

COVER STORY

FESPACO 1995

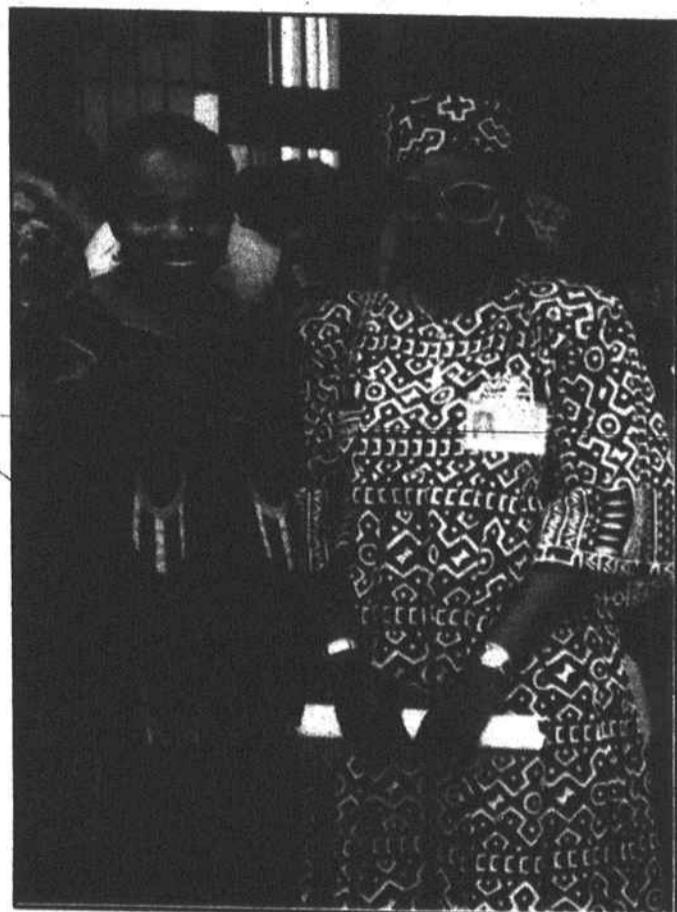
Africa's Academy Awards

Ouagadougou, bustling capital city of Burkina-Faso (formerly known as Upper Volta), was the scene of the 14th edition of FESPACO (the Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou pronounced "wah-gah-doo-goo") February 25-March 4. For seven marvelous days filmmakers, actors, actresses, film critics, journalists, artists, artisans, scholars and cinephiles from all over the world converged in the Motherland Africa for a season of cultural and intellectual stimulation.

FESPACO began in 1969 as the Premiere Semaine du Cinema Africain (First Week of African Cinema). Seven countries participated, 24 films were screened with 10,000 spectators. Since that time, FESPACO, now held every two years, has grown to include representation from all of Africa and its black diaspora. Over 150 films were shown throughout this year's festival at Ouagadougou's many theatres. A crowd of 30,000 including 1600 invited guests attended the opening ceremonies. Nearly 1/4 million viewers filled the movie theaters.

The festival received a major boost when Thomas Sankara (popular Burkinabe president who was assassinated in 1987) was in office. Sankara supported the arts and as a result Ouagadougou's urban plan boasts modern buildings and theatres that are comfortable and suitable for hosting an event of this magnitude. This year's theme was "Cinema and History". All over the world the film industry is celebrating the centenary of the art form which dawned in 1895.

Keeping with an old tradition, FESPACO opened with a mega show at 4th of August Stadium. It was a lively fresco that recalled the past, the present and the future of cinema. More than thirty thousand spectators were entertained for four hours by musical artists from Burkina Faso (the Naba Sanem Choir, popular singer Waonga Roger and the Coba Dancers from the city of BoboDioulasso) and Malhatini and the Mahotella Super Queens from South Africa. There were herds of camels and horses, choreographic ballets mimed by five hundred children and an extravagant fireworks exhibition that highlighted the shades, colors and ideas of cinema. A concurrent slide show on big screen recounted cinema's growth in the world



(Top) "Alphady", also known as the Prince of Niger, one of West Africa's foremost fashion designers surrounded by two of his models. The costumes were designed for the African version of the play Britannicus. (Left) Dr. Boyd-Buggs with Mariama Hima, Niger Republic's first female filmmaker. Mrs. Hima is the director of the National Museum of Niger.



(top) Winnie Mandela, with Mr Gaston Kabore, president of the Pan African Filmmakers Association and Filippe Sawadogo, General Secretary of FESPACO during the opening of Colloquium "Women and Film" (right) Alexandra Akoto Duah played the role of Nunu in Haile's Gerima's "Sankofa"



Cheick Oumar Sissoko receives the Etalon from President Compaore.