For your consideration

BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM
SOUTH AFRICA

THE WOUND
WOUND

A FILM BY JOHN TRENGOVE
WRITTEN BY JOHN TRENGOVE
THANDO MGQOLOZANA & MALUSI BENGU

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FESTIVALS

SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL
World Cinema Competition

BERLINALE PANORAMA
Opening Film

NEW DIRECTORS / NEW FILMS
Official Selection

MOOV FILM FESTIVAL
Official Competition

NETIA OFF CAMERA
INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF INDEPENDENT CINEMA
Official Competition

SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
Official Competition

THE TEL AVIV LGBT FILM FESTIVAL
Opening Film

TORINO GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL
Official Competition

VALENCIA CINEMA JOVE
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
Official Competition

TAIPEI FILM FESTIVAL
Official Competition

DURBAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
Official Competition

NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
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INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL SANTANDER
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MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
Official Competition

WORLD CINEMA AMSTERDAM
Official Competition

FAROE ISLANDS INTERNATIONAL MINORITY FILM FESTIVAL
Official Selection

HONG KONG LESBIAN & GAY FILM FESTIVAL
Official Selection

HELSINKI INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
Official Selection

QUEER PORTO
Official Selection

CPH:PIX
Official Selection

BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL
First Feature Competition

MUMBAI FILM FESTIVAL
Official Selection

FILM AFRICA LONDON
Opening Film

AWARDS

BEST FIRST FEATURE
BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL 2017

GRAND JURY PRIZE
MUMBAI FILM FESTIVAL 2017

SPECIAL MENTION
MOOV FILM FESTIVAL 2017

BEST FILM
SARASOTA FILM FESTIVAL 2017

AUDIENCE AWARD
SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL 2017

BEST FILM
TORINO LGBTQI FILM FESTIVAL 2017

GRAND PRIZE
OUTFEST FILM FESTIVAL 2017

JURY PRIZE
DURBAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2017

BEST ACTOR
CINEMA JOVE PALMA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2017

BEST DIRECTOR
DURBAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2017

BEST FIRST FEATURE
FRAMELINE 2017

BEST FILM
WORLD CINEMA AMSTERDAM 2017
The Wound is a compelling and taboo-breaking South African feature taking the international festival circuit by storm. Leading a new wave of African cinema, it is equal parts coming-of-age story, love drama, and intense psychological thriller told from a uniquely African perspective. A bold and unflinching new voice on the international stage.
Xolani, a lonely factory worker, joins the men of his community in the mountains of the Eastern Cape to initiate a group of teenage boys into manhood. When a defiant initiate from the city discovers his best kept secret, Xolani’s entire existence begins to unravel.
The Wound was born out of a desire to push back against clichéd stereotypes of black masculinity perpetuated inside and outside of African cinema. As a white man, representing marginalized black realities that are not my own is, of course, complicated. Even highly problematic.

It was important to me that the story mirrors this problem. The character of Kwanda is an outsider to the traditional world who expresses more or less my own ideas about human rights and individual freedom. He’s also the problem. His preconceptions create jeopardy for others who have much more to lose than him.

This was my way of saying, “I don’t have the answers and my own values don’t necessarily apply here”. A film such as this cannot hope to provide solutions for the crisis faced by millions of queer people in the African continent and around the world, only to present the crisis for what it is, a deep and ever-widening chasm.

In writing The Wound, inspiration came, unexpectedly, from President Robert Mugabe. Statements that he and other African leaders have made since the early ’90s imply that homosexuality is a symptom of western decadence that threatens “traditional” culture.

And so we thought: “okay, let’s use that idea. Let’s imagine ‘gayness’ as some kind of virus that penetrates and threatens a patriarchal organism, and let’s see how that organism responds to being penetrated.”

John Trengove
Ukwaluka is a traditional initiation into manhood that is widely practiced by the amaXhosa people of South Africa. Twice a year, groups of initiates in their late adolescence leave their communities to live in secluded camps where they are ritually circumcised. For several weeks, initiates are nursed and mentored by young men from their communities (khankathas) after which they return home to assume the privileges and responsibilities of adult men.

Increasingly, the practice faces mounting criticism for reasons of safety and relevance, although it remains a cornerstone of traditional Xhosa culture and is considered the defining event of a man's life. While Xhosa men are forbidden to speak openly of their experience of ukwalukha, Nelson Mandela famously broke the secrecy taboo by describing his initiation in his autobiography, Long Walk To Freedom. The ritual is also the subject of The Wound co-writer Thando Mgqolozana’s debut novel, A Man Who Is Not a Man.
What drew you to the subject matter?

I was interested in what happens when groups of men come together and organize themselves outside of society and the codes of their everyday lives. I wanted to show the intense emotional and physical exchanges that are possible in these spaces and how repressing strong feelings leads to a kind of toxicity and violence.

As an outsider to this culture, it was important that I approach this story from the perspective of characters who are themselves outsiders, who struggle to conform to the status quo that they are a part of.

