

Written by Ernest Kanjo

Monday, 13 September 2010 21:17 -



Titus Banyoh, Belgium-based Cameroonian filmmaker

When he left Cameroon seven years ago, little did Titus' peers know the talented journalist was going to find a new career in filmmaking. After all, Batimu, as the fine broadcaster; formerly a staff of Yaounde's Magic FM radio outfit as fondly called, did not show any signs of peeping into the movie World. But when in 2005, posters of the famous Berlin Icon with the name Titus Banyoh as author of the story flooded Cameroon streets, it began to ring in people's minds that the young communicator had something up his sleeves. Indeed, Shades, his second production launched a couple of weeks ago in Belgium's metropolitan Antwerp came to confirm the journalist cum filmmaker's true ambitions - to be a guru in the seventh art. Perhaps, his forthcoming projects will seal the deal for the Cameroonian-born Belgian resident, who spent close to half a decade in Germany. Titus, who also pioneered on of Yaounde's earliest TV stations, Ariane TV, formerly RTN, spoke to Tiptopstars editor on the line to Antwerp, following the release of Shades. Here are excerpts of the chat

Ernest Kanjo (EK) : *Why Shades?*

Titus Banyoh (TB) : The story in the in the movie actually justifies the title.

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EK: *What does the movie talk about?*

TB: The movie talks about life in Europe and cuts across what happens in some people's lives out here and any other place in the world.

EK: *In what category would we have SHADES?*

TB : **Shades** is a love story.

EK: *Who is the author of the story?*

TB: (Laughs) Titus Banyoh is the author. Well, I conceived the story and did the Screenplay as well.

EK: *What inspired the story?*

TB : Events around have been quite inspiring. Well after the launch of the movie, I was surprised when someone told me that it was a true life story. Honestly, I took some happenings around me and crafted a story with my personal imagination.

EK : *How long did it take to produce SHADES?*

TB : From the script to the shooting, it took us a year.

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EK : With what means - financial, material and human resources did you produce the movie?

TB : I belong to an NGO known as Great Bridge International. We put together resources be it financial, material or human to produce SHADES. It may interest you to know that GBI, has as one of its objectives promoting the Cameroonian movie industry at home and abroad.

EK : What were the difficulties encountered during its production?

TB : The difficulties encountered during the production of the movie may not be too different from what other young aspiring groups face. But I think the main problem is having the right people to do the right things at the right time. You see, it is difficult to convince people to play certain roles that have to do with intimacy. Secondly, the problem of time - one is bound to work on the work schedules of the actors and actresses because since they do other things. On weekends, they have to do shopping and many other things.

EK: *What is particular about the movie?*

TB: It is the first of its kind by Cameroonians in Belgium.

EK : *What assistance did you get in producing SHADES and from who?*

TB: SHADES is a Great Bridge International Production and all the financial as well as human resources came from the said organization. This was supposed to be an eye opener project. I presume with what people have seen, we may be lucky to have the Business class coming in to produce.

EK : *Who are the actors featuring in the movie?*

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TB : In SHADES we have Isidore Bang, Cassandra Kinde Boja, Loveling Afong (L2Loko), Achu Loveline, Catherine Lum , Terence Sakwe and of course myself Titus Banyoh.

EK : *How would you appreciate their performance?*

TB : I'm proud of them. Apart from myself, any other person was doing it for the first time. And their performance for a start is worthy of praise.

EK: *When was the movie launched?*

TB: The movie was launched last June 5, this year in Antwerp, Belgium.

EK : What was the feedback from the Cameroonian community in Antwerp?

TB : Positive! Very positive! In fact, before we started, there were discouraging talks around but after the movie was watched, many walked up to me and my actors to say it was a job well done.

EK: *How far does SHADES circulate?*

TB: I would begin by saying that you on the spot in Cameroon have to help us circulate the movie. As at now I think we are still working out strategies but it is on the market though.

EK: *Any promotional activities so far?*

TB: Well, we intend to launch it in Cameroon everything being equal and we are looking for

partners to this effect.

EK: *Any plans to have it launched in Africa?*

TB: Yes of Course, it is an African movie so it has to be launched in Africa

EK: Plans to have it screened in cinema halls?

TB: SHADES is a movie like others, so it has to follow the same trend like other movies.

FACT FILE FOR SHADES

- Story/Screenplay - **Titus Banyoh**

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- Location - **Antwerp, Belgium**
- Editor - **Ndamnsa Chepnjie**
- D.O.P - **Ndamnsa Chepnjie**
- Camera Operator - **Ndamnsa Chepnjie and Titus Banyoh**
- Producer - **Ngoh Dong Isidore Bang and Akaya George**
- Director - **Titus Banyoh**

ABOUT BANYOH THE FILMMAKER

EK: *What role do you play in filmmaking?*

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TB: I'm a writer, director, actor, producer and I even operate the camera.

EK: *How long have you been in filmmaking?*

TB: Well, I nursed the idea since 2005 which let me to the writing and co-producing Berlin Icon, my first script ever. I was the Assistant director in Berlin Icon as well.

EK: *What is your training in the aspect of filmmaking in which you are involved?*

TB: I have no formal training to be honest with you. But with skills in the production of TV Commercials for which I have a diploma, I can deliver the goods. TV commercials and film production are almost the same since because an advert has a cast, a camera crew, etc as well. However, I have done some online courses in film directing. Also, talents are born and I think from what people say, I can only go to school just to have the certificates.

EK: *How many film projects have you carried out?*

TB: So far, two, from my scripts have been published. **Berlin Icon** and now **Shades**. I have more in my drawer pending production and release (laughs).

EK: *How successful have they been?*

TB: Talking about success here, one may be tempted to start thinking about finances. But I will evaluate success here in terms of how ready we are to continue. To this, I would say without any doubt that we are determined to move ahead. Ernest, I think we would come to the limelight if the Government of Cameroon is ready to assist the industry and encourage those who are willing to promote CFI.

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EK: *How easy or difficult is it, as an African to do films in Europe?*

TB: Europe has its own laws which one is obliged to respect. The first difficulty even lies on us the Africans.

EK: *How much of Africa and Cameroon can one observe in your film projects?*

TB: In **Shades** you would find some pidgin expressions which we all agree, is a lingua franca in Cameroon.

EK : *Is filmmaking lucrative for an African like you in Europe?*

TB: It can only become lucrative if people buy the movies. Well, our first market is Africa and Africans in the diaspora.

EK :

EK : *Who are some of the big names you have worked with?*

TB : We have not really worked with any big names as such, but we do contact some people for advice. It may sound awkward, but I'm my own big name and the sky is my limit, God being my helper.

EK : *What are your ambitions?*

TB: To become a guru in film making

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EK: *What are your future projects?*

TB: Right now, I just finished writing a script which will be shot in no distant time from.

EK: *Thanks for talking to TIPTOPSTARS.*

TB: It was a pleasure Ernest. Do come any other time.