

Written by Ernest Kanjo

Tuesday, 18 September 2012 07:24 - Last Updated Thursday, 20 September 2012 13:24

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{/jb_redbox} {jb_greenbox} *If there is one thing that is certain, it is the fact that the film industry in Cameroon is alive. Described by observers as embryonic, the industry grows from lips and bounds, defying all odds. Every blessed day, movie shooting crews are spotted on the country's numerous locations. Editing studios are increasingly being charged with assignments from impatient producers who want their products thrown out for public consumption. Movie premieres are fast becoming desirable social rendezvous in the country.*

{/jb_greenbox} {jb_redbox} *Even when some of the movies shot and edited delay in the drawers, many others get exposed and win prizes at renowned international film festivals. Unfortunately, this progress almost goes unnoticed by the Cameroonian media. Very little of it is reported by the newspapers, television and radio to the utter dissatisfaction of the people who make the sector tick. This seemingly deaf-ear attitude of the fourth estate to the detriment of a sector that could possibly be the biggest employer after government has not left concerned Cameroonians indifferent.*

{/jb_redbox} {jb_bluebox} *Through tireless efforts, some initiatives have emerged not only to pay tribute to film makers, but also to promote their works in a bid to place Cameroon on the world stage. One of such initiatives is Cam Movies, a frontline promoter of the film industry in Cameroon. For some time now, the entire industry has rallied around this initiative and every stakeholder seems to find their gold here.*

{/jb_bluebox} {jb_yellowbox} *The project which uses the magic of ICT to put Cameroonian film makers and their works in the limelight has indisputably become a leading initiative in the promotion of the fast-developing Cameroonian film industry. But who are behind this golden effort? We traced out its founder and the young and dynamic Cameroonian accepted to talk to us. Fred Kenyati is based in South Africa but overflies the continent for job imperatives. He spoke to TIPTOPSTARS' Editor Ernest Kanjo. Excerpts!*

CAM MOVIES FOUNDER SPEAKS OUT!

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Ernest Kanjo (EK): Hello Fred! Thanks for accepting to talk to us. How are you today?

Fred Kenyati (FK): I'm ok, thank you!

EK: We here you are the brain behind Cam Movies...

FK: That's correct Ernest.

{jb_brown} "Cam Movies was born in South Africa, Cam Movies fills the gap created by poor media coverage of film issues" {/jb_brown}

"Our Top10, Top20 are only encouragement-intended"

EK: But why did you stay in oblivion all this while – your fans had been anxiously waiting to know who was behind the curtains...

FK: Hahaha... that, I know so well, but I opted to stay anonymous because I care more about what I do and not whether people know me.

EK: That's a good display of humility there Fred...

FK: Well, if you say so Ernest.

EK: Now, tell us, what is Cam Movies all about?

FK: Cam Movies is all about promoting the Cameroonian film industry, from the movies to the people who make them and the faces they project. Cam Movie is also about providing constructive criticism on films and their makers in a bid to encourage good practice in the industry. We do that by way of advertising events, interviewing actors, directors, and producers and publishing monthly classifications. This is done via social network forums, especially facebook.

EK: How did this initiative come about?

FK: Cam Movies was created in Cape Town, South Africa by Fred Keyanti. I was later joined by Tatah Gwendoline, a lecturer at the University of the Western Cape, Chia Standley Kisuh of Chikista Film Productions and Olga Chungu, a Zambian actress and singer. We recently co-opted Nkanya Kwai the producer of The African Guest as content Editor.

EK: What inspired the project?

FK: We realized that there were so many talented Cameroonians in the film making who go unnoticed because of the minimal media coverage of the sector. We then we decided to use the available social media forums such as facebook, HI5 and google blog, to promote and unify our people and productions. Since its creation, Cam Movies has reached out to Cameroonians in Belgium, Holland, China, Germany, USA, Ghana, Nigeria, Canada, South Africa, Zimbabwe you

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name them. Some film makers only get to know others through our monthly celebrity Top10 and Top20 classifications.

EK: For how long has the project been running?{/jb_brown}“Cam Movies film critic movie awards soon”{/jb_brown}

“Cam Movies training academy eminent”

“Cam Movies hang-out party to award certificates to Top20 stars”

FK: Cam Movies has been on since 2010, but our activities intensified after our Executive Producer Gwendoline Tatah visited Cameroon in early 2011 and reported back to us how Cameroon was boiling with talented young people in film making. She actually met many of these enthusiasts. I then decided to fly down some actors from the US so that we can explore this potential. In that regard we flew down Mairo Sanda and Pridine Fru and with some home-based artists, we shot Trouble Kingdom. After that project I returned to South Africa richer in information to kick-start the CFI promotion process.

