

= Drum (2004 film) =

Drum is a 2004 film based on the life of South African investigative journalist Henry Nxumalo , who worked for the popular Drum magazine , called " the first black lifestyle magazine in Africa . " It was director Zola Maseko 's first film and deals with the issues of apartheid and the forced removal of residents from Sophiatown . The film was originally to be a six @-@ part television series called Sophiatown Short Stories , though Maseko could not get the funding . The lead roles of Henry Nxumalo and Drum main photographer Jürgen Schadeberg were played by American actors Taye Diggs and Gabriel Mann , while most of the rest of the cast were South African actors .

The film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2004 , and proceeded to do the rounds of international film festivals before going on general release in South Africa in July 2006 . It was released in Europe , but failed to get a distributor for the USA where it went straight to DVD .

The film was generally well received critically . Most of the negative reviews were based on the quality of Maseko 's directing and Jason Filardi 's screenwriting . It was awarded Best South African Film at the Durban International Film Festival , and director Maseko gained the top prize at the Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO) .

= = Plot = =

The story is based on real events and real people and is set in the mid @-@ 1950s freehold township of Sophiatown , Johannesburg ? one of the few areas in South Africa where blacks could own property and drink alcoholic beverages . Drum begins with the central character , sportswriter Henry Nxumalo , reporting on a boxing match with Nelson Mandela . Nxumalo leaves his wife Florence at home while going out into his community 's night life and has an affair with a female singer . He works for Drum magazine , which was " the first black lifestyle magazine in Africa . " The magazine was financed by whites and had a multiracial staff ; it was popular among the black community . Drum 's British editor , Jim Bailey (Jason Flemyng) , asks Nxumalo to write on the township crime scene , and Nxumalo , while at first unwilling , finally agrees . While on the job , he encounters Slim (Zola) , a gang leader , that he had previously met in illegal township drinking places , and witnesses him kill a man in Sophiatown .

Initially Nxumalo stays away from political articles , but eventually writes about more than entertainment after his wife and Mandela encourage him . When a young man goes missing at a Boer farm and is feared enslaved , Nxumalo decides to investigate undercover . He gets employment as a labourer at the farm , where he is treated like a slave and nearly killed . He becomes a celebrity when his story is published , further reinforced by getting himself in prison and reporting about its conditions . Nxumalo decides that his destiny is to be a muckracker and , with the help of the German photographer Jürgen Schadeberg (Gabriel Mann) , ventures on more risky investigations .

Nxumalo frequently fights the racism and apartheid that is beginning to creep into his hometown . He tries to tackle stories important to his society 's well @-@ being . However , he is no match to the plan to evict residents and ultimately destroy Sophiatown . Constantly harassed by the government , at the end of the film he is stabbed to death . The attacker has never been identified .

= = Cast = =

American actor Taye Diggs played the lead role of investigative journalist Henry Nxumalo , with fellow American actor Gabriel Mann as his photographer Jürgen Schadeberg , and South African Moshidi Motshegwa as his wife , Florence Nxumalo . The South African short @-@ story author , Can Themba , who also worked with Nxumalo at Drum magazine , was played by the little @-@ known South African actor , Tumisho Masha . Apart from the British actor Jason Flemyng who took the part of Jim Bailey , the ex @-@ R.A.F. pilot who owned Drum , the rest of the parts were taken by South African actors , the best known being Zola (credited as Bonginkosi Dlamini) playing the

part of Slim , the Sophiatown gang leader .

Notable people portrayed in the film include Nelson Mandela , played by Lindane Nkosi ; jazz columnist Todd Matshikiza played by Fezile Mpela ; and the writer Casey Motsisi played by Thapelo Mokoena .

Aptly portraying the music of the day , (Manhattan Brothers) was a fresh new outfit , formally approved by Miriam Makeba and Joe Mogotsi , the Junior Manhattan Brothers from Ladysmith , Kwa Zulu Natal .

= = Production = =

Drum is Zola Maseko 's first feature film . He originally wanted to tell Sophiatown 's story in a six @-@ part television series called Sophiatown Short Stories . Unsuccessful in convincing the South African Television Company to pursue such a series , he decided to change the medium to that of film . He secured a large amount of his funding by convincing Taye Diggs to fill the lead role .