What was the process of writing *The Wound*?

We started with a lot of research. Spent time in the Eastern Cape which is where the ritual is mostly practiced. We listened to many testimonials and conversations with Xhosa men who had been through the ritual. Gay men, straight men, some urbanized and affluent, others from remote rural areas. These stories sparked our earliest ideas about the narrative.

Researching the ritual brought up conflicting feelings in me. You hear stories about how it can be a breeding ground for homophobic and hyper-masculine behaviour. At the same time, I got to see first hand the transformative effect it had on some men who went through it. In a world that is underfathersed, there is something profound about a ritual that shows a young boy his place in the world of men.

Given the controversy of the ritual in South Africa, how do you think it will be received?

Ukwuluka is a taboo ritual and representing it in the way we have is contentious. We knew from the start that we’d spark strong reactions from traditionalists. There has also however been a lot of encouragement from a younger Xhosa generation who seems eager to break the silence around the initiation which is seen to perpetuate some of the dangers associated with it.

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It’s a vast and very nuanced practice and there remains a lot to be said about the ritual that is not my place to talk about. Things that need to be said from within the culture. Hopefully The Wound could spark some of that. Maybe a gay Xhosa kid will look at it one day and go, actually, that wasn’t my experience at all, and be inspired to write his own story.

How do you navigate the politics of being a white filmmaker depicting marginal characters with realities different than your own?

As much as possible, I tried to disrupt my own preconceptions. Like most middle-class audiences who watch the film, it would be easy for me to look at Xolani and say, here is a gay character who is repressed and deserves to be emancipated from his oppressive community and express himself as an individual. I resisted those kinds of resolutions for his character and tried instead to present his problem for what it is, which is big and difficult, without clear answers.

The character of Kwanda comes closest to expressing those values, but he’s also the problem. His preconceptions create jeopardy and crises for others who have much more to lose than him. This was my way of saying, “I don’t have the answers and my own values don’t necessarily apply here”.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR JOHN TRENGOVE
Can you describe your process on set?

We had a few rules that were there to help us stay connected to the truth. All the roles including speaking extras had to be first language isiXhosa speakers who had their own first-hand experience of the ritual. The only exception to this was Niza Jay Ncoyini who plays Kwanda, which made sense because his character challenges and defies the ritual. The larger community of Xhosa men and elders in the film are all non-actors. We asked them to perform the different aspects of the ritual as they would do it, and to react to the rehearsed scenarios in any way they felt was right. If they didn’t approve of a character’s behavior, they would say so during takes. Sometimes we wouldn’t call cut and scenes would just carry on and we’d be rolling as these men were offering up the most incredible material, completely unscripted.

Bongile Mantsai who played Vija is a very experienced theatre actor, was particularly good at encouraging this free flow interaction with the group. It was very exciting to watch and it really kept us on our toes. We shot the group scenes chronologically, in the order that they would happen in the ritual.

Can you speak about your collaboration with Urucu Media?

Until recently there was a shortage of South African film producers willing to take risks on non-formulaic projects. When I joined forces with Elias Ribeiro at Urucu Media, the first thing we decided was that this is exactly the niche the company would occupy. We wanted to create a space for films like The Wound, to encourage original voices in local cinema that could hopefully also reach an international audience. People thought we were crazy when we started developing this film, but Elias’s incredible optimism and ability to embrace less conventional ways of financing, particularly international co-production, meant that it finally got made. Today we are seeing more daring films coming out of South Africa, and I like to think Urucu has been a significant part of that shift.

On working with Nakhane Touré

I met Nakhane about 2 years ago and I was instantly a fan. I secretly started writing the lead character for him after our first meeting. Even though he didn’t have any professional acting experience, I had a feeling that he would be hypnotic on camera. Nakhane is a fearless and multifaceted artist in his own right and understands intrinsically that you have to put yourself outside your comfort zone to do interesting work. He does this instinctively without blocking or resisting and allows himself to be very vulnerable and honest in front of the camera. It’s very rare to work with an actor like that.

How did you come to work with Thando Mgqolozana?

I approached Thando when I read his first novel A Man Who Is Not A Man, which deals with the initiation. Meeting him was a turning point, because he clearly got what I was trying to do. I don’t think he was necessarily interested in working on a project about the initiation again, but he responded strongly to the idea of depicting alternative African masculinities.

Thando wrote his own version of the treatment, filtering my ideas through his own experiences and opening up narrative possibilities within the frame of the ritual.

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NAKHANE TOURÉ

Nakhane is a multimedia artist based in Johannesburg. In 2013 he released his debut album, Brave Confusion. The album was nominated for four South African Music Awards, an MTV Africa Music Award for Best Alternative Artist, and the video for his single Fog was nominated for Design Indaba’s Most Beautiful Object in South Africa. The album went on to win the SAMA for Best Alternative Album. In 2015 he collaborated on the gold-selling, number one track We Dance Again with Black Coffee. That year, he also published his debut novel, Piggy Boy’s Blues. The novel was longlisted for both the Sunday Times Barry Ronge Fiction Prize and the Etisalat Prize for Fiction.

