

...An embodiment of infectious enthusiasm by creatives and audience

By Andy Jones



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[Andy Jones - IMDb](#)

IT's hard to know where to begin after an experience like iREP; so let's go back to what it's all about, and try and remember the feeling on Saturday March 26, 2016 -- the morning after the night before. The night our film played at the festival.

You don't often get a night like that. A night when the host begins singing along to the end credits and then the whole audience joins in. It doesn't even matter that they get the words a little bit wrong; there's something euphoric about that crowd participation -- the feeling you only ever get when you watch a film with an audience. The fact that this was the West African premiere of a film set in East Africa, made by an international team, just adds to the

magic.

I'd first visited Lagos back in 2009, working on a BBC series (no -- not that one) which went out just before the World Cup began in South Africa. The idea was to cast an optimistic, positive eye on the continent, eschewing the narrative of poverty, corruption and misery as we went in search of resilience, innovation and progressive ideas. Our first scene in Lagos saw presenter Jonathan Dimbleby navigating the streets of Lagos in the company of a certain Mr. Femi Odugbemi, who explained, among other things, the hidden informal structures that keep the city moving.

That same Femi Odugbemi had been so enthusiastic to welcome our film -- the tale of the end of the life of an African musical icon to the festival. They say the enthusiasm is infectious -- and iREP is the embodiment of that. But it's more than that. The use of documentary film as a subversive tool for progress was reflected in the festival theme that year, *'Change: Documentary Films as Agent Provocateur.'*

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What’s brilliant about iRep -- in common with all the best festivals that I’ve been to, is that visiting guests are put to work. My base for two days was the Afrinolly Space over on the mainland where alongside German crowdfunding and marketing consultant Paul Reith, I helped to lead a two-day workshop attended by 15 young Nigerian doc-makers. Again, the energy in the room is contagious, with ideas flowing, and by the end of our second day everyone was ready to pitch. We even had a new budget system in place -- equating film finance to how many cars you could buy for the same money; and a fantastic mix of projects ranging from new YouTube tech shows to long-form enviro-activist features.

And again, like all the best experiences, there are beautiful coincidences. My visit was supported by the British Council in Nigeria, where their Arts team are busy folk. On my way back from the workshop I dropped in to hook up with Sam Jones of Soundthread and Yemi Alade Lawal from Afropop live, busy with a fantastic recording project out and about on the streets in a big yellow bus. I get roped in to assist on second camera as trumpeter ‘Mandela’ nails a solo. A proper busman’s holiday!

The festival ends with a whirlwind of conversations with friends old and new. One of the themes emerging from the festival is around the language we use to describe ourselves. Our late-night discussion revolves around how the very description of ourselves as ‘independent’ filmmakers is misleading. We struggle to think of a better term before settling on ‘inter-dependent’ as a more accurate reflection of reality.

It feels right to me. Although the film I am here with is a first-person narrative, it wouldn’t exist without the input and support of a whole bunch of creative, talented people who shared an enthusiasm to tell the remarkable story of Bi Kidude’s final months on screen. People who halved their usual rates, who gave their time for free. People who donated small amounts of money, which added up to get us out to Zanzibar to film, organisations who support networks of film-makers -- festivals who then helped to get the film in front of audiences, and cinema owners, and VOD platforms and event’s organisers who are taking it beyond the festival and out to the world.

So, I arrived in Lagos an independent filmmaker. And I left as an inter-dependent creative. Thanks to all at iREP who made the trip happen. I hope that one day I’ll be back.

- *Andy Jones is director/producer of **Bi Kidude***