EK: What exactly do you guys do?

FK: We do in-depth research into the professional lives of film makers living both in Cameroon and abroad. We gather information about them and their works. We browse youtube to watch their movies and be able to proceed with the classification. We promote even those who are not on our Top20 list. The list is not permanent. When you get to our Top20 list, it does not mean you will stay there forever. Rather, it simply means while we are research on others, you remain the best.

EK: What is the rationale behind this monthly classification?□□□□□□□□

FK: We seek to make those who are not on the classification work harder and those in inferior positions work even harder to climb to the top. Mark you inferior here is not used in negative terms. Our classifications are a way of instilling confidence amongst our film makers and make them strife for the best and refuse to give up, even when the working environment is at times hazardous. We also intend to let our film makers know that there are people out there who are watching them and appreciating their works and willing to help them achieve their goal.

EK: Tell us more about this research aptitude of Cam Movies

FK: I agree with you that we are very research focused. We use every means available to get information about who is who in the Cameroon film industry. This includes general google search with key words such as Cameroon Films, Cameroon Movies, Cameroon actors, and names of artist being searched. Just to let you know without any flattery that Tiptopstars is our number one research stop point. Apart from internet search, we also work with directors, DOPs, producers and the artists who feed us with information. Film makers such as Akim Macauley, Allenne Menget, Neba Lawrence, Agbor Gilbert, Agbor Steve, Mairo Sanda, Simon Timah, Eric Ntang, Crystal Beauty, Samson Tarh, Aurelien Henry Obama, Kamwah Anthony, Taka Tani, Trina Takoh and Inorie Fotso have been very resourceful in providing Cam Movies with information about film makers and their works.

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EK: What are some of the difficulties faced by the project so far and how do you intend to deal with these?

FK: The difficulties we are facing pertain to the fact that some artists are not users of facebook and other social media. As a result, most of their works go unnoticed. Secondly, most artists are slow in responding to our requests for information. Thirdly, we have difficulty in knowing every film maker. To overcome these problems, we are intending to recruit Cam Movies Volunteers otherwise called CMVs this November in three places, Bamenda, Buea and Yaounde. These volunteers will be our information focal points, regarding any film activities happening in their respective regions. When need be, we will cover their cost of attending premieres, parties, shootings taking place out of their city and in returned, they will furnished us with still photos and short video clips of the events. We plan to equip them with digital cameras with HD video recording for this purpose. We will also appoint reps in all countries we have identified in the Diaspora where Cameroonians are producing films.

EK: Just where do you expect to get Cam Movies to? □□□□□□□□

FK: Cam Movies intends to grow with CFI. We look forward to having a Cam Movies Film Critic Award call it CMFCA. We are envisaging a Cam Movies Film Training Academy, CMFTA in Cameroon as soon as we have all the required partners. We intend to open a Cam Movies Film Charity through which we will sponsor or let me say produce good scripts written by less privilege who are unable to find cash or producers. . There is just a lot and we will be revealing more as things unfold.

EK: We hear Cam Movies has some coming events in the pipeline. Tell us more about this...

FK: The Cam Movies Hang Out party is aimed at getting all interested film makers on the table and while we are having a nice time together, we shall brainstorm on how to work together and how Cam Movies can better assist film makers. We will be giving out certificates to those who have stayed on top of Cam Movies monthly Classification with other surprise prizes. During this event, we also intend to brainstorm on a common marketing strategy and how movies made in Cameroon can be advertised in Diaspora made movies, including promoters on premiere backdrops and vice versa, etc. This event will be held at the Hotel Residence Carlos in Buea whose management I must say has shown a huge interest in what film makers in Cameroon are doing. I must use this opportunity to salute their efforts in promoting this young baby. If there are any changes we will notify the public. We will also introduce our reps on that day.

EK: Fred, let's leave it here for now. We'll be back with you. Thanks for enlightening our readers on the Cam Movies vision.

FK: It's been my pleasure Ernest. I applaud Tiptopstars for the great work you guys have been doing. Keep the flames burning!

{jb_bluebox} **EDITOR'S NOTE**

In Part II of this interview, we shall discover the man Fred Kenyati whom some of you already

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know is an artist par excellence. Where and how this brilliant Cameroonian was raised, what dragged him into film making, how he manages shuttles between his demanding professional schedule and the promotion of his beloved country's film sector are some of the salient things we will be revealing in the bio chat I had with Fred. Do stay with us as you have a fantastic reading pleasure.

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