

African films excel at Berlin festival

African-linked films have won nine awards at the Berlin International Film Festival. 2018 also marks the first year that a short film from Rwanda has competed at this prestigious film festival and won.



Supamodo film

Samuel Ishimwe's *Imfura* also took home the Silver Bear Jury Prize in the short film category – one of nine awards given at this year's festival to African-linked films. This weekend's awards went to:

***Imfura* - Berlinale Shorts** - Silver Bear Jury Prize: Gisa, a young man, travels to the village of his mother, who disappeared in the genocide. He wants to comprehend, to remember, but is instead forced to choose a side in a fight over an inheritance, a shell of a house. Berlin's programme says, "The film's hybrid form, its fusion of documentary and staged material, gives it a great sense of immediacy." Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/255358801>

Burkina Brandenburg Komplex - Berlin Short Film Nominee for the European Film Awards: Directed by German Ulu Braun, *Burkina Brandenburg Komplex* is set in a presumably African village, inhabited by Germans, and "describes a geographical construction that makes use of 'our' medial and collective image of Africa and puts it to the test", according to Berlin's programme. Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/249933765>

Styx – Ecumenical Jury, Panorama Prize Winner; Label Europa Cinemas; the Heiner Carow Prize; and 2nd Place, Panorama Audience Award for a Fiction Film: Directed by Austria's Wolfgang Fischer, *Styx* follows a German woman on a solo yacht trip who encounters a sinking boat of refugees off the coast of Mauritania. Kenyan teen actor Gedion Wekesa Odour shines as one of the refugees and *Variety* called his performance "superb"; and *The Hollywood Reporter* praised him as a "find." The Ecumenical Jury citation said *Styx* "discovers the biblical story of the Good Samaritan in the challenge the EU faces in the arrival of desperate immigrants from Africa. It is a film of high artistic quality, which tells a tale of suspense, and confronts us with the ethical dilemma that individuals and nations must face when we are asked, 'Who is my neighbour?'" Excerpt: <https://youtu.be/GEcqBhhiTcA>



Fortuna film

Fortuna - Generation 14Plus, Youth Jury Crystal Bear and the International Jury Grand Prix: Directed by Switzerland's Germinal Roaux, *Fortuna* is the story of a 14-year-old Ethiopian refugee (Kidist Siyum Beza) who has found shelter with Catholic friars in Switzerland. The International Jury praised its "sincere performances" and "sublime black and white cinematography", adding, "This film transcends religious and political dogma in a beautifully realised tale of purity and survival as seen through the eyes of a strong-willed Ethiopian girl."

Supa Modo - Generation 14Plus, Children's Jury Special Mention: Directed by Kenyan Likarion Wainaina, *Supa Modo* is the story of a terminally-ill girl who dreams of being a superhero, and how her village helps her achieve that dream. The children's jury citation praised the film as "touching" and "gripping," adding that it "shows the resourcefulness of the girl and the humanity and the strong willpower of the entire village in their efforts to make the last months of her life something special." It's produced by One Fine Day Films and Ginger Ink, the team behind *Kati Kati*, *Nairobi Half Life*, *Something Necessary*, *Soul Boy*, and *Veve*. Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/256094409>

In total, 18 African-linked projects screened at Berlin this year, including the winners above, and the following films:

- *7 Days in Entebbe*, a Ugandan-set feature film by Brazil's Jose Padilha
- *Afrique, La pensée en mouvement Part I*, a documentary by Cameroon's Jean-Pierre Bekolo
- *Before I Forget*, a short film by Egypt's Mariam Mekiwi
- *Besida*, a short film by Nigeria's Chuko Esiri
- *Circleen, Coco and the Wild Rhinoceros*, an African-set animation by Denmark's Jannik Hastrup
- *High Fantasy*, a feature film from South Africa's Jenna Bass
- *Jahilya*, a feature film by Morocco's Hicham Lasri
- *Kinshasa Makambo*, a documentary by the DRC's Dieudo Hamadi
- *Liberty*, a Danish TV series set in Tanzania and shot in South Africa
- *Shaihu Umar*, a 1976 feature film by Nigeria's Adamu Halilu
- *Tahia Ya Didou*, a 1971 feature film by Algeria's Mohamed Zinet
- *We Live In Silence*, a short film by Zimbabwe's Kudzanai Chiurai
- *What Comes Around*, an Egyptian-set documentary by Reem Saleh

This translated to more than four times as many African-linked films showing in Berlin, as were at Sundance in January and, encouragingly, two-thirds of them were directed by Africans.

Africa has a proud history at Berlin, with over 50 films, documentaries and short films linked to the continent having won, dating back to 1952. You can explore all these winners at: <https://africa.film/berlin-international-film-festival-winners-from-africa/>.

African films win globally

It's been a great start to 2018 for African-linked films: *And Breathe Normally* won Best Direction at Sundance for its story of a struggling Icelandic mother and an asylum seeker from Guinea-Bissau; *Black Panther* is currently the highest-grossing film of the year; and next Sunday, two African-linked films will be competing for Oscars: the Kenyan-set *Watu Wote*, by German filmmaker Katja Benrath, in the Live Action Short Film category and *Revolting Rhymes*, animated in South Africa by Triggerfish Animation and Germany by Magic Light Pictures, in the Animated Short Film category.

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