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Oscar Nominated Film, 'Timbuktu,' in Orinda for One-Week Engagement

By *Sophie Braccini*

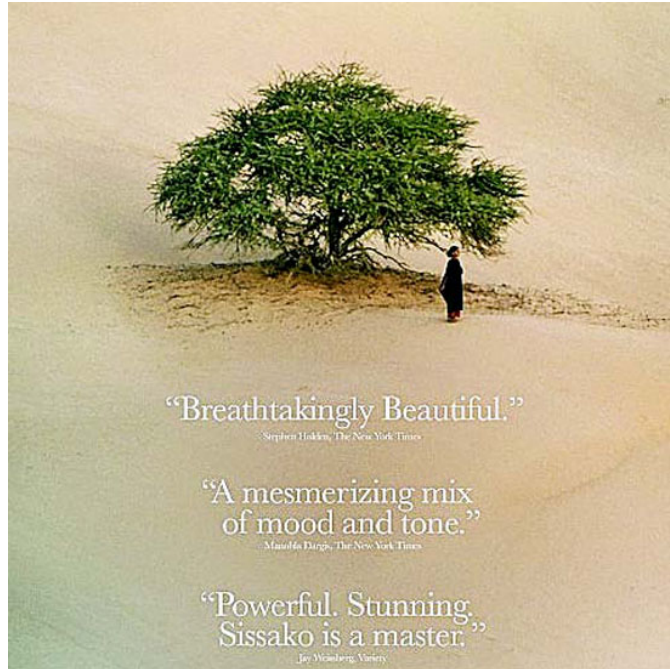


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The idea for the film, "Timbuktu," started in 2012 when Director Abderrahmane Sissako heard about the death by stoning of a couple in Aguelhok, Mali, who were accused of having children outside of marriage. A revolt ensued, and the relevant, fictional movie was born.

The film develops like an impressionist painting, with small incremental brush strokes. Set in the Northern Mali town of Timbuktu and its surroundings, over the course of a few days we follow a few characters and learn about the life of the town.

The movie opens with the destruction of local artifacts by a group of Jihadists. It's reminiscent of Daesh recently destroying ancient relics at a museum in the Iraqi city of Mosul or the Taliban's destruction of Bamiyan Buddhas. Sissako aims to show that the Jihadists' first victims are the local Muslim population and their original civilization. In an interview with French media, he said, "The movie is called 'Timbuktu' - a ... city that's a thousand years old, a city of commerce, gathering

and exchange that holds monuments and manuscripts as important as the giant Afghani Buddhas. In Timbuktu, the human values were threatened; it had to be passed on."

The movie centers on the Touareg family who lives near town in their tent, raising their cattle. All they want is a peaceful life, but the rising frustrations and tensions lead them to conflict and to their demise. Many other stories are intertwined in the film: The woman who sells fish in the market and is ordered to cover her hands, the boys who play soccer with a phantom ball, the man who gets 20 lashes because he owns a football, the young people caught playing music and who are punished in front of everybody, the girl who is abducted against her parents' will and is forcefully "married." The local Imam tries to protect the population, appealing to the religious fundamentalists' faith, but he is often powerless.

The movie is esthetically well mastered and worthy of a large screen. Many of the actors were amateurs, some of them coming from the refugee camp of M'bera in Mauritania where 70,000 people live, including the very touching 12-year-old Layla Walet Mohamed. Sissako compares her in the movie to a gazelle - a graceful creature, vulnerable, and a perfect target for collateral damage.

"Timbuktu" will play at the Orinda Theatre during its Contra Costa premiere for one week starting March 20. It was one of the four nominees for Best Foreign Film at the 2015 Academy Awards.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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