American screenwriter Jason Filardi was asked to write the script by production company Armada and subsequently " fell in love " with Drum 's plotline . In preparation for this task , he read books on Nxumalo and the history of South Africa , and stayed for a month in Johannesburg . Filardi said that his work on the film was his fondest experience with the medium . Filming began in May 2004 and lasted for six weeks . On 29 May , producer Dumisani Dlamini died after being shot in the head at his home in Johannesburg .

The soundtrack was written by Terence Blanchard and Cédric Gradus Samson . Much of it is a jazz score , which has been called " strong " . This is a reflection of the music that was popular during the movie 's place and time .

= = Release = =

Drum premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival on 10 September 2004 . It was the lead film in the festival 's Spotlight on South Africa program . The Sundance Film Festival picked up the film , for its US premiere in January 2005 , as did the Cannes Film Festival in May . On 21 June , Drum was screened at the Boston International Film Festival during its first session . The film opened the 2005 Filmfest München on 25 June .

For his work with Drum , Maseko received the top prize at FESPACO , the Golden Stallion of Yennenga , in addition to a cash prize of 10 million CFA francs (US \$ 20 @,@ 000) at its closing ceremony in March 2005 . He was the first South African to do such . In addition , Drum is only the second English language film to have won the Golden Stallion at FESPACO , the first being Kwaw Ansah 's Heritage Africa in 1989 .

The film premièred in South Africa at the 26th Durban International Film Festival (DIFF) on 17 July 2005 where it won the Best South African Film Award . It was released at 29 South African movie theatres on 22 July . Events to help promote the film included toyi @-@ toyi dances in various South African market places , and the production crew holding a contest in which South African schoolchildren would have to research a lost community and the winners would get to meet the actors .

Outside film festivals , the first release in the USA was at the Olde Mistick Village theater in Filardi 's hometown of Mystic , Connecticut , on 22 December 2006 . Despite wide releases in Europe , Drum did not obtain one in the USA , mostly due to a failure to find distributors . Instead , it went straight to DVD .

= = Reception = =

Drum was mostly met with favorable reviews . Review aggregate website Rotten Tomatoes reported that 86 % percent of seven critics gave the film positive write @-@ ups , a rating that it considered " Fresh " .

Sura Wood of The Hollywood Reporter called it " an intelligent , moving film steeped in an authentic

sense of time and place . " Her sentiments were echoed by Joe Leydon of Variety , who thought Drum was " an intelligent and affecting take on political radicalization in 1950s Johannesburg . " According to Film Threat 's Jeremy Matthews , Drum was " a solid work of classical storytelling . " He observed that it was " heartbreaking in its portrayal of Johannesburg at a time when its rulers had convinced many people that whites were born to command and blacks were born to obey and serve . "

Critic David Nussair gave the film 3 out of 4 stars and praised Diggs as " fantastic " . The supporting actors also delivered " solid " performances . He believed that the film was anything but superfluous , and it moved at a fast pace . While the screenplay was predictable , Maseko 's " steady " direction " ensure [d] Drum 's place among better @-@ than @-@ average true @-@ life tales . " The Arizona Republic disagreed with Nussair 's first point , not thinking Diggs looked like a South African . It called the film " a well @-@ meaning but static look at apartheid in the 1950s . "

Shadows on the Wall 's Rich Kline noted that the storyline was " compelling and eye @-@ opening " and praised the actors as " excellent " and " committed to getting the truth out . " He was impressed with the " lively and fascinating sense of local culture " that dominated the film . Kline , who gave the film 3 out of 5 stars , was mainly concerned with the film 's " rather clumsy " direction and screenwriting . Maseko directed with " energy and verve , " though his " struggles to capture the human drama " led to the impression that Drum was " a clunky TV movie , with awkward camera angles , wonky editing and clumsy sound recording . " Filardi was guilty of a dialogue which " echoes with cliches , while contrived plotting put characters into situations that may be true , but they feel corny and movie @-@ like . " Kline also criticised the wide variety of political issues that characterised the film , though added that " maybe this helps us begin to understand what life must have been like under such an oppressive government . "

One of the most critical reviews was by Francesca Dinglasan of Boxoffice Magazine . Dinglasan , who gave Drum 2 @.@ 5 out of 5 stars , was unimpressed by the " unoriginal plotting techniques to convey the story of an investigative journalist attempting to expose racial injustices in a society coming to grips with the newly introduced edicts of apartheid . " Although Diggs 's acting was " engaging " , according to her the film " depends on just a few too many big @-@ screen cliches and predictable plot turns . " The " richly designed sets and costumes " were not able to overcome the less @-@ than @-@ satisfactory " Drum .