

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

Frank 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

So you have a problem here because there is a big market in the Anglophone countries and yet this market has not been exploited. In fact, the so-called Ghana Film Festival of 1994 was a fiasco. There were no films, it was badly organised. It was a waste of time going there. They tried the Harare Film Festival. And now there is the talk of South Africa, in the hope that South Africa would provide alternative to what is going on here.

And the unfortunate thing about it is that we talk of the video revolution, but the video makers are not talking about developing national cinematic industry. They just see video as a way of making quick money, and that misses the point because everybody is kind of selfish, fighting for their own pockets. That is not the way to develop a national film industry.

world and then just dump them in one place without effective interpreters. Moving around is a much easier thing to do, but with the programmes themselves, you discover that you were simply lost in some meetings, symposia and the likes, because French was the only means of communication.

QUESTION: Don't you think that this may be partly informed by the fact that the bulk of the donor biddies is French, or at least Francophone?

ANSWER: Well, it's a long time we've been talking about this problem. When I returned from Fespaco in 1971 I wrote an article about this issue, complaining about ...

QUESTION: What was the title of the article?

ANSWER: Wait a minute, I think it was entitled **Framing Fespaco: Pan African Cinema in Context**. I complained about this, and have since then talked to numerous film makers on same. Almost all the Anglophone film makers I've talked to, they don't like what is going on either. Some of them even boycott the meetings because of this language problem.

Yesterday for instance, there was an important meeting and there was no translator. So, those who couldn't speak French were all disappointed. It comes to the same point I've made before that those who walk away at the end of Fespaco smiling, are the French people, not Africans.

QUESTION: The theme of this year's festival is **Cinema and History**. What significance has this to the evolution of cinema and art in the African continent?

ANSWER: When they talk of cinema and history I don't quite understand what that is supposed to be. But if it is cinema in the context of historical development, because this year marks the centenary anniversary of the invention of cinema, then I may understand that emphasis.

There was something extremely interesting and significant during the opening ceremony. There was this lavish display of fireworks, lightings, all of them reflecting cinematic illusion. I thought it was very interesting from that perspective.

Then again, there is the problem when you insist on the question: where is the African perspective? Again the French got the last credit.

QUESTION: What do you think Anglophone film makers can gain, given the present context?

ANSWER: 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.

QUESTION: What is the title and who is the film maker?

ANSWER: I can't quite remember the maker, but the title is *The Snake in My Bed*. We were all happy that at least there was an Anglophone film, but we went home really disappointed.

QUESTION: Don't you think that Anglophone film makers lack the sort of support networks of governments and non-governmental organisations enjoyed by their Francophone colleagues?

ANSWER: Let us not forget that without the French, the Ministry of Co-operation, ACCT, and the like, there will probably be no African cinema. Even the bulk of the funding of Fespaco is from French sources, European sources and with Burkina Faso picking about one-third. I don't see any Anglophone country that is willing to give support to cinema the way Burkina Faso has done. It is not just in staging a Fespaco, Burkina Faso help in co-production. Most of the films here have been co-produced with countries like Mali. In Nigeria however, you are bedevilled with bureaucracy. If you bring Ola Balogun, Breudan Shehu and Ugboma together for instance, you'll discover that they will not agree on anything.

So you have a problem here because there is a big market in the Anglophone countries and yet this market has not been exploited. In fact, the so-called Ghana Film Festival of 1994 was a fiasco. There were no films, it was badly organised. It was a waste of time going there. They tried the Harare Film Festival. And now there is the talk of South Africa, in the hope that South Africa would provide alternative to what is going on here.

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QUESTION: After your new book *Black African Cinema*, what next are we to expect from you?

ANSWER: I am working on a number of things but I don't know how long it will take. One is a compilation of interviews with African film makers. There is also a new video project. I am also looking at women film makers in the Black world. Perhaps someday I'll make my film, apart from the current academic efforts. I guess I'll love someday to play with my camera. **GR**