

Written by Ernest Kanjo

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*Specialization and professionalization! These are the watch words that have guided the vision of the Cameroon Film Industry, CFI, the 2008-created structure that has been overseeing operations in the industry at least since then. In frantic efforts not to lag behind at a time evolution is hyper rapid, a good number of filmmakers have stock to these and are working hard towards achieving this vision. One of them is Buea-based Itambi Delphine. The female filmmaker who is a graduate of Chemistry from the University of Buea became more popular when she did **A Woman's World** whose official release into the market is just happening this year. "Ernest, I'm serious about what I'm doing and won't like to do a job that is not clean," she had told me, then editor of **Among Youths** magazine. It is this quest to perfect her work that inspired Itambi to seek further knowledge in filmmaking. This move first took the young filmmaker to Tanzania, then later, to a more intense programme at **the New York Film Academy, Abu Dhabi campus** from where she just rounded off with a certificate in Directing. Now back to Cameroon, the now certified female film director spoke with **TIPTOPSTARS***

Editor from the line to Buea. Amongst other things, Itambi told us she is currently post-producing a second film she shot before taking off for Abu Dhabi for the three-month course. Excerpts of the interview with Ernest Kanjo!

Ernest Kanjo (EK): Who sponsored you for the New York Film Academy course?

□ **Itambi Delphine (ID):** It was self-sponsored with the support of my family that has always believed in me. I thank God for them.

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EK: What exactly did you study?

ID: Generally speaking, I studied filmmaking. To explain further, when you study filmmaking in NYFA, you do courses in screenwriting, Camera Operation, Video Editing, Sound Recording, lighting and directing. Directing is the focus of the entire course. That way, you write, shoot, direct and edit all the student films you have to do and also work as camera operator, gaffer, script supervisor in your course mates' project interchangeably. You are criticized on your own works as a director by the directing instructor.

EK: Would you say you now have a completely different vision vis-a-vis film making?

ID: I do have an ultimately different angle from where I see movie making after the training. I've learned to appreciate the art more and see its uniqueness from other forms of arts. I've also learned the value of time in production and most especially discovered other hidden talents that were in-born in me as much as taken those discovered earlier to yet another level with the help of professional instructors.

EK: What is your specialty in the domain now?

ID: My specialty is directing. I've been trained in all the other aspects just to make me the best director that I can be and to be a completely independent filmmaker.

EK: How can what you learned help to change the film landscape in Cameroon?

ID: I want to believe the film industry in Cameroon starts changing from the moment individuals challenge themselves to unimaginable tasks. It could start with research online and later putting into practice what they've researched on. In my case, I'll still do what I have always done. Some people say I never give up. That's right, but this time I'll be doing it in a real professional manner. I just want to believe others will learn from my example that of the other great guys around.

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EK: How would you transfer the knowledge you got from the course to Cameroon - seminars, workshops, etc, etc?

ID: First, I made a promise to myself to work in chosen projects in some of the domains of filmmaking I studied. I'll randomly choose three projects and in one of them write the script, in another, direct, and in the third, do the editing. I'll do this free of charge. These projects could be short films, feature films or music videos. It all depends on how convincing the project would be. As regards workshops, I'm planning to organize one in September hopefully.

EK: How was the experience, working with filmmakers from other countries?



ID: Working with filmmakers from other countries is particularly fulfilling. It even gets more interesting when you are the only African in the group, as was the case with me at that moment. I had another dark skinned companion from Iraq. It was their first time the school was receiving a Cameroonian and they were particularly interested in me. I got to learn a lot from all of the students. It was always a great bond in and out of classroom. I had the opportunity to learn how to be accurate and precise. With my Abu Dhabi course mates, I learned that before film school, I was literally a shallow dreamer. That helped raised my vision beyond limits. Generally, with them, I learned a kind of love I'd never known before in the film community.

EK: What impression did they have about you upon departure?

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ID: Upon my departure, the one thing I know they will always remember me for is that I was that girl who knew she could have anything. I was different from them, thank God, from where I was coming, but I did everything to cope with that. I was studying in an Arab country with thousands of rules and I had to break a few in order to complete my course. My directing instructor Norman Schwartz told us that it was normal for filmmakers to do that. If you believe in something then go for it. If a location had no lights and generator for instance, they would find me for alternatives. They thought I was bold and brave and would fearlessly face the administration and present any problem. And above all, they thought I make a great director, reason why most of my cast out there insisted on coming to Cameroon and working in my feature projects. Saying goodbye was hard. We tried to hold back tears but realized we were rather shedding them profusely. We however promised to keep in touch as we parted to start facing our new world as professional filmmakers.

EK: *Apart from studies, did you have other contacts with film makers/marketers/actors, etc?*

ID: Yes I did! I worked in the filmmakers department at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival (ADFF) in October 2011. I was privileged to be among the few selected to do voluntary services there. Those who worked in this department had their CVs Submitted to the festival programmers and 10 people were chosen to receive all the filmmakers around the world. So all filmmakers coming to the festival were received on our desk where they got their festival badges, bags and invitations to the opening and closing night. Through this, I met so many great directors, producers and actors around the world. Some, I got to talk with briefly. That had been my ultimate goal when I applied to do the volunteer service. At the end, I was granted a certificate, recognized as having worked in that edition of the festival. Thanks to that and other works, I've been made the Cameroon manager of yet another up-coming international film festival known as Cine Phone International Film Festival, CIFF.

EK: *What was your class project all about?*

ID: Each student was expected to write, shoot, direct and edit three short films in three months and work on twelve others as camera operator, boom operator, gaffer, or script supervisor. So overall, you worked in 15 short films in three months. Now, do your math. How intensive can one get again? First, we did a continuity project, called it silent movie, one to three minutes in length.

