

...Inspiring much-needed conversations about Africa

By Steve Gukas



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IT is difficult to describe the charge you feel in an atmosphere brimming with creatives. The energy is both electric and laid back. The buzz of conversations about projects to be seen, excitement of those being dreamt up or just the conviviality of kindred spirits. You get a sense, something special is happening but even more so, a feeling you are about to be given a peep into Pandora's box. Every year without fail, that's the magic that I-Rep Film Festival has managed to create. And it is not without reason. The line-up of carefully curated films from the documentary world, never disappoint in subject, scope or ambition. Never failing to challenge, probe and expand both our thinking and the art of documentary filmmaking. Always an eclectic mix of unusual viewpoints by filmmakers who dare to be different, the festival is a creative synthesis that is; as much a reflection of the organisers love for the art form as it is a celebration of what it has to offer.

At iREP, I have seen documentary films I otherwise might never see as well as those that are anticipated worldwide. From the likes of Beverly Naya's inspiring film "Skin" to Alex Gibney's "Finding Fela", each year has had gems on offer. But the line-up is not the only thing that is special about the festival. In the ten years since its debut, the festival has successfully moved documentary filmmaking both in practice and discuss, from counterculture to mainstream. It has taken something quite alien in our parts and made it a much-anticipated feature of Nigeria and Africa's creative calendar. Using its menu of Masterclasses, workshops, seminars and screening, it has created a meeting point for filmmakers from the continent and outside, to interact, discuss and share. Growing itself into a networking platform for film professionals that has inspired many as well as fostered and encouraged the flourishing of excellence in the art of documentary filmmaking. One thing I can say for the festival, is that it is very inclusive, carrying both the filmmaker and the audience along, ensuring there is something in the experience for everyone.

With themes like "Rhythms of Identity, Africa in self conversation", "Archiving Africa", to "Change-Documentary Films As Agent Provocateur" the ethos of the festival is clearly reflected. Looking back, one must agree, it has more than delivered on its mission. Looking forward, I see it growing in size and stature into a top 10 global documentary film festival that is a must-attend, for filmmakers, doc enthusiasts, buyers and programmers. A significant platform that brings

together creatives from a wide range of backgrounds and one that inspires much-needed conversations and artistic growth. Above all these, I see it continuing to challenge African documentary filmmakers not to relent in telling the continents stories, documenting its evolution and challenging its thinking, ambition and humanity.

- *Steve Gukas is director of '93 Days and 'A Place in the Stars'*
