

LOS ANGELES WAVE
ENTERTAINMENT

High Q rating

With his directorial debut turning heads on the festival circuit, Kwabena Manso wants to change the game for Black filmmakers across the Atlantic.

BY OLU ALEMORU
STAFF WRITER

Over the last two decades, a host of Black American talent — Spike Lee, Robert Townsend, the Hudlin brothers, the Wayans brothers, Denzel Washington, Sam Jackson, Halle Berry and Tyler Perry — have joined the Hollywood mainstream and forged significant careers.

However, their counterparts across the pond haven't fared nearly as well.

While British television latterly provided opportunities for Black talent, film has been a different cup of tea, especially with its quaint obsession for period drama and Hugh Grant.

That's probably why, in that time, the country can boast only one bona-fide movie star in Chiwetel Ejiofor and why stellar talent like Marianne Jean Baptiste, Lenny James and Idris Elba, ply their trade over here.

But a different wind may be blowing.

Recently, urban contemporary movies like "Bullet Boy" and "Kidulthood" have received critical acclaim, and now filmmaker Kwabena Manso is making a splash stateside with his gangster flick, "Deadmeat."

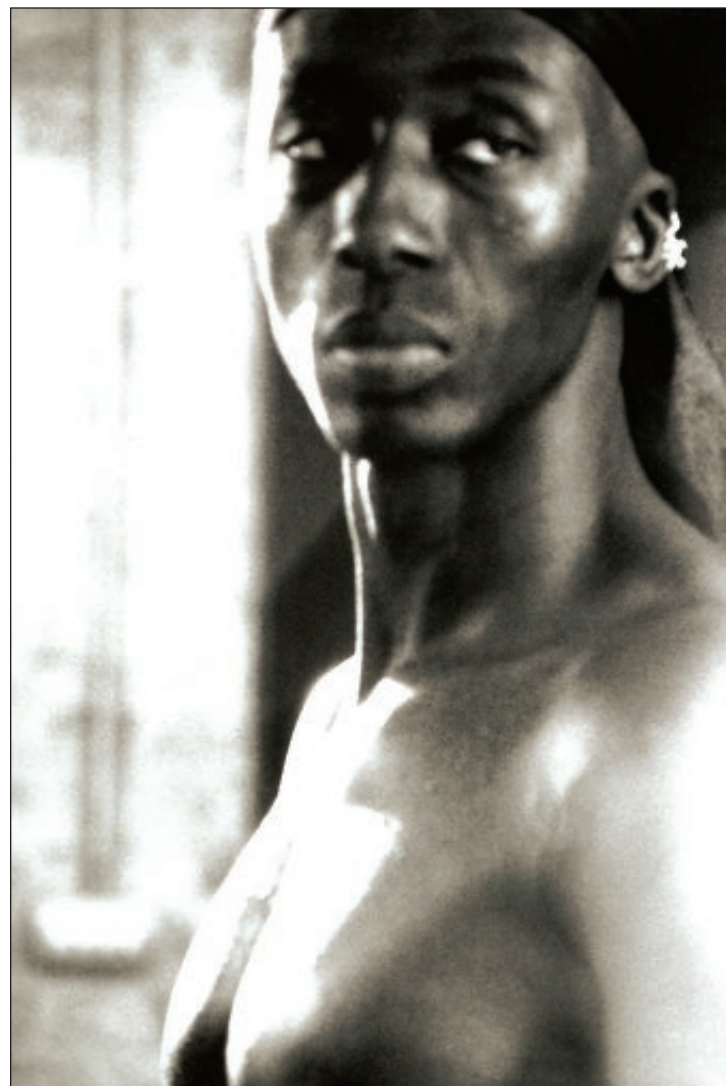
The film, written, directed, starring and financed by Manso, is about a musician who searches for the gang that killed his brother. It has attracted attention on the West Coast festival circuit, making the official selection at the American, Pan African, Hollywood, San Francisco, San Diego Black film festivals.

At the Pan African Film Festival, Manso was nominated for best director.

Quixotically, Manso, 37, the Ghanaian-born son of parents who moved to London in the 1960s, only answers to the name of Q, a nickname that started out in school.

"Growing up it was Kwabena or QB, then it just became Q," Manso said. "Q was something that I liked and just turned it into a derivative — Q stands for quality. I thought that was a really good thing to wake up to and think about every morning."

Although he shot "Deadmeat" in 2007, the film was actually 20 years in the making. Q studied for a business degree,



Urban World

Kwabena Manso — known popularly as Q — wrote, directed, financed and stars in the gangster drama "Deadmeat."

but then went on to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, where he trained with renowned American drama coach Doreen Canon, who taught the likes of Pierce Brosnan.

