



## **DISCO AFRIKA : A MALAGASY STORY**

**Luck Razanajaona — 2024**

Debut Feature · 81 min · 4K color · DCP

Malagasy subtitled in English, French, Spanish & German



### **SYNOPSIS**

Madagascar, nowadays. Twenty-year-old Kwame, who struggles to make a living in the clandestine sapphire mines, is taken back to his hometown by an unexpected turn of events. As he reunites with his mother and old friends, he finds himself confronted with the rampant corruption plaguing his country. Now, he will have to choose between easy money and loyalty; between individualism and political awakening.

### **LUCK RAZANAJAONA**

The director comes from Madagascar and studied at the Ecole Supérieure des Arts Visuels in Marrakech, Morocco. He has participated in and developed his projects at Berlinale Talents, Rotterdam Lab and La Fabrique des Cinémas du Monde in Cannes. His short films and feature-length documentaries have screened at numerous festivals around the world. *Disco Afrika: A Malagasy Story* is his first feature-length fiction film.

*Disco Afrika : A Malagasy Story is a story influenced by the moods and fashions of the '70s. I want to invite the audience to return to that era when many values and civic movements emerged in the aftermath of independence throughout Africa. This marked an artistic and musical awakening, which was a continuation of the struggles of the independence movements.*



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

After the independence struggles of the 1960s, most African countries hoped they would profoundly transform their societies and bring prosperity and justice to their peoples. But nearly six decades later, reality looks grim: Africa remains unstable and unequal as a continent and the values it once held high during the self-determination movements have all but vanished today.

My island, Madagascar, is a part of this Africa. It too rebelled against the colonial power sixty years ago, in a surge of hope. Blatant inequalities and corruption are all too common in the political system that has since been established; and despite my country's many resources, the majority of the population remains in a state of extreme poverty. A situation that, throughout the years and political upheavals, has fostered a persistent sense of discouragement and abandonment. The ideals of the anti-colonial struggle now appear to have come to naught as the thirst for a profound change echoes like an illusion, a chimera.

I was born in Madagascar in the eighties. I know this ingrained sense of powerlessness from within. I worked as a prison social worker for several years – I have witnessed the anger that can arise out of despair. But how can one grasp this feeling of powerlessness, see it for what it is, and build a truly political Malagasy film around it? Therein lies the essence of *Disco Afrika : A Malagasy Story*, whose screenplay I wrote with the help of Marcelo Novais Teles and then François Hébert.

I did not seek to represent the world of politics as a major concept, an abstract process complete with glorious uprisings and powerful images. Of course, great films were made about revolutions and popular uprisings in the fight against authoritarian powers. I am thinking of Gillo Pontecorvo's

*The Battle of Algiers* and Mikhail Kalatozov's *Soy Cuba*, among others. And although I find these films to be truly beautiful and inspirational in their aesthetics and dramatic intensity, I cannot help but feel that their revolutionary impetus has become a thing of the past.

Hence, I sought to modestly chronicle the emergence of a political awakening in the heart of an individual. I wanted to tell the story of a young eighteen-year-old miner, Kwame, through the journey that led him, from an initial state of suffering, to hold his head high, to say 'no'. What I like about Kwame's character is his very frailty, his flaws, his doubts. He is nothing like the kung fu and Bollywood heroes that fuelled my imagination as a child. Kwame is neither a John Rambo nor an Ernesto Guevara. He starts out as a victim of misery, violence, and corruption, and the entire narrative revolves around his resolve to free himself from such gloom.

For the film's making, *Two Days, One Night* by the Dardenne brothers come to mind. I would like the tension in Kwame's journey to be captured on film in the way Sandra's distress is conveyed by the Dardenne Brothers's camera in their movie. I could also refer to Stéphane Brizé's film, *The Measure of a Man*, where Vincent Lindon's character is filmed without pathos in his fight against an adverse power that looms ominously, as if constantly about to crush him.

Today, many Malagasy people see having money, a nice car and a Westerner's lifestyle as the only answer, the only way out. In contrast with a tantalising future force-fed to television and social media viewers, I wanted Kwame to delve into his father's past; I wanted him to reconnect, through the process of mourning, with the thirst for freedom that prevailed in 70s music. Here again, I did not seek to analyse the structure of inequalities in an abstract way; rather, I wanted Kwame to face his pain, to listen to the music of the day and truly feel its vibe within his soul, in honour of his father.





As I wrote the film, I endeavoured to recount a Malagasy story, a tale steeped in the authentic history of my ancestors and my African roots. I entrusted the character of Rivo's ghost with the task of guiding Kwame along this awakening, as the revolt begins to stir within. As if it was necessary to return to a pre-colonisation era, to start over from this ancient culture and instil the desire for truth and justice in Kwame. This is perhaps where the social reality so skilfully depicted by European filmmakers such as Robert Guédiguian, Ken Loach, and Abdellatif Kechiche will differ in my film, for such cinematic naturalism leaves little room for the magical and dreamscape voyages that I wish to bring to the screen.

A quest I hope to pursue through this film, since I simply cannot, we simply cannot relinquish our desire for a fairer world. With every passing day, we hear of yet more disasters and inequalities plaguing our planet. Armed with this evidence, we can no longer just stand still and wait. I find that the cinema and storytelling fuel my urge to act and contribute in my own way to the fight against what seems inevitable.

Lastly, through this film, I hope to restore some of my country's pride by sharing a story that is our own. I believe that African and Malagasy cinema has a part to play in exposing our view of the world, notably to further enrich its diversity. But today, more than twenty-four years after Raymond Rajaonarivelo's *When the Stars Meet the Sea*, Malagasy cinema has but disappeared from the silver screen. I want to give a new lease of life to the cinema of my country. *Disco Afrika: A Malagasy Story* is a true challenge for me in this respect; it is an artistic and political challenge that I am proud to embrace. In keeping with films such as *City of God* by Fernando Meirelles, *Disco Afrika* is committed and in perpetual motion. It is a film that I hope bears its own necessity in its core.

## CAST

Parista SAMBO · *Kwame*

Laurette RAMAWSINJANAHARY · *Mother*

Joe LEROVA · *Idi*

Drwina RAZAFIMAHALEO · *Bezara*

Jérôme OZA · *Babaa*

## CREW

**Director** Luck RAZANAJAONA

**Screenplay** François HÉBERT · Marcelo NOVAIS TELES · Ludovic RANDRIAMANANTSOA · Luck RAZANAJAONA

**Assistant director** Manon COLOMB DE DAUNANT

**Casting** Delphine ZINGG

**Cinematography** Raphaël O'BYRNE

**Sound** Julien VERSTRAETE

**Production Design** Florence DUMONT

**Costumes** Sandra RAJAONARIVO

**Executive Producers** Jonathan RUBIN · Herizo RABARY RAZANAMASY

**Editing** Marianne HAROCHE · Patrick MINKS

**Sound Design** Pierre GEORGE

**Music** Pierre GRATACAP

**Producers** Jonathan RUBIN · François MAGAL

**Coproducers** Herizo RABARY RAZANAMASY · Nicole GERHARDS · David CONSTANTIN · Carolyn CAREW

**Produced by** WE FILM in coproduction with AFRICAMADAVIBE PRODUCTION · NIKO FILM · CAMÉLÉON PRODUCTION · FREE WOMEN FILMS

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