

A Fire in Africa: A Masterful Tale of a Man's Journey to a Universal Truth

A Fire in Africa is a classic South African film that tells the story of the OvaHimba tribe of the Namib - the oldest desert in the world. The OvaHimba, meaning 'beggars', are descendants of the Ancient Egyptians from the era of Queen Nefertiti and were once the richest nomadic tribe in Africa. However, they find themselves on the brink of extinction after fleeing genocide at the hands of the German army during the 1904 Herero-Nama war. The chief of the tribe, Nguzu, realizes that their only hope of survival lies with his grandson, Omusuverua who is sent to school, where he learns English and grows in faith. When Omusuverua comes into contact with the mystical art of karate at a nearby army base, it changes his life forever.

The film employs a variety of cinematic techniques, including colour, sound design, figurative comparisons, editing, and music, to strengthen its narrative. The use of colour to generate emotion, sound effects to create symbolic sources of meaning, and figurative comparisons to convey enigmatic concepts, are all skilfully executed.

The film begins with an exceptionally colourful image of Nefertiti when she is introduced as the queen of Egypt. However, when the OvaHimba queen appears, the colour palette shifts predominantly to earthy brown, conveying the arduous future that awaits the red nomads.

Sound effects are used to create symbolic meaning. For instance, when the narrator tells us about the release of the slaves, he pauses for a flash of lightning and thunder. The lightning suggests "the best of times" – freedom and a land of milk and honey - but when it becomes ominous, it suggests "the worst of times" - the Germans' extermination order.

The film employs figurative comparisons extensively, including motifs, metaphors, and symbols. For example, the protagonist cutting off his braids clearly symbolises the cutting of ties with his tribe. However, on a more esoteric level, the protagonist's arrival in the ghost town of Kolmanskop in search of water comes with a profound "buildings metaphor," suggesting his fading chances of finding water with shots of progressively deteriorating buildings.

The editing is meticulously integrated with the music, as clearly demonstrated in the last scene of the movie. It is as if the music, by creating a moment of silence, is respectfully allowing the character to express his appreciation in a single word. After Orlog says to Omusu: "You are the king of your soul and the master of your destiny," the music pauses to allow Omusu to say, "Wow!"

After 33 years, the movie was revised, and it is the first time in the history of filmmaking that the filming of a storyline with a break of 33 years has been resumed after an actual break of 33 years, so that the two principal actors were, in fact, 33 years older and consequently required no make-up or prosthetics to simulate this passage of time. Japan Mthembu made his first appearance in the leading role, and the supporting role of Orlog, a karate instructor, is played by distinguished actor Rod Alexander. The film also features a cameo appearance by seven-time karate world champion, Billy Blanks, who was part of the USA Karate Team depicted in the karate championship scenes.

The scriptwriter, Emil Kolbe, is a former newspaper sub-editor who currently lives in Australia, where he writes novels published by Amazon.com. Kolbe's extraordinary talent is evident in the telling of a modest story intertwined with a complicated theme statement, making the movie appealing for both mainstream and high art film audiences. At its core, the story is about balance, with the montage at the end that follows the naming of the executive toy - equilibrium - forcing the audience to delve deep into their minds in search of the meaning of this name. The story statement is universal and esoteric,

but rationalisation and intuition can clarify its purpose. It is decidedly this concept that discretely reveals the sensible principles of human sustainability, which is entrenched in the film's narrative.

The director's choice of filming locations underscores the narrative's point, as selecting the Kolmanskop location where the protagonist searches for water has a two-pronged purpose. The location complements the sequence in that it reflects the uncertainty of whether water will be found, in the same way, as uncertainty exists of whether the tribe will become extinct. The director's style is refreshing, as the movie is audio-visually rather than character driven, making it a joy to experience.

The film has several weaknesses that can be attributed to its limited budget, such as unconvincing minor roles and frequent use of still shots in a drama. Additionally, the movie's theme is not always clear, as it shifts between being about good leadership and a balanced approach to life. Nonetheless, the movie's award-winning status confirms its worthiness of acclaim.

A Fire in Africa has won ten Best Picture awards at illustrious film festivals from Germany, England, France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Croatia and Mexico. It has passed Quality Control at the renowned Filmhub platform in Los Angeles and distributed to nine VOD TV channels, including Amazon Prime Video. The number and variety of all its awards, constitutes a record in the history of world cinema.

In conclusion, *A Fire in Africa* (www.afireinafrica.com) is a classic movie that has already stood the test of time. Despite its humble beginnings as a low-budget student movie, it has surpassed many high-budget professional films. Its enigmatic story statement is skilfully integrated with a diversity of cinematic techniques, all of which come together to create an unforgettable experience.
