

favor, Madame refuses!” Then the scene continues with the immediate problem of Dominique’s affair rather than pausing to pathologize homosexuality or abortion. It is quite rare and refreshing to find nonhysterical references to homosexuality or to abortion in West African films. On this score, the film contradicts long-standing generalizations about innate African aversions to such matters.

In other ways the film wallows in clichés. The character of Dominique, for example, is written like a cliché of a middle-class housewife. His life consists of staying at home all day, fussing emptily over his wife when she returns from work, and going out socializing with his friends. Occasionally he takes up a new Chinese exercise routine, but for the most part he is rendered as a lazy house spouse who is too lazy, in fact, to venture any farther than the neighbor’s house to find a secret lover.

The film ends on a curious note. The second husband proposition was, as Dominique divined early on, just a lesson. In the closing moments, after Dominique has shot up the house and the quartier, Sekou is revealed to be nothing more than one of Mina’s cousins from the village. Sekou has grown quite comfortable in Mina’s lovely home and would prefer to remain and turn the ruse into reality. But Mina will have none of it. He must go back home, having accomplished the assigned mission, while she will stay in the city with her philandering husband. Dao Abdoulaye reassures us at the end that there will be no civil war of the sexes. Everything is still under control.

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doi:10.1017/asr.2014.77

**Kenneth Gyang, director. *Confusion Na Wa*.** 2013. 105 minutes. English, Pidgin, and Hausa. Nigeria. Cinema Kpatakpata. Streaming on Dobox.tv.

*Confusion Na Wa* is great fun to watch—a blast of fresh, keen air in Nigerian filmmaking and out of the ordinary in several dimensions. It comes from Nigeria’s Middle Belt. Violence in Jos, where the director, Kenneth Gyang, lives, shifted the production to Kaduna. Its two big stars, Ali Nuhu (from the Hausa film industry) and Ramsey Nouah (from Nollywood), appeal to Nigeria’s cinematic north and south, while the ambience is that of the complex cultural mosaic of the country’s center. The film is full of new talent: other members of the uniformly excellent cast are relatively unknown, as are Gyang, who is also the cowriter and coproducer, and Tom Rowlands-Rees, who produced and cowrote. (The director of photography, Yinka Edward, the third member of the production company, has shot several films for the leading directors Kunle Afolayan and Izu Ujukwu; he was a classmate of Gyang’s at the National Film Institute in Jos.) The production is strikingly young in its personnel, subject, and outlook, and it springs from

a novel constellation of resources and strategies. It grew out of the friendship of Gyang and Rowlands-Rees, an Englishman with a family connection to Nigeria, and was funded by a €20,000 grant from the Hubert Bals Fund of the International Film Festival Rotterdam. Unlike most “New Nollywood” films, which rely on relatively high budgets and production values, massed star power, and patronage from expatriate Nigerians and cinemagoers at the new elite multiplexes in Nigeria, these filmmakers embraced their low budget—very low even by Nollywood standards—to make a film with a grassroots feel that is nevertheless unusually sharp in every aspect of its conception and execution.

*Confusion Na Wa* (in Pidgin, “na wa” means “wow”) has been warmly received at several international film festivals and also in Nigeria, winning Best Film at the Africa Movie Academy Awards, the most important Nollywood event. Now it is making its way through the unsettled and treacherous Nigerian and international distribution system. (It can be streamed on the pay Website Dobox.tv.) Fortunately, the filmmakers did not have to put up their houses as collateral in the normal New Nollywood way—their willingness to work on a shoestring bought them freedom. The film is a revelation of what can happen in Nigerian filmmaking, showing that there is room for intelligent, edgy experimentation and the sensibility of a new generation, and that hitherto untapped Nigerian cultural resources can be channeled into Nollywood. It’s an important movie, a harbinger.

The charismatic, profane central characters, Charles (O. C. Ukeje) and Chichi (Gold Ikponmwosa), are unemployed youths who steal car stereos to fund their ganja smoking and womanizing. Charles picks up a phone dropped by a businessman named Emeka (Ramsey Nouah) and extorts money from him when text messages show that Emeka is having a steamy extramarital affair with fiery Isabella (Tunde Aladese), who is married to the excessively cautious and mild-mannered office worker Bello (Ali Nuhu). Bello’s manhood is in question, as is the sexuality of teenage Kola (Nathaniel Deme, giving a wonderful, underplayed performance), whose father publishes a newspaper as an outlet for his self-righteous moralizing outrage. Kola’s sister and a girlfriend slip out to a party where the girlfriend is date-raped by Charles, bringing her angry father into the picture. *Confusion Na Wa* then resolves its jigsaw puzzle of a plot in a neat dramatic climax. Gyang cites the multistranded, coincidence-laden films of Alejandro González Iñárritu (*Amores Perros* [2000]; *Babel* [2006]) as an inspiration.

But the dramatic closure does not entail ideological closure. The film begins and ends with Chichi’s hard-won wisdom: “When I was a boy, they told me everything happens for a reason. But they were wrong. Some things don’t happen for a reason. They just happen.” The film is agnostic and irreverent, and it contradicts the most fundamental principle of Nollywood: that there is a spiritual and moral order underlying the atrocities of this world; that the story arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice, as in part 2 of the movies where the wicked are punished. *Confusion Na Wa*’s young have the clarity of youth about their situation. Kola’s succinct

analysis of contemporary Nigeria—in a place where colossal amounts of oil money are stolen every day, why wouldn't car windows naturally be broken and stereos stolen?—is obviously superior to his father's pompous moralizing. But their situation, Nigeria's situation, is just a mess, a random colliding of low motives and strong personalities in which they must somehow live. Confusion na wa! Pain and sadness are in this world, but the film and its characters are so full of unfazed vivid life that the strongest experience is of deep, glorious comedy.

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doi:10.1017/asr.2014.78

**Michael Matthews, director.** *Sweetheart*. 2010. 27 minutes. English. South Africa. BePhat Motel. Price not reported.

*Sweetheart*, directed by Michael Matthews, is a postapartheid South African science fiction film. Like many other films that have recently been produced in South Africa, it is part of a new wave of African cinema, and alongside other films such as the Kenyan-directed short film *Pumzi* (dir. Wanuri Kahiu, 2010) and the feature-length South African film *District 9* (dir. Neill Blomkamp, 2009), it provides further evidence of changes in African cinema. These changes are not entirely new and are seen in, for example, the growth of the Nollywood film industry and the variety of feature-length and short films produced on the continent.

*Sweetheart* begins with the sound of a changing radio frequency interspersed with snippets of news about the Cold War. The mise-en-scène of the opening is the large kitchen of a farmhouse in which a woman prepares breakfast for a family. The relationships among the characters, where they are, and what we are hearing in the diegetic sounds of the radio are unclear and somewhat confusing. The use of black and white gives the film a dated texture. This feeling of the past is aided by the character of Inge Beckman, who plays the young woman named Sweetheart. She is a stereotypical housewife with a 1950s feel about her as she fusses over two boys and her husband at the breakfast table. As they set off for the day, she waves goodbye to them and shouts into the wind, "I love you." Nobody responds. The family never returns to the house, and for the first half of the film the camera follows Sweetheart around the property of the farm as she continues to do the everyday chores: collecting milk, making supper, doing housework, and eventually calling the police about her missing family.

*Sweetheart* is the first film made by BePhat Motel Productions, a group of five young South Africans who utilized their film production skills to create something that the screenwriter, Sean Drummond, says "would not take itself too seriously." A self-funded film, *Sweetheart* was shot on a shoe-string budget of R80,000 (approximately U.S.\$7,933). The film is about a