

cinema any more.

**NAGIB:** I am eager to hear something about the film you shot in Brazil and how you started the relationship.

**BALOGUN:** There is this producer, Jose Valladan, who brought a financier from Brazil. He wanted to do a co-production with Nigeria and this was the time I made a proposal.

**NAGIB:** And how come you learned Portuguese so well?

**BALOGUN:** Because I was forced to. None of the cast or crew at the time spoke English or French.

**NAGIB:** So you learnt Brazilian Portuguese?

**BALOGUN:** Yes.

**NAGIB:** And this was the time of Cinema Novo, may be late Cinema Novo. Did you have any contact with the people from Cinema Novo and the style of shooting and making films at that time?

**BALOGUN:** No, I worked later on with a director of photography who has been quite involved with Cinema Novo, Jose Meideros, the late Jose Meideros. I also met a couple of the Cinema Novo people. That was the only project I undertook in Brazil, so I cannot speak widely on them. I hope and look forward to long term relationship with Brazil.

**NAGIB:** And after this, nothing else devel-

oped?

**BALOGUN:** I have not had the opportunity to go back to Brazil to do another project. Maybe this is the time to think about it.

**NAGIB:** So you know of the Yoruba culture in Brazil?

**BALOGUN:** Yes, yes. I was in Bahia.

**NAGIB:** How did Bahia interest you?

**BALOGUN:** It is a very powerful linkage between Africa and the new world.

**OKOME:** And this link is very apparent in *Black Goddess* and *Bisi Daughter of The River*?

**BALOGUN:** Yes.

**OKOME:** I will take you back to the Nigerian Cinema. One of the complains that we have heard is that the Yoruba Cinema, so to speak, poses some kind of national question. It is said that it does not aspire towards a national cinema.

**BALOGUN:** I do not know. Nigeria is a pluri-ethnic, pluri-cultural society, therefore it is the coming together that makes the Nigerian entity. Bear this in mind.

**OKOME:** Don't you see some unevenness in the content of the films produced in Nigeria? Some critics argue that the Yoruba film could alienate; the language is Yoruba, the culture is traditional Yoruba, and indeed the whole social system is Yoruba.

**BALOGUN:** It is inevitable that we have to deal with each other on the basis of what our cultures are. So we cannot emasculate our individual cultures on the basis that people from other cultures would not understand.

**NAGIB:** From what you have seen here in FESPACO 95, what would you conclude is the main tendency of African cinema? Would you argue that it has been developing upward?

**BALOGUN:** I must say I have not been feeling too well, so I have not seen so many films. It won't be fair, therefore, for me to answer this question.

**OKOME:** One more question. Filmmakers in Nigeria are said not to be organised, and this is why representation are not properly made to government in international festivals such as this. What are the reasons for this situation?

**BALOGUN:** I would say it is the difficulty of organising in a large country such as Nigeria. It is difficult to have an umbrella organisation that would bring the different people together in one situation.

**OKOME:** But other big film cultures, for instance Brazil, and Cuba, have been able to do this...

**BALOGUN:** But you see the production in these countries is structured in a different way. In Nigeria, production is sporadic, a free for all. There is no cultural organisation through which things are done. **GR**

## OUR FILM MAKERS MUST COME TOGETHER — Breudan Shehu

**B**reudan Shehu, Chairman, Nigerian Film Corporation spoke to Sola Olorunyomi and Onookome Okome during the anniversary of a century of world cinema in Ouagadougou, Burkina-Faso.

**QUESTION:** What prompted your decision to attend this festival and in what ways do you think Nigeria can benefit from this gathering?

**ANSWER:** First and foremost, I am here to make and establish contacts in order to sell the facilities we have in Nigeria. We've just set up a colour laboratory and a dubbing

studio in Jos, but unfortunately both are yet to be utilised by either our film makers or those from abroad.

The other area I am looking forward to making a contact in, is in respect of co-production and distribution, so that we can pool our resources to increase the number of African films and try to get outlets for our films. When our cinema houses are not showing video films, they are showing foreign ones. So, if we don't make efforts for external markets, we may not be able to make profit or even recoup what we have invested in our production. The third reason why I am here is to see their set-up, how they are organising

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*Nonetheless, we are trying to come to the aid of film makers by looking at the films they have earlier produced and by trying to reproduce additional copies for them. You won't believe that some of them have only single copies, which cannot be shown anywhere because they are so battered.*

their film festival. If you can recall some two years ago, we had our own film festival. But we couldn't hold one last year because of the economic situation in the country. We hope that before the end of the year we would be able to organise another national film festival that would eventually be of international standard.

