

7 groundbreaking African films now on Showmax

The African film industry is booming - with a range of films from animation to documentary, the continent is not short of telling diverse stories. If you're unsure of where to start, here's a listing of seven films - which showcase the continent's groundbreaking storytelling and filmmaking.

Kanarie

Two-time Comics' Choice winner Schalk Bezuidenhout, who also won a Safta for his supporting role in the kykNET comedy *Hotel*, stars in *Kanarie* as a small-town boy during Apartheid who is chosen to serve his compulsory two-year military training in the South African Defence Force choir, where he discovers his true self through hardship, camaraderie, first love and the liberating freedom of music.



Charl-Johan Lingenfelder gets personal in his new film *Kanarie*

Daniel Derksen 17 Oct 2018



Directed by Christiaan Olwagen (*Johnny Is Nie Dood Nie*), *Kanarie* won the 2019 Safta for Best Script and five 2018 Silwerskermfees Awards, including Best Film and Best Director.

Indiewire named *Kanarie* one of the 14 Best LGBTQ International Films of 2018, while *The Los Angeles Times* praised it as a "rich, poignant and finely observed musical-drama" and *The Hollywood Reporter* as "a winning combination of thoughtfulness and exuberance."

Zog

Zog tells the tale of a keen but accident-prone dragon who gets himself into mischief while learning how to fly, roar and breathe fire in his first three years at Dragon School. Each year, he meets a kindly young girl who patches up his bumps and bruises, but can she help him with his trickiest challenge yet: it's Year Four and he has to capture a princess!

Animated in Cape Town by Triggerfish (the Oscar-nominated *Revolting Rhymes*) and co-directed by South African Daniel Snaddon (the multi-award-winning *Stick Man*), *Zog* is based on the bestselling Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler picture book. Since premiering on BBC at Christmas, *Zog* has won Best Animation at Shanghai International TV Festival and the Audience Award: Ages 3-6 at New York International Children's Film Festival.

"Once this has been added...you may never be allowed to watch anything else again on your TV – ever!" – *The Guardian*

Whispering Truth To Power

With exclusive, behind-the-scenes access, *Whispering Truth To Power* charts the final year in office of South African anti-corruption champion Thuli Madonsela as she attempts to seek justice for ordinary people. After successfully challenging President Jacob Zuma for illegal use of state funds, she faces the biggest challenge of her career: exposing the systematic takeover of government by a private family in cahoots with the president.

Directed by Shameela Seedat, *Whispering Truth To Power* won the Special Jury Prize at Hot Docs, North America's most important documentary festival, among other awards. The jury praised "its timely portrait of a bad-ass public servant (Thuli Madonsela) who uses her office for good at a pivotal moment in South African politics."

Stroomop

In a desperate effort to find healing, five women in a self-help group find themselves on the Orange River on adventure therapy. What's the worst that can happen?



Q&A with Ivan Botha about directorial debut *Stroomop*

Daniel Derksen 16 Aug 2018



Ivan Botha's directorial debut, starring his wife DonnaLee Roberts (*Pad Na Jou Hart*, *Vir Altyd*), *Stroomop* was the second most popular local film at the South African box office in 2018.

The adventure story also won Best Feature Film at WorldFest Houston 2019 and Safta awards for Best Supporting Actress (Ilse Klink from *Isidingo*) and Best Makeup and Hairstyling (Minuche Bridgette Snyman).

Liyana

Liyana is a genre-defying documentary that tells the story of five children in the Kingdom of Eswatini who, with some guidance from South African storyteller Gcina Mhlope, turn past trauma into an original fable about a girl named Liyana, who embarks on a perilous quest to save her young twin brothers.

The film weaves her animated journey together with poetic documentary scenes to create an inspiring tale of perseverance and hope.

Winner of 35 awards, *Liyana* is the directorial debut of Swaziland-born and raised Aaron Kopp, who shot the Oscar-winning documentary *Saving Face* and the Oscar-nominated *The Hunting Ground*. It's executive produced by Emmy-winner Thandie Newton (*Westworld*), produced by Oscar-winner Daniel Junge (*Saving Face*) and edited by Davis Coombe (*Chasing Coral*, *Chasing Ice*).

Nigerian Shofela Coker created the stunning animated artwork, while South African Philip Miller composed the score.

Entertainment Weekly hailed it as "Gorgeous. Unlike any documentary you've ever seen," while *The Hollywood Reporter* praised it as "A lyrical work, as bright and captivating as it is poignant."

Stories Of Our Lives

Created by The Nest Collective, *Stories Of Our Lives* is a multi-award-winning anthology of five short films about the queer experience in Kenya, co-produced by South Africa's Big World Cinema.

"Brave and beautiful filmmaking, based on true stories that cannot fail to touch each one of us," – Teddy Award jury, Berlin International Film Festival.

“A fresh, warm, visually ravishing look at queer life in East Africa,” – *The Hollywood Reporter*.

“A beautiful little film about love,” – *Shadow & Act*.

Ellen: Die Storie Van Ellen Pakkies

In 2007, the death of 20-year-old Abie Pakkies created a stir in South Africa and the world. The most disturbing part of the case was that the murderer was his mother, Ellen.



Amy Jephta on writing the screenplay for *Ellen: The Ellen Pakkies Story*

Daniel Dercksen 6 Sep 2018



Based on that disturbing true story, *Ellen* was the third most popular local film at the South African box office in 2018, despite its harrowing storyline about a mother’s unflinching love for her drug-addicted son.

As Abie and Ellen, Jarrod Geduld and Jill Levenberg won both the Safta and Silwerskermfees awards for Best Actor and Best Actress respectively. *Ellen* also won Best Director (Daryn Joshua from *Noem My Skollie*) and Best Score (Quinn Lubbe) at the Saftas as well as Best Script (Amy Jephta) at Silwerskermfees.

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