



Africa Film Special – “New films from North and South Africa”

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AFRICAN GUESTS PRAISE COLOGNE AUDIENCES

With 1,200 guests, the **Africa Film Special 2013** by FilmInitiativ Köln e.V. was very well-attended, despite only three of the 22 films from North and South Africa being shown with German subtitles. The filmmakers invited to the event appeared to be thoroughly impressed by the “African feel” to the foyer of the Filmforum and by how happy the Cologne public were to engage in discussions. The Egyptian **Iman Kamel** wrote after her return journey, “I miss the late summer’s days in Cologne that were filled with warmth and loving” and that she would love to come again at any time. Her fellow Egyptians **Alia Ayman** and **Mona El-Naggar** were “delighted” with the cinema audience who almost all remained behind after the films in the jam-packed cinema to ask questions about the current situation and role of women in modern-day Egypt. Director **Anis Djaad** wrote to FilmInitiativ after his return to Algiers, “I don’t know how I can thank your team for the wonderful hospitality and how I was looked after in Cologne. Even though the Cologne sky was grey, I met many friendly and well-organised people who allowed me to enjoy a wonderful trip that I will never forget.” The Tunisian director **Mahmoud Ben Mahmoud** praised the “knowledgeable Cologne public” and thanked FilmInitiativ for providing him with the contact details of potential co-producers for his next feature film project (working title: “Fatwa”, subject matter: “Islamists in Tunisia”). We also received positive feedback from our South African guests who visited the film event. Theatre director **Catherine Henegan** and feature film director **Oliver Schmitz** explained how they would “definitely like to stay longer in Cologne next time”, as they really liked “the vibe surrounding the screenings”. **Ntshavheni Wa-Luruli**, who had to endure a total flight duration of 20 hours to reach Cologne from Johannesburg, told the audience before the screening of his feature film “Elelwani” at the packed Filmforum in Museum Ludwig, that he had “already been to many film festivals”, but that he had “never been so warmly welcomed as here in Cologne”, where he “feels like part of a family”.

The media reaction to the film festival was also resoundingly positive. In addition to articles in **Algerian newspapers** and on **Tunisian websites** there were radio reports with original interviews by the African guests on **WDR** and **Deutschlandradio Kultur**, as well as on French and Arabic-language programmes on **Deutsche Welle**. Unfortunately, the Cologne daily newspapers limited themselves to merely advertising the event and let the opportunity of reporting on the outstanding filmmakers from North and South Africa go to waste, despite the many statements professing the importance of representing non-European artists in Cologne. FilmInitiativ hopes that this will be different for the next African film festival (**Out of Europe XIII**), which will take place from **September 18th to 28th, 2014**.

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