

ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON VIDEO FILMS: BORDERLINE CINEMA?

BY
PANI NALOWA FOMINYEN
UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE 1 –CAMEROON
NALOWAFOMINYEN@YAHOO.COM
(+237) 694478450

PAPER OUTLINE

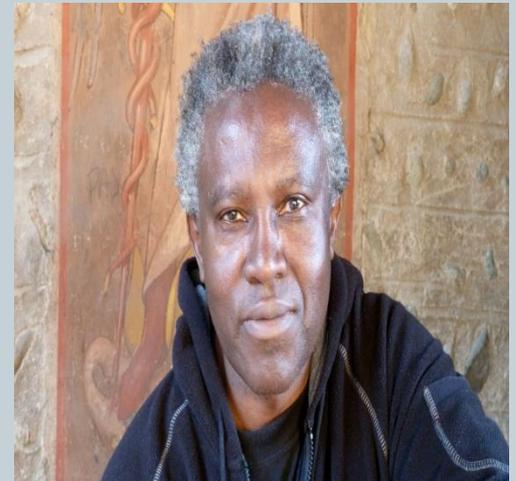


- Introduction
- Problem
- Some Literature & theoretical considerations
- Methodology & Data Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References

INTRODUCTION



- The Cameroonian Cinema sphere though prolific, over the years has been void of Anglophone Cameroonians. (AngloCams)
- It has been rife with renowned filmmakers from Francophone Cameroon.



Basseck Ba Khobio, Jean Pierre Bekolo, Jean Marie Teno
Image Courtesy: Google Images

- The Video Film boom brought AngloCams into the filmmaking scene.



Image Courtesy cam-movies.blogspot

- According to Cameroon Film Industry (CFI) association at least 20 films release in Cameroon per year since 2012



Image Courtesy Pani Fominyen

PROBLEM



- **Weak audience reception**
 - AngloCam audience alleges these video films do not represent them.
 - Some advance that AngloCam video films are ostensibly poor copies of Nollywood films
- **Not Cinematic enough**
 - Video films are considered an embarrassment by both the Cameroon film fraternity and viewers (Poor quality)
- **Consequently, No effective local market**

Motivation



- The interest in this paper was spurred by the high levels of production yet limited audience appeal with regards to AngloCam films.
- The expectations perceived from the audience seemed somewhat contradictory.
- The filmmakers base their creative decisions on assumptions and not experience nor skill.
- The probability that video films in spite of wonky productions could be the dawn of a different phase of Cameroonian Cinema.

Research Questions?



- Who is the target audience for AngloCam Films?
- Are AngloCam video films a medium of representation for the AngloCam Group?

Literature and Theoretical Considerations



- *Oliver Barlet (2000)* looked at the advancements of African film theorists and practitioners such as Souleymane Cisse, Ousmane Sembene as an attempt by African filmmakers to decolonize the thought of Africans through films. They propounded a concept of African cinema to be a cinema by Africans, for Africans on Africa.
- A concept boarding on claims of an authentic African Cinema which *Kenneth Harrows (2007)*, *Sarah Hamblin (2012)*, *David Murphy(2000)* do not quite agree with. Harrows points out that an African can not by themselves judge their authenticity; Murphy agreed the colonial representation of Africa was faulty but argued an authentic African cinema would be that which is void of western tenets of cinema and this he finds implausible in Third World cinema.



- On the other hand *Pierre Barrot (2009)* looks at the video film industry in Nigeria as Africa's revival and possible response to a definition of its cinema. That is, cost effective production and quick marketing and distribution.
- In Cameroon talk on films has been crowned by the lack of production funds and porous distribution networks *Jeremie Ngansop (1987)*, *Josiane Nganou (2012)*, *Edwige Yempmo (2010)*.
- With regards to Anglophones in film *Alexie Tcheuyap (2005)* advanced that a real Anglophone cinema was yet to be born. This is backed by the non-mention of AngloCam films or filmmaker in this publication comprising several essays by national and international scholars on Cinema and social discourse in Cameroon.



- *Ateh Paul (2010)* did a study on production techniques and enunciated lack of technical investment and film knowledge as the shortfall in film productions in Cameroon. His case study were primarily films done by AngloCams. He charged some of these discrepancies on the blind attempts to simulate foreign films.
- *Dieudonne Mballa Mballa (2014)* proffers on the other hand that Cameroonian cinema through benchmarking, could use the phenomenon of Nollywood to reinvent the film industry in Cameroon.
- Meanwhile *Layih Butake (2009)* assessed AngloCam drama and video films as a medium for the articulating of the groups' identity. She analysed some literary works and films *and* found the films to be a tool in the mediation of identity in the AngloCam group.

Theoretical Considerations



Representation Theory

- *Andy Wallis (2012)* asserts that “representation involves not only how identities are represented (or rather constructed) within the text but also how they are constructed in the processes of production and reception.”
- *Smith (2009)* affirms further that everything in the media is a representation – everything we see is being represented. He attests the selection process comprises of; the decision over *what is chosen* to be represented and what is rejected; the choices made when *organising* the representation; the options taken to *focus* the audience in a certain way.

WHO or
WHAT is
being
represented?

WHO has
created the
representati
on?

The theory of
representation in Media
Studies means thinking
about how a particular
person or group of people
are being presented to the
audience.

(Andy Wallis 2012)

HOW is the
representation
created?

WHY is the
representation
created in that
way?

WHAT is the
effect of the
representation?