NIZA JAY NCOYINI

Niza Jay is an actor and writer with an honors degree in film studies from the University of the Witwatersrand. He made his acting debut as Kwanda in The Wound. He had a cameo role in Jason Croot’s Hello, Au Revoir which will be released via IMDb in 2018. He co-wrote the screenplay for a short film OTA that is currently being filmed in Johannesburg. He is presently developing a short film: Fire!Burning! Niza is also the co-founder of The Big Gay Debate, a quarterly series of panel discussions, created exclusively for black gay men.

BONGILE MANTSAI

Bongile is an actor, dancer and musical director. His accolades include the 2007 Aardklop Best Actor in an Ensemble Award for Karoo Moose (a performance for which he was also nominated in the 2009/10 Naledi Theatre Awards); the 2010 Fleur du Cap Best Supporting Actor award for his role as the Drum Major in Woyzeck; as well as the 2014 Naledi Award for Best Actor for his role in Mies Julie. Bongile was nominated for Fleur du Cap Best Actor awards in 2013 and 2014.

In 2016, he directed the Cape Malay stars in their production called Liedjies van die Kaap who performed in New York’s Carnegie Hall as well as KKNK.
"Mr. Trengove shoots the film in intimate wide-screen, getting in close to the performers as their characters tamp down explosive feelings, often letting the spectacular landscapes behind them break down into soft-focus abstractions. His direction is perfectly judged up to and including the shudder-inducing ending."

Glenn Kenny
The New York Times

"[Touré's] superb, deeply internalized performance manages to suggest wellsprings of longing concealed by a scrim of perpetual wariness."

Mike D'Angelo
A.V. Club

"Issues of sexuality, generational divide, class and self-loathing are cross-stitched into a compelling patchwork of edgy masculinity."

Robert Abele
Los Angeles Times

"Haunting, at times incredibly raw but always honest and caring. [The Wound] will leave you breathless."

E. Nina Rothe
The Huffington Post

")Mr. Trengove shoots the film in intimate wide-screen, getting in close to the performers as their characters tamp down explosive feelings, often letting the spectacular landscapes behind them break down into soft-focus abstractions. His direction is perfectly judged up to and including the shudder-inducing ending."

Glenn Kenny
The New York Times

"Nakhane Touré makes an impressive screen debut."

Sheri Linden
The Hollywood Reporter

"A POTENT DRAMA OF SEXUAL IDENTITY AND DIVIDED LOYALTY"

THE NEW YORK TIMES

"A MILESTONE IN SOUTH AFRICAN CINEMA"

Guy Lodge, Variety

"URGENT AND ORIGINAL"

British Film Institute

"ENTHRALLING"

Sundance Institute

"The initial promise of a South African Brokeback Mountain broadens into a measured consideration of class, race, self-loathing and self-assertion in a compact but complex drama."

Allan Hunter
ScreenDaily

"urgent and original"

British Film Institute

"a milestone in south african cinema"

Guy Lodge, Variety

"a potent drama of sexual identity and divided loyalty"

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CAST AND CREW

Xolani NAKHANE TOURÉ
Vija BONGILE MANTSAI
Kwentsi NIZA JAY NGCOVINE
Bablo THOBANI MSILENI
Initiates GAMELIHLE BOVANA
HALALISANI BRADLEY CEBEKHULU
INGA QWEDZE
SIBABALWE NGOAYANA
SIPHOSETHU NGCETANE

Director: JOHN TRENGOVE
Writers: JOHN TRENGOVE
THANDO MGQOLOZANA
MALUSI BENGU
PAUL OZOUR
BOBBY CARDOSO
SOLLY SITHOLE
LEHASA MOLLOYI
SMARTIE OLIFANT
MTHOKOZISI NHLAPO
Director of Photography: CAIT PANSERGOUW
Production Designers: MATTHEW SWANEPOEL
Costume Designer: MATTHEW JAMES
Makeup Artists: JOAO ORECCHIA
Casting Director: ELIAS RIBEIRO
Editor: CAIT PANSERGOUW / URUCU MEDIA
Sound Designer: MICHAEL ECKELT / RIVA FILMPRODUKTION
Composer: CLAUDIA TRONNIER / DAS KLEINE PERNSEHSPIEL
Producers: OLAF GRUNERT / ARTE/ZDF
Co-Producers: TRENT / OAK MOTION PICTURES
World sales: BIANCA ISAAC / EDITION SALZGEBER
Producers: BRATANA VUNDLA / COOL TAKE PICTURES
Marie DUBAS / DELIEME LIGNE FILMS
ERIC LAGESSE / SAMPEK PRODUCTIONS
Bjorn Koll / EDITION SALZGEBER
Pyramide International