



Think BIG

A documentary by Chew on it productions in partnership with WORLDwrite

Press Release: Film damns pity fest

Chew on it productions in partnership with WORLDwrite are delighted to announce the completion of their widely-anticipated documentary *Think BIG*.

Shot in Ghana, the film revolves around snapshot portraits of five aspirant, better-off Ghanaians. In a challenge to the normal portrayals of Africa as a hopeless and helpless continent, the film argues that big plans and bold visions are not only needed but happening.

Director Ceri Dingle says:

“The mountain of despair that we are bombarded with to pull the heart strings and prick our consciences has done our peers few favours. It wrongly suggests in good old missionary style that we are Africa’s ‘saviours’ and reinforces Western interference and the denial of autonomy. The Western obsession with extreme poverty also overshadows the African-led development that is happening. On the 50th anniversary of Ghanaian independence we felt it important to release a film which shows the other side the story and a truer picture.

“The people in the film are not unusual, and if you visit any developing country they are the people you will meet in hotels, bars and shops. Much of the way Africa is treated as an important ‘cause’ is more often about our guilt and dissatisfaction and rarely about supporting our peers’ aspirations to have what we have. I hope this film helps sets the record straight and opens up debate.”

For more information and interviews contact:

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Background

WORLDwrite made this film as part of its *Pricking the Missionary Position* series in the aftermath of Live8 and the G8 meeting at Gleneagles. Having had longstanding partners in Ghana we visited initially to examine the impact of debt relief (the big deal decided at Gleneagles in 2005) a year on. What struck us was the huge gap between the low horizons enshrined in the debt relief deal – which denies Ghanaians autonomy and provides no new money – and the incredible aspirations Ghanaians have for their own future. We wanted to reflect on this missing message and ensure the world knows there are eloquent, capable and even better-off Ghanaians with big ideas who, given the resources, are able to make development happen.

With concise portraits we hope to subvert the usual pity fest and suggest the transition from poverty to decent living standards does in fact happen and should be embraced. The development portrayed in this film is not the product of Western pity, interference or prescription, nor is it the result of small-scale community health, sanitation and education schemes, which are a Western obsession. Instead, it is development that is African-led and inspired and represents aspirations for the best of everything.

We hope also to raise questions about Western attitudes to better off individuals in the developing world. In doing so we seem to have raised many more questions, not least, the way Western disenchantment with economic growth influences our view of developing countries and leads us to prescribe what we think is best for others. The denial of political autonomy and economic freedom is thus back on the agenda but in a new ethical form. Born of Western self-loathing, particularly of affluence, we once more take up the “White Man’s Burden” and treat developing countries as children who must “Do as we say, not as we have done”. These are ideas that this short but ambitious documentary seeks to question.

Synopses

Short Synopsis (50 words)

Think BIG showcases Ghanaians with big aspirations and big plans. Flash hotels, fab homes and full-on modernity are where it's at; dependence makes Ghanaians sick. This film turns the usual pity fest on its head and showcases Ghanaians who are making things happen and putting African-led development on the map.

Medium Synopsis (100 words)

Shot in Ghana by a volunteer crew, *Think BIG* showcases Ghanaians with big aspirations and big plans. Flash hotels, fab homes and full-on modernity are where it's at; dependence makes Ghanaians sick. The film turns the usual pity fest on its head and showcases Ghanaians who are making it. The film shows that some development is happening and that Africa is not one great morass of extreme poverty. Aspirant Ghanaians are the ones responsible for this; backing their ambitions might do them more favours than either the pennies we pop into tins or the survival-only goals prioritised in the West.

Longer Synopsis (200 words)

Think BIG showcases Ghanaians with big aspirations and big plans. Flash hotels, fab homes and full-on modernity are where it's at. The film turns the usual pity fest on its head and showcases Ghanaians who are making it. This short documentary shows that some development is happening - Africa is not one great morass of extreme poverty. Aspirant Ghanaians (not aid workers) are responsible for some good news and bold ideas, and backing their ambitions might do our peers more favours than either the pennies we pop in tins to make us feel better or the survival-only goals prioritised in the West.

Tomato farmer Lawrence wants a factory; Kwame Agyapong is building a film school and has visions of tourist vistas on Ghana's deserted beaches; Patricia Ocloo loves her new sofa and modern bathroom, and resents the idea that being better-off means you don't care; Emmanuel Chance is expanding a luxury hotel. These people are eloquent, aspirant and ambitious for themselves and their peers. They want full-on modernity. As David Ampofo puts it, in a moving end to the film: "Oh that this country will really become great... we won't be stuck in so much dependence, it makes me sick."

Production Information

Production Company

A Pricking the Missionary Position Film

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WORLDwrite Centre

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Production notes

Original format: DV CAM

Online edit: Avid Express Pro

Digital cut format: Mini DV, DV CAM, Digibeta & DVD PAL (all regions) & DVD NTSC

Aspect Ratio: 4:3

Length: 28:40

Completion: March 2007

Contributors (in order of appearance)

Lawrence Teiko

Ceri Dingle

Kwesi Pratt Jnr

Patricia Ocloo

Kwame Agyapong

Aba Heinrichs

Emmanuel Chance

Dr Yao Graham

David Ampofo

Tomato farmer, Anamole village

Presenter

Managing