IIFF opened its 20th edition of the iconic festival in a never to be forgotten event! A truly classy affair in the appropriately ambient environment of the ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE theatre and gardens...

The opening film, from Guinea Bissau and entitled NOME, mesmerised the audience of diplomats, filmmakers and other creatives as well as journalists. It’s honest and true to life depiction of the universal African colonial experience, rural and village life in a time of conflict, guerilla warfare and the traumatic existence of all parties. All parties concerned preceding the conclusion of a violent armed conflict moved many to tears.

An observation made by few filmmakers about the film NOME is that it highlighted the difference in reactions to adversity between men and women. This film subliminally indicated that in the face of disillusionment felt by many in the aftermath of gaining independence through armed conflict women are more likely to retain their humanity and integrity.

The question and answer session with the films’ director SANA NA N'HADA- which followed the screening- revealed his close personal relationship with the revolution depicted in the film. The lead actress, BINETE UNDOQUE, was also present during the session, which made it even more interesting. Many who had not signed up for the directing masterclass the next day being led by SANA NA N'HADA suddenly wanted to attend.
The mood following the opening film was to thoroughly enjoy the entertainment provided by the always polished PAULINE GUNDIZA (of MAFRIQ fame) along with the cocktails and finger snacks generously laid on by the organisers.

It was a happy and festive networking event characterized by laughter, dancing and, ‘happy snappies’ with local celebrities and industry colleagues rubbing shoulders and making plans for more collaborative projects in the future.

Director Sana Na N’Hada and actress Bintette Undoque of NOME

The directing masterclass on Wednesday, led by SANA NA N’HADA following the opening nights’ film which he directed, saw him elaborating further on his background and relationship with the story told therein. He imparted a few insights into how he handles filmmaking when amateurs have to be trained in the process.

He emphasized the importance of planning and background information before production. He revealed that a factor in making the choice to do his film was the availability of certain locations. He also recommended the use of camera stabilizers during filming. According to Mr N’HADA budgets are negotiable and adjustable and should not be allowed to stand in the way of making a film. He also urged filmmakers to operate within the law to avoid problems later.

By Sylvia Vassilatos