

African Studies Film Club  
Riley Auditorium, Clare College  
Wednesday Evenings, 7-9pm (except 24 Oct)  
Michaelmas Term, 2012



## Movie Programme

**10 October:** *Keïta! The Heritage of the Griot* (France/Burkina Faso, 1995), 94 minutes



Directed by Dani Kouyaté, this film dramatises one of the most important works of African oral literature, *The Sundjata Epic*. It is framed by a story of the relationship between Mabo Keïta, a boy in contemporary Burkina Faso, and Djeliba, who arrives mysteriously at Mabo's home in Ouagadougou. A master griot, Djeliba teaches Mabo that he is descended from Sundjata Keita, the thirteenth-century founder of a great precolonial trading empire.

For more information and a clip of the film, click [here](#).

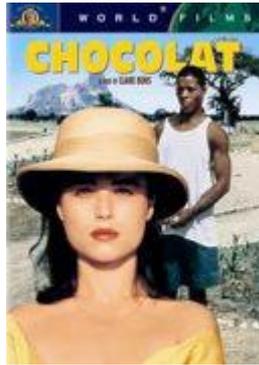
**17 October:** *Ceddo* (Senegal, 1977), 120 minutes



*Ceddo* is a classic film from the 'father of African cinema', [Ousmane Sembène](#). Set in the dry coastal region south of Dakar during the precolonial period, it examines the struggle of the Ceddo to preserve their religious customs and social practices against the onslaught of Islam, Christianity, and the slave trade. When a local ruler sides with the Muslims, the Ceddo protest their forced conversion to Islam by abducting his daughter. Eventually, the kidnappers are killed and she is brought back to the village to confront the *Imam*, just as all the villagers are being given Muslim names.

For a [trailer](#) and [more information](#) click on the links.

**24 October:** *Chocolat* (France/Cameroon, 1988), 105 minutes **\*\*Showing at 9pm\*\***



A young woman, symbolically called 'France', visits Cameroon during the 1980s. It emerges that three decades earlier, her father was a local *Commandant* for the colonial district of Mindif, and she spent her childhood in the far north of the country. *Chocolat* presents her reminiscences as a film-long flashback, and examines the complexity of social and racial boundaries in the white colonial household. Much of the drama centres on the child's mother, Aimée, and the family's male servant or 'houseboy', Protée, who was both France's friend and an object of Aimée's desire.

Directed by Claire Denis, whose father was a colonial administrator, *Chocolat* has been viewed by some as semi-autobiographical. Denis moved to Cameroon with her family in 1948 when she was two months old, and remained there following independence in 1960. A short time later she returned to France, after she contracted polio at age 13.

For a [trailer](#) and [more information](#) click on the links.

**31 October:** *Johnny Mad Dog* (France/Liberia, 2008), 97 minutes



Jean-Stéphane Sauvaire's film is based on the 2002 novel *Johnny Chien Méchant* by the US-based Congolese author, Emmanuel Dongala. The action takes place during the Liberian civil war, when Charles Taylor's government is on the verge of collapsing and rebels are advancing, victoriously if chaotically, on Monrovia. 'Johnny Mad Dog' is the 14-year-old leader of a small commando; they rob, pillage and slay everything in their path. His story unfolds in parallel with that of a talented teenage schoolgirl called Laokolé, who pushes her disabled father around in a rickety wheelbarrow, while also caring for her younger brother, Fofu. Battling to escape as child-soldier militias overrun her city, she joins the fleeing mass of civilians, from where she is destined to come into contact with Johnny.

**Warning:** This film contains distressing scenes of extreme violence.

Watch the [trailer](#) so you know what you are letting yourself in for. For a review of the film, click [here](#).

**7 November:** *Benda Bilili!* (France/DRC, 2010), 85 minutes

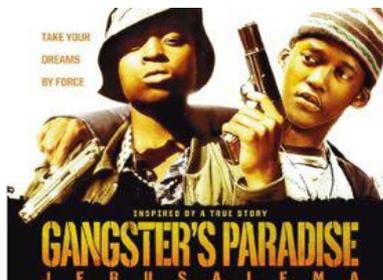


*Benda Bilili!*, meaning ‘look beyond appearances’, follows the story of a group of street musicians – Staff Benda Bilili – who live in Kinshasa, capital of the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2004, French film directors Florent de la Tullaye and Renaud Barret encountered the band members, most of whom are paraplegic, playing music on homemade instruments in the area around Kinshasa Zoo. De la Tullaye and Barret began documenting their struggles to survive – through music – in the volatile city.

A decayed, wasteland garden containing a few cages of emaciated animals, Kinshasa Zoo was home to *shégués* (street kids), hoodlums, and thugs. But it was also a place of relative calm, amid the suffocating and deafening cacophony of contemporary Kinshasa. As the disabled musicians negotiate their way through its inhospitable urban landscape, we travel with them on an extraordinary musical journey, and see an African city from the perspective of those living and sleeping on its streets.

For a [trailer](#) and [more information](#) click on the links.

**14 November:** *Gangster's Paradise: Jerusalem* (South Africa, 2008), 119 minutes

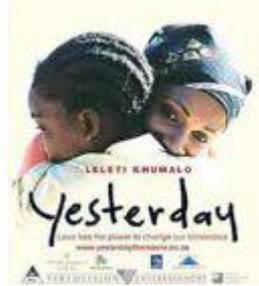


Inspired by true events, *Gangsters Paradise: Jerusalem* is an account of crime, corruption and the struggle to survive in the Hillbrow district of Johannesburg in post-apartheid South Africa. Starting off with petty theft, Lucky Kunene rapidly moves on to more aggressive heists such as armed robbery and carjacking. Realising that he needs to do more to make his fortune, he hatches a plan to hijack buildings from tenement landlords. His high-profile real estate acquisitions attract the attention of the police and a Nigerian drug lord, who ultimately close in on him in a tense standoff.

Filmed on location in Hillbrow, *Gangsters Paradise: Jerusalem* presents Johannesburg as a character within the film, examining urban hopes and aspirations, as well as the brutally violent cost of entrepreneurialism in the face of bitter poverty, degradation and decay.

View a trailer [here](#) or on the [official movie site](#).

**21 November:** *Yesterday* (South Africa, 2004), 96 minutes



Yesterday lives with her 7-year-old daughter, Beauty, in a small rural settlement in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Plagued by a persistent cough, she tries to be seen at the local clinic and is eventually diagnosed with AIDS. This film examines the impact of the AIDS diagnosis on Yesterday and her family, as well as the reaction of her fellow villagers to the presence of the disease in their community. Initially rejected by her husband who works far away in the goldmines of Johannesburg, Yesterday later cares for him when he returns home dying from AIDS-related illnesses. With her health also failing, Yesterday finds hope in the future of her daughter, and makes it her goal to live long enough to witness Beauty attending her first day at school.

Directed by Darrell Roodt, *Yesterday* was the first commercial feature-length production in the Zulu language.

For a [trailer](#) and [more information](#) click on the links.