

"THEMBA- LIVING THE GAME" BY STEFANIE SYCHOLT

General:

In the spring and summer of 2010 the whole world will look at South Africa, the host country of the World Cup in Football. Media's attention will be tremendous and the interest for not only the game, but the country and its people will reach new heights all over the world. The year 2010 also celebrates the 20th anniversary of Nobel Peace prize winner and former South African president Nelson Mandela's release from prison.

Synopsis:

Themba – "living the game" by South African Director Stefanie Sycholt is a beautiful, dramatic, heartfelt story which will fascinate audiences world wide.

"Themba" tells the story of a talented young football player who, like so many boys the world over, wants to follow in the footsteps of his heroes and dreams of becoming a football star. But, the reality in the round-hut village he calls home could not be more different from the life he dreams of. Themba realizes that he has been given the name "Hope" for a reason as he sets out on his emotional journey from "hopelessness" to "hopefulness". Beautifully set and shot in South Africa, "Themba" is about a boy who braves the battlefield of African reality to discover that anything is possible...

Screening:

"THEMBA- Living the Game" Screening in Berlin:

Sunday, 14.02. 16:45 CineStar 1

Tuesday 16.02. 11:00 CineStar 1

Statement Director: Stefanie Sycholt

As soon as I read Lutz van Dijk's novel, CROSSING THE LINE, I was deeply moved and immediately inspired to adapt it for the big screen. Themba's story is universal. Broadly based on the amazing real-life stories of boys who have grown up to be men like Maradona and Zidane; boys who managed to escape a life of poverty by following the dream of soccer, THEMBA is much more than a soccer film though. It takes us into the heart of South Africa's reality. On a journey from "hopelessness" to "hopefulness".

I firmly believe that THEMBA will be a film that will do so much more than entertain those that will see it. It is a moving story, yes. But, more than that, I know it will allow audiences across the world to get a glimpse of our common humanity, to live for 90 minutes a life of hardship and desperation, but a life in which, as the Xhosa title, Themba, suggests, hope is never absent ...

This year – 2010 – the world's eyes will be on South Africa for the soccer world cup. It will be a moment to celebrate our common humanity, to play together and to compete with each other, a moment when South Africa can be the generous hosts to the world. At the same time, I personally feel we should not let this opportunity go by without paying tribute to the millions who brave a killer stronger and more lethal than any weapon of mass destruction the world has seen to date: HIV/AIDS. There are over 12 million children south of the Sahara who have lost their parents to this killer and who battle on daily through lives that remain unimaginable to most of us. And very many of them live in South Africa.

As a young film student at the film school in Munich, Germany, I was fundamentally convinced that films could change the world. Some years older now, I still like to believe that films at least can make a difference. And if that is the case, they are worth every cent that goes into making them. I firmly believe that THEMBA is such a film.

Producer statements:

DO Productions – Brigid Olën and Marlow de Mardt

A key player in independent feature films, DO Productions has joined forces with partners at Zeitsprung/Rheingold and award-winning Stefanie Sycholt (Malunde) to create a strong, passionate and endearing film about triumph and adversity in South Africa. Powerful performances and exceptional landscapes give this co-production a bold cinematic signature that realises enormous screen value and heartfelt narratives, testament to DO's intentions to articulate noteworthy stories."

Rheingold Films GmbH – Josef Steinberger

Themba and his sister share their fate with millions of children in Africa and the Third World. Poverty, child abuse, crime and the thread of HIV are the cruel daily challenges they have to cope with. But at the same time THEMBA shows a tremendous story about unlimited power emerging from love and responsibility for his mother, sister and friend. He never gives up! We want to encourage our audience to follow him and find ways to lead these millions of innocent children into a humane life.

Zeitsprung Entertainment GmbH – Ica & Michael Souvignier

The Team of Zeitsprung Entertainment, especially Ica and Michael Souvignier, would like to thank Lutz van Dijk for his touching and inspiring novel THEMBA. Without his work, our film THEMBA would have not been made possible! We also would like to thank Stefanie Sycholt for her awesome commitment and outstanding scriptwriting and directing. And last but not least: The Gray Family for believing in all of us, Archbishop Tutu and Franz Beckenbauer for their support!

Producers/ Cast:

Written and directed by STEFANIE SYCHOLT

Based on a novel by LUTZ VAN DIJK

Producers: MICHAEL SOUVIGNIER, ICA SOUVIGNIER, JOSEF STEINBERGER, BRIGID OLËN, MARLOW DE MARDT, STEFANIE SYCHOLT

Director of photography EGON WERDIN bvk

Production designer EGBERT KRUGER

Editor HANSJÖRG WEISSBRICH bfs

Music by ANNETTE FOCKS

Cast:

NAT "JUNIOR" SINGO

SIMPHIWE DANA

PATRICK MOFOKENG (INVICTUS)

KAGISO MOTSEI

EMMANUAL SOQINASE

MELABANTU MAXHAMA

ANISA MHLUNGULA

MIHLE MTAKATI

With RAPULANA SEIPHEMO

DOCTOR KHUMALO

JENS LEHMANN as John Jacobs

108 minutes, English & Xhosa, Drama, 35mm