The highlight of Day 3 at IIFF, for the filmmaking fraternity, was the producing masterclass which kicked off at 10am. All the venues also started their daily screenings at 10am as has been the case from the beginning of the festival. TOMAS BRICKHILL, the producer/director of the hugely successful Zimbabwean film, COOK OFF, led the masterclass which was initially supposed to be presented by CARLA SOSPREDA of Spain. Unforeseen circumstances prevented her from traveling to Zimbabwe although her film YELLOW CEILING is on the programme. As luck would have it, TOMAS BRICKHILL was a good choice due to his experience within Zimbabwe's unique set of challenges facing the film industry and was able to address the local filmmakers' questions.

A few interesting facts emerged from the discussions in this masterclass, one of which is that Zimbabwe has no entertainment lawyers, which is a great disadvantage to the local film industry and, indeed, the whole entertainment industry. On a positive note it is an area that is open to those law students looking for an area of specialization that is currently undersubscribed and potentially very lucrative.

The bottom line is that the producer carries the financial and logistical responsibility for the film from its inception to its distribution and beyond. The producer's role does not end with the première, once the film has been made.
TOMAS pointed out that a fantastic production that is 90% complete still counts as nothing next to a mediocre production that is complete, saying “a finished film is a film (and an incomplete project is nothing)”. He revealed that in his film he had started off as the producer but had to hand that role over to JOE NJAGU as he then took on the directors’ role to drive the project to conclusion. “The producer protects the director – and the whole creative team – from issues that may disturb their creative roles”, he explained. All issues relating to welfare and finance are taken care of by the producer.

In response to a question from the floor about how to deal with short films TOMAS explained that they would have a better chance in many festivals if packaged in batches of a few that to make up the length of a feature film. Meanwhile attendance at all venues improved from the first day with public interest in the festival evidently mounting halfway through as it rolls toward it’s climax on Saturday.
It is impossible to see all the films screened at IIFF as there are so many – and they are all good – so one has to make some hard choices based on personal taste and ability to venue hop.

By Sylvia Vassilatos