community. With singer/mother Felicite, Gomis embodies the community in a human form â?? imperfect and spirited.

And, while the film could have been made in 65 minutes, Gomez chose to expand the run time to 123 minutes. In doing so, he takes the film to a new level a higher dimension representative of the driving force behind this fictionalized Senegal community. Highly recommended!

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