**QUESTION:** What is your assessment of FESPACO '95?

**ANSWER:** Honestly, my impression is that it is more or less a French affair. The Anglophone countries are marginalised and everything is French.

**QUESTION:** What are the impulses behind this marginalisation?

**ANSWER:** Because France thinks she's supporting one of her colonies, a former colony - Burkina Faso. They fund them in order to produce the kind of films they want to see in their own country, France. Neither they nor any other person can do that to Nigeria. We produce what we think is good for Nigeria, not what others feel should be seen about Nigeria.

**QUESTION:** What do you think would be the impact of post apartheid South Africa on African cinema?

**ANSWER:** Well, I think they want to be exposed; they want to reach out as much as possible. I know there is a big market both in Nigeria and South Africa which ought to be exploited.

*We still have problems because the film makers still need to come together. Even if the Federal Government provides all the facilities, the film makers still need to pool their resources together and work as a team, if the film industry is to develop.*

**QUESTION:** Are Nigerian film makers conscious of this?

**ANSWER:** That is really what I don't know; for the whole of last year, we couldn't produce a single film. This is partly explained by the economic situation in the country and to some degree, the political crisis.

Nonetheless, we are trying to come to the aid of film makers by looking at the films they have earlier produced and by trying to reproduce additional copies for them. You won't believe that some of them have only single copies, which cannot be shown anywhere because they are so battered. With the facilities in our own laboratory, I believe we can then turn them into competitive titles that can be presented in film festivals.

**QUESTION:** Can you elaborate further on the overall objectives and functions of the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC)?

**ANSWER:** The NFC is essentially set up to provide infrastructure for the film industry. We ought to be able to come to the aid of film

makers financially but, unfortunately at the moment, we can only limit our efforts to equipment and manpower, largely because we are not funded to give out loans.

**QUESTION:** In specific terms, which film makers and artists have you assisted?

**ANSWER:** For now, Eddie Ugboma, the late I-Show Pepper, Bankole Bello and a few others.

**QUESTION:** In a synopsis, how would you assess the current development of cinema and the film industry in Nigeria?

**ANSWER:** We still have problems because the film makers still need to come together. Even if the Federal Government provides all the facilities, the film makers still need to pool their resources together and work as a team, if the film industry is to develop. Of course, there is a role for the private sector to play, because government has other priority areas such as education and health.

**QUESTION:** The Copyright Council has just concluded a conference in Nigeria, what is the NFC's attitude to issues of copyright violation?

**ANSWER:** The Copyright Council is doing a good job by creating the awareness. In the past, we didn't know what copyright was all about in Nigeria. But today, film makers know their rights, what and where they can make claims and demand their entitlements. I must commend the Copyright Council for doing a good job. **GR**

## FESPACO IS STILL A FRENCH AFFAIR - Ukadike

**F**rank Ukadike, film maker, critic, scholar, and author of several books on cinema, including the most recent, *Black African Cinema*, came to Fespaco from his base in the United States and had this interview with Sola Olorunyomi and Onookome Okome.

**QUESTION:** What is your assessment of this year's Fespaco?

**ANSWER:** For me I think this year's Fespaco

is better organised than the ones I've attended before. At least this time it took me only one day or half a day to get my accreditation badge whereas before it took about three days.

Though, we still have the problem of language here. Most of the things are still done in French, and the Anglophones are just left out. So, it becomes a French thing. This is very sad because you go to see some films and if you don't understand French, then you

*My interviews with Ugboma, Breudan Shehu, with Kwaw Ansah, none of them told me they've benefited anything from Fespaco, because Fespaco doesn't promote Anglophone films. Which is true, but in a way that is not one hundred per cent true because we have very few Anglophone films coming here, and most of the time the few ones that come are only thrashes. For instance the film they showed from Nigeria everybody simply walked away.*

are lost. My question is: What is the focus of this festival? Is it French heritage or Pan African? If it is Pan African, then there is a problem from that perspective.

You just don't bring people from all over the