Q found work with directors like Ken Russell in "Aria," then Bruce Beresford in the 1920s African drama "Mr. Johnson." Beresford gave him a sobering piece of advice.

"Bruce had just finished 'Driving Miss Daisy' with Morgan Freeman," Q said. "And he told me that with the limited opportunities for black actors in Britain, I'd have a better chance if I wrote a book or a screenplay."

He added: "I began 'Deadmeat' soon afterwards [as a book] and used desktop publishing software to design it myself. I literally began selling it as a pocket-sized book at nightclubs for \$10 a copy. People thought I was crazy, but I sold almost 4,000 copies."

Q's bravado helped spark a new British self-publishing movement leading to companies like X-Press, which went on to independently publish and sell 10,000 copies of a gangster novel called "Yardie."

But for Q, it was just a political statement.

"I'm a very political guy," Q said. "I believe you should make a change if someone's not giving you the chance. Before publishing the novel I was in America and I heard a Farrakhan speech. He was talking about these Black Harvard graduates

complaining because they can't get a job in these White firms. He said it was amazing that these intellectual giants are acting like intellectual midgets. They should be starting their own law firms, not waiting to be blessed by someone else. That really resonated with me when I got back to London."

With the novel turning Q into a clubland maverick, he turned the book into a play starring Ian McKellen and began a modeling career after being spotted by a top fashion photographer.

Meanwhile, tapping his business savvy, Q got into the property market, making a lucrative living that he used to cover the film's \$200,000 budget.

"In the 20 years since Spike Lee, Halle Berry [and] Will Smith have been given all these opportunities to become big names, we've had nothing," Q said. "I wanted to change that by giving some of the best Black British actors a chance to work on a 35 millimeter film, and they did a terrific job."

PAPARAZZI

Photos by Bill Jones



Hot start for a star-studded summer

In the parlance of the streets, T.I. (top center, at the MTV Movie Awards) is getting ready to "go away" for a bit. But his imminent stay as a guest of the government hasn't slowed down the platinum rapper-turned-hot Hollywood property: last week, the "ATL" star signed a three-picture agreement with Screen Gems. The first project as part of the deal: the crime thriller "Bone Deep," which will reportedly co-star Matt Dillon and Idris Elba

("The Wire"). Meanwhile, also out on the town was actress Angell Conwell (above) who recently completed the comedy "Love for Sale," co-starring Mya. Clockwise from top right, other celebrities getting summer started right: Will Smith (with son Jayden) is primed for the premiere of his newest summer blockbuster, the quirky superhero flick "Hancock." The movie opens July 2, the same day as his daughter Willow's latest star turn,

"Kit Kittredge: An American Girl!"; "American Idol" finalist Chikezie, soon to embark on a national tour; Ludacris, posing with Earvin Johnson Jr. at Johnson's birthday party; Lionel Richie, who has revealed that the Commodores will soon reunite for a tour; Samuel L. Jackson, star of the forthcoming "Lakeview Terrace"; and "Ugly Betty" star Vanessa Williams, currently filming "Hannah Montana: The Movie."

CALENDAR

Compiled by Marisela Santana

MUSIC

Earth, Wind & Fire

The African-American soul band behind the classic hits "Boogie Wonderland" and "September" are making a stop in Los Angeles to perform alongside the neo soul songstress Macy Gray. **June 22.** Greek Theatre, 2700 N. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles. (323) 665-5857



THEATER

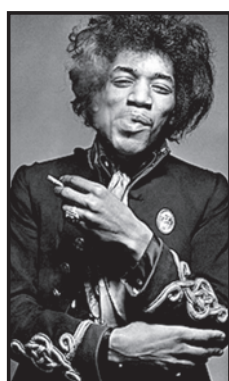
Bananas

Do It Yourself Productions, along with Michael Golden and Leroy Richardson III, present "A Day In the Life of Josephine Baker," a theater cabaret written and performed by Sloan Robinson, accompanied by pianist Aeros Pierce. **June 21, 28.** Vintage Hollywood Private Club, 4000 W. Washington Blvd., Los Angeles. (213) 417-8891

