



YOUSOU N'DOUR: I BRING WHAT I LOVE

Directed and Produced by Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi



**Publicity
(National, NY, LA):**

Frank Lomonto
42 West
646-467-9056
Frank.Lomonto@42West.net

Outreach & Promotion:

Karen O'Hara
O'Hara Promotions
520-326-0813
karenoh@aol.com

Distributor:

Ken Eisen
Shadow Distribution
207-872-5111
shadow@prexar.com

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Youssou Ndour: I Bring What I Love is a music-infused cinematic journey about the power of one man's voice to inspire change. One of Time magazine's 100 most influential people in the world and called "the rare rock star whose music matters," Senegalese singer Youssou Ndour is beloved internationally and at home. In 2005, the Grammy-winning artist defied expectations and produced his most personal album, *Egypt*, presenting his Islamic faith as a peaceable and tolerant religion. While the record received international acclaim, it was denounced as blasphemy in his native Senegal. Director Chai Vasarhelyi follows Ndour for over two years, filming in Africa, Europe, and America, to tell the story of how he faces these challenges and eventually wins over audiences both at home and abroad.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

A friend introduced me to Youssou's music six months before I started shooting this film. I didn't understand a word, but it didn't matter. His songs were magic, and gave me the idea for a big, beautiful film about Africa.

At the time, I felt helpless and frustrated by the political situation in the world. Youssou and his actions, however, constantly defy the sentiment that we, as individuals, are unable to create change. Youssou inspired me immediately; he lived so successfully by his convictions. I believe in Youssou and the hope he creates, and although he is one of the most popular voices coming out of Africa, many people around the world still don't know his work. I wanted to make a film that would illuminate Youssou's life and his message for others to discover.

I could have never predicted the controversy surrounding Youssou's *Egypt* album, which strongly shaped the film around the themes of conscience, faith, and simply doing the right thing. Regardless of your religious upbringing or musical tastes, you see an artist who makes a decision, faces the consequences, effects change, and finally is rewarded on the world stage. Yet while the film covers monumental issues, ultimately it, like Youssou's story, is about enjoying yourself. Through its gorgeous footage and its fun and sexy beats, the film introduces you to places and experiences entirely new, and along the way may even change the way you look at the world.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

This film was made possible by a wonderful team of filmmakers and friends. We filmed over the course of three years – across West Africa, Europe, America, Egypt, Morocco, Asia and the Live 8 benefit concerts (2 countries and 3 cities in one day). We lived for over a year in Senegal, essentially becoming part of Youssou's family. To preserve the intimacy of the film, we often traveled as a team of two: a cinematographer and the director. We received a lot of support from Youssou's crew and we had a true angel supporter in Aaton. Most people know them for their film cameras, but they also have great digital audio recorders. The Cantar-X is an 8-track digital recorder with killer pre-amps and built like a tank. We also used the Aaton Prod and A-Minima film cameras, and mixed the 16mm film footage with HD (shot on the Sony F900) and DVCPRO 50 (shot on the excellent and reliable Panasonic SDX900). We edited on Final Cut Pro.

ABOUT YOUSSEU

Born in Dakar, Senegal, Youssou Ndour introduced international audiences to mbalax, a Senegalese blend of African, Caribbean, and pop rhythms, with his band Le Super Etoile de Dakar. The highest selling African pop musician of all time, he has released more than 30 albums, and he won a 2005 Grammy Award for his album Egypt. Ndour has used his voice to inspire change and has dedicated his life to promoting human rights. In 2007 he was one of Time's 100 Most Influential People for his musical accomplishments; for his advocacy of public health, humanitarian activism, and civil and political stability in Africa; and for acting as an influential defender of a progressive image of Islam. Since his 1989 appointment as a UNICEF Ambassador, Ndour has emerged as a staunch warrior in the fight against malaria and HIV/AIDS in Africa. A Goodwill Ambassador to the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, he also founded the Youssou Ndour Foundation - Youth Network for Development, which aims to create an equitable and viable world for Africans, particularly for vulnerable children and youth.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

A Message from the Director:

James Newton Howard and Martin Davich composed the film's original score. Youssou suggested that we invite musical genius Jean Philippe Rykiel to contribute African instrumentals and percussion. From Paris, Jean Philippe sent his recordings to James and Marty in LA., and then came Youssou's turn. Enroute to Tahiti, he stopped in LA for 18 hours, just enough time to lay down a vocal track. Youssou had yet to watch a final cut of the film, and was deeply moved. In response to some scenes, Youssou cried as he sang. The result of those recordings can be heard throughout the film – but it is most present in the final song, “Forgive me/Diegolu”. As a filmmaker you always want to know what your subject really thinks of the film – especially the details – for me Youssou's original lyrics and vocals told me everything I needed to know.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi, Director/Producer

