

# FILM REVIEW

**Adze Ugah, director. *10 days in Suncity*. 2017. 90 minutes. English. Nigeria.** Corporate World Entertainment. No price reported.

Producer Ayo Magun's *10 days in Suncity*, directed by award-winning South Africa-based Nigerian director Adze Ugah, is one of Nollywood's most hyped recent movies. Written by Kehinde Ogunlola, the film is a combination of comedy, thriller, action, afro pop, and tourism. Shot on location in Lagos, Nigeria, and Suncity, South Africa, in 2017, it features the humor for which the comedian-producer is popularly known and passes as a comic tourist film more than anything else. Although the producer claims the film has won several awards in many international film festivals, the only confirmed recognition is a nomination by City People Movie Awards for Best Movie of the Year (English). However, the film's popularity seems assured among film-loving audiences in Africa due to its choice tourist locations and parade of A-list stars in Nigeria and South Africa.

*10 days in Suncity*'s narrative revolves around a generic "grass to grace" story, told through the lives of Bianca (Adesua Etomi) and her boyfriend Akpos (Ayo Makun [AY]), who believe in Bianca's future as a beauty contest queen. The duo arrives in Lagos as Bianca is poised to compete in the national beauty pageant as the Delta State contestant, with Akpos as her manager. Fortunately, Bianca wins the pageant, which is sponsored by a cosmetic magnate, Otunba (Richard Mofe Damijo). Besides becoming the face of *Otawi*, Otunba's cosmetic brand, Bianca is assigned to have a ten-day photo shoot in Suncity, South Africa, as part of the contract. On arriving in Suncity, Bianca and Akpos become entangled in webs of intrigue, clashes of interests, and ultimately a love triangle. The allures of the city draw flirtatious Akpos away from a jealous Bianca, while Otunba sets Akpos up in order to get him out of the way so that he (Otunba) can seduce Bianca. Akpos collaborates with Miguel Nunez Jr. (another of Otunba's victims, who has scores to settle with Otunba) to rescue Bianca from the influential sponsor who holds her hostage. At the end, Otunba is defeated, and Akpos makes up with Bianca.

*10 days in Suncity* opens with a scene from the last day of Bianca's photo shoot. Bianca watches helplessly in tears as a battered Akpos faces Otunba. Seeing no way out, Akpos acknowledges in Warri pidgin, that "*all die na die, kpai me if you wan kpai me. But do me one favour, send my dead body to Warri!*"

(“All death is death, shoot me if you want to shoot me, but do me a favour, send my corpse back to Warri!”) Coming at the beginning of the film, this death wish prepares the audience to be on the lookout for other Warri influences in the film, which were subtly unveiled at various scenes in the narrative. Friendly banter between Akpos and Monica in Warri pidgin English in the first scene after the credit roll reveals Monica to be a Warri “runs girl” who “*donates her kpekus*” (indulges in prostitution) for a living. A declaration that the “A” in Akpos’s name signifies “violence” exposes Akpos as a Warri area boy or urchin, who is noisy, crude, troublesome, uncouth, and wild. These qualities act as the producer’s unapologetic homage to his Warri roots, which have also been incorporated into other tourist films by Ayo Magun such as *30 Days in Atlanta* (2014) and *A Trip to Jamaica* (2016). The raw Warri lifestyle in AY’s films distinguishes them from other African film genres on international tourism—thus the “*Warri no dey carry last*” aphorism.

Globalization has a tremendous impact on the film. The urbanism which exposes Monica to independence, materialism, and waywardness is a reflection of the influences of and exposure to an entirely different cultural orientation, which is western. The beauty pageant and the celebrity lifestyle which Bianca and Akpos embrace are adaptations from the glamour, glitters, and sparks of the global entertainment world, with the accompanying international migration to a new world and life in Suncity. Otunba’s power and success in his endeavor were further emphasized by his transnational economic power. Importantly, the film showcases South Africa as a global holiday and business destination, encouraging film audiences to visit the African nation as a tourist destination.

In partnership with the South African Tourism board, the film captures scenes of beautiful landscapes in South Africa. The most obvious include the breathtaking tourist sites from the Harties, Hartbeespoort Dam, Sandton City, Nelson Mandela Square, and shots of Soweto. The film has all the trappings of contemporary world cinema, with beautiful helicopter shots, great lighting, sound, high production values, well-managed tracking shots, crane shots, long shots, and close-ups, which enrich the film aesthetically. However, the story line is neither complex nor creative, which confirms the audience’s suspicion that the film has been overhyped by the distributors. This perhaps explains why the film appears to be entertainment designed as a comic relief instead of a serious classical tourist film, regardless of the producer’s claim that *10 Days in Suncity* broke Nollywood’s box-office record within two weeks of its release.

Filmmakers from Nollywood tend to collaborate more with Hollywood and Europe for artistes—as seen in Stephanie Linus’ *Dry*, Chineze Anyaele’s *Ije: The Journey*, Obi Emelonye’s *Onye Ozi: the Messenger* and *Mirror Boy*, Jetta Amata’s *Black Gold* among others—while they rely on Bollywood for cultural influences—such as *Zee World Wives* and many Hausa films. However, apart from the beautiful South African landscape, *10 days in Suncity* broaches taboo subjects on cross-border performance of stand-up

comedy, exploiting moments of entertainment and jokes to make comical reference to South African women and femininity before a South African audience. Elements such as this assure that the film will remain relevant in future discourses of stage and stand-up comedy in contemporary Africa.

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