METHODOLOGY



- **Observation**
 - AngloCam reaction to AngloCam films
 - Film practitioners‘ interaction
 - ✓ Film Screenings
 - ✓ Makeshift distribution centers
- **Interviews**
 - Informal and formal
 - ✓ Filmmakers
 - ✓ Audience
 - ✓ Critics
- **Film Analysis**

Data Summary

- **Issues of Representation in AngloCam films**

- The search for an identity: Who/what is represented in the films. AngloCam viewers feel the group is not well represented in films set in purely AngloCam settings.



Image Captured from the movie *Peace Offering* (2003)



Image Captured from the movie *Whispers* (2014)



Image Captured from the movie *Whispers* (2014)



- Culture arguments : Body language and expression as well as some verbal interjections are critiqued of ripping from foreign cultures.



Image courtesy of Pani Fominyen

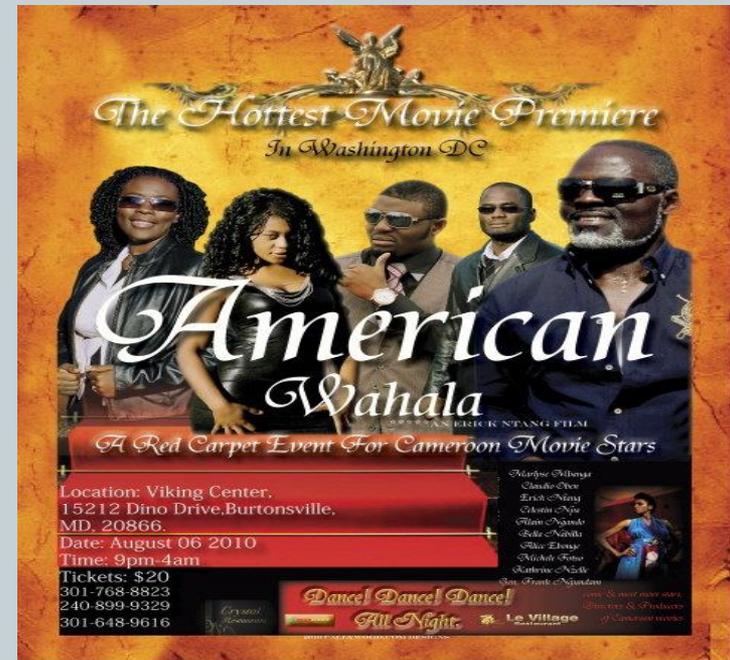


Image courtesy of cam-movies.blogspot

- **Issue of Quality & Content:**
- Viewers found some of the socio-economic presentations overly fictional and unrealistic. E.g. A vampire film set in Bamenda



Image 2: Captured from the movie *Black Vampire* (2008)

- Many have argued AngloCam video films due to the poor production quality.



FINDINGS

- The audience's perception of AngloCam video films is mostly based on hearsays.
- Audience's expectations is complex due to extensive foreign cinema grooming.
- The filmmakers' assumptions on spectatorship is unclear (is it based on marketing strategies or are they choosing the easy way out?).
- Heavy dependence on Nigeria at all levels of production stifles originality and creativity.
- Little investment in sourcing out materials for film narratives accounts for the wonky notions of representation.

CASE STUDY: Pension (James Tum) and Pink Poison (Neba Lawrence)



- Objective

The Objective in this comparative work is to look at the content of both films, the production values and the audience reception to shed more light on the complexities of representation and audience expectations.

Pension



Pink Poison



Captured Images from the video films Pension and Pink Poison



- Narrative and Thematic Structure

In Pension the theme is clearly enunciated as the film is about a retired civil servant whose pension is stalled because the corrupt government official.

In Pink Poison there are a plethora of themes ranging from immorality, harmful traditional practices, blackmail, betrayal, etc

While the narrative in Pension shows through the characters the differing effects and causes of corruption; Pink Poison a multistarrer approaches its narratives based on situations.



- **Mise-en-scene**

The visual approach to Pension with regards to set/decor, costumes & makeup, composition and lighting and acting aims for a realistic and recognisable average Cameroonian family.

In Pink Poison is a larger than life presentation of university girls driven by materialism.

- **Reception**

Though Pink Poison bears the traits of a typical Nollywood rip off it retained the attention of the audience as opposed to the Pension which sought for a realistic portrayal.

• **Analysis**

- There is a contradiction in what the audience say they want and what they actually consume.
- ✓ The audience clamors for non Nigerian influence in video films yet the films fashioned with Nollywood traits work best amongst them.
- ✓ The video films are critiqued for espousing low moral values particularly in the costuming department yet it is these so-called glamour film genre is most appealing
- Representation vs Subjectivity
- ✓ Representation theory emphasizes that media products represent reality but are not real.
- ✓ A filmmakers re-presentation of the society is primarily from their vantage point and bearing personal/generalised ideologies.

CONCLUSION

- The complexities of representation vis-a-vis the audience is based on clash between notions of identity and extensive film grooming.
- Filmmakers need to conquer their audience with innovative creative and technical savvy productions.
- AngloCam video films are geared more towards a Nollywood sensitive audience, given the marketing appeal adopted in its production values.
- The high levels of production show AngloCam thirst to have an input in this medium



- Films can be close to reality but remain an individual's take on that reality thus subjective.
- Video films are contributing in the Cameroonian film sphere.
- **Future Research**
 - Francophone Cameroonian audiences' reactions to AngloCam video films.

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