VISUAL

Hendrix Revealed: A Life Through the Lens

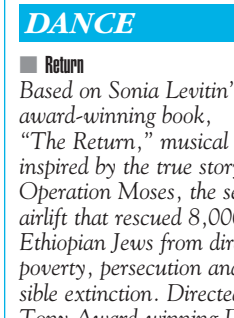
Exhibit represents the largest exhibition of photographs of Jimi Hendrix ever shown in the Los Angeles area. Previously exhibited in London earlier this year and brings to the City of Angeles works by 15 world-class photographers who captured the legend in some of the most legendary moments of his life and career. **June 19-30.** Celebrity Vault Gallery, 345 N. Canon Drive, Beverly Hills. (888) 838-1881



From her beginnings with Patti LaBelle and The Bluebelles, to LaBelle and followed by a stunning solo career, Nona Hendryx has always been on the cutting edge of music. Flicker House Productions presents Hendryx, Alice Ripley and Ronny Drayton in an entirely new production directed by Brian Purcell. **June 19-29.** Ricardo Montalban Theatre, 1615 Vine St., Hollywood. (866) 468-3399



From Theodore Roosevelt to George W. Bush, United States presidents have used the powerful iconographic symbol of the heroic American cowboy to define themselves and their administrations to the nation and the world. This exhibit explores the fascinating and ongoing intersection of cowboy culture and presidential politics. **June 19 through Sept. 7.** Autry National Center, 700 Western Heritage Way, Los Angeles. (323) 667-2000



Based on Sonia Levitin's award-winning book, "The Return," musical is inspired by the true story of Operation Moses, the secret airlift that rescued 8,000 Ethiopian Jews from dire poverty, persecution and possible extinction. Directed and choreographed by the Tony Award-winning Donald McKayle. **June 19 through July 20.** Edgemar Center for the Arts, 2437 Main St., Santa Monica. (310) 399-3666

COMEDY

Katt Williams

Known just as much for his permed hair as he is for his animated performances and quick wit, comedian Katt Williams has been making his mark in Hollywood for over 10 years. The comedian is making a few stops in Los Angeles on his It's Pimpin' Pimpin' Tour. **June 26.** Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, 100 Universal City Plaza, Universal City. (818) 622-4440



SPECIAL EVENTS

Rhythm Soul

The 21st annual American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers' Rhythm and Soul Awards honors the top songwriters and producers for 2007 and presents New Edition (pictured) with the Golden Note Award. Last year over 500 songwriters, recording artists and music industry leaders gathered for the 20th annual event. **June 23.** The Beverly Hilton Hotel, 9876 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills. (212) 621-6278



Art AIDS Art: Brick by Brick, Bead by Bead

South Africa's most giant beaded sculpture is brought to Los Angeles by Art AIDS Art. Sculpted by the Monkeybiz Bead Project, a collective of 450 women from the impoverished townships surrounding Cape Town, this group of remarkable women have created a sensation of exhibits worldwide through their unique reinterpretation of traditional beading styles. **June 26 through July 10.** Pounder-Kone Artspace, 3407 Glendale Blvd., Los Angeles. (323) 913-2247



'Hulk' takes all the green at box office

From City News Service

Yet another comic-book superhero topped the weekend box office, as "The Incredible Hulk" knocked "Kung Fu Panda" out of the top spot, according to final figures released today.

The green giant leapt from the comic pages to the big screen and collected \$55.4 million between Friday and Sunday, according to Encino-based box-office tracker Media By Numbers. "The Incredible Hulk" features Edward Norton, Liv Tyler, Tim Roth and William Hurt.

"Kung Fu Panda," the animated tale of a bloated panda trying to escape the family noodle business by becoming a kung fu master,

finished second with a weekend take of \$33.6 million. The film has earned \$117.3 million in its two weeks of release.

M. Night Shyamalan's latest film "The Happening," starring Mark Wahlberg, placed third by earning \$30.5 million, while Adam Sandler's comedy "You Don't Mess with the Zohan" took fourth with a weekend box office take of \$16.4 million.

"Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull" earned \$14.7 million, bringing its four-week box-office total to more than \$276.5 million.

Rounding out the top 10 were "Sex and the City: The Movie" (\$9.8 million), "Iron Man" (\$5.6 million), "The Strangers" (\$4 million), "The Chronicles of Namia: Prince Caspian" (\$3.2 million) and "What Happens in Vegas" (\$1.7 million).

"Iron Man" has earned nearly \$298 million in its seven weeks of release.

Those wishing to place announcements in the weekly calendars should mail information to The Wave, 1730 W. Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90051, fax to (213) 835-0584 or e-mail to msantana@wavepublication.com. Items will be published on a space-available basis. The deadline for all submissions is Friday at 5 p.m. Please include the name and telephone number of a contact person.