Chai Vasarhelyi is a director and producer with Hungarian, Chinese, and Brazilian roots. She grew up between New York City and Rio de Janeiro and graduated from Princeton University in 2000 with a B.A. in comparative literature. A Normal Life, her documentary debut about young Kosovars who came of age during the recent war, won the 2003 Tribeca Film Festival's Best Documentary award. Chai has received grants from several foundations including the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the William and Mary Greve Foundation. She received an Achievement Award from the Creative Visions Foundation, and has been featured in numerous publications including the New Yorker, Index, Vogue, Filmmaker Magazine Top 25 to Watch, and the New York Times. I Bring What I Love marks Chai's first feature-length documentary film.

Sarah Price, Co-Producer

Sarah Price is an award-winning filmmaker whose films include the feature documentaries Summercamp! (Argot Pictures/Sundance Channel 2008), The Yes Men (United Artists/MGM 2004), Caesar's Park (Sundance Channel 2003) and American Movie (Sundance Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary, Sony Pictures Classics 1999).

Nick Doob, Cinematographer

Nick Doob is a cinematographer, editor and director of numerous award-winning documentaries. Four of his films received Oscar nominations, including From Mao to Mozart, which won in 1981 for Best Documentary Feature. Nick's cinematography credits include Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars, The War Room, Startup.com,

and Only the Strong Survive. Co-directing credits include the Emmy Award winning Elaine Stritch at Liberty, Down from the Mountain, and Al Franken: God Spoke.

Jojo Pennebaker, Cinematographer:

Jojo Pennebaker is a prolific cinematographer. His credits include: The Ukrainian Mennonites; the Academy Award nominated The War Room (1994); Searching for Jimi Hendrix (1997); Moon Over Broadway (1998); STARTUP.com (2002); Down from the Mountain (2002); Only the Strong Survive (2003); We Have Arrived (2005); and After Innocence (2005). He is currently working on "Show and Tell", a series of conversations with several of the most influential people in documentary filmmaking today.

Scott Duncan, Cinematographer/Co-Producer

Scott Duncan is a preeminent cinematographer. He has been nominated for 16 Emmy Awards for cinematography and has won six. He has shot the Olympic games opening sequences for Sydney 2000, Salt Lake City 2002, Athens 2004, Torino 2006 and most recently Beijing 2008. Scott also created the visual style for the Mark Burnett international franchises Survivor, The Apprentice, The Contender, and Rock Star.

Hugo Berkeley, Cinematographer/Co-Producer:

Hugo Berkeley is an award-winning filmmaker and media producer. In addition to directing, filming and editing numerous documentary and television projects, he works extensively with new media technologies.

Jonathan Oppenheim, Editor

Jonathan Oppenheim has edited numerous award-winning documentaries, including Children Underground (Sundance Special Jury Prize, nominated for the Oscar for Best Documentary Feature), Paris is Burning (Sundance Grand Jury Prize, winner of NY & LA film Critics Award) and Streetwise (Academy Award winner Best Documentary, Sundance Grand Jury Prize). He also edited Sister Helen (nominated for Grand Jury Prize at Sundance).

Fernando Villena, Editor

Fernando Villena had his documentary editing debut with David LaChapelle's Rize in 2005. His narrative credits include Battle in Seattle and Bella (Toronto Film Festival, People's Choice Award). He is currently working on Crank 2: High Voltage for Lionsgate.

Craig McKay, Editing Consultant/Mentor

Craig McKay has numerous editing credits include Reds and The Silence of the Lambs, both of which garnered him Academy Award nominations. Other editing highlights include, Philadelphia, The Manchurian Candidate, Married to the Mob, Melvyn and Howard and the upcoming All Good Things.

Martin Davich, Original Score

Martin Davich composed the score for the popular television series E.R. during which he first collaborated with Youssou. Davich has also composed scores for such hits as Third Watch, and Beverly Hills 90210. He also composed the main title theme for the show Trinity, which won him an Emmy Award.

James Newton Howard, Original Score

James Newton Howard first collaborated with Youssou Ndour on the score for Blood Diamond. He has composed the score for over 100 films, including The Sixth Sense, Collateral, Batman Begins, King Kong, Michael Clayton, and Dark Knight. He has been nominated for six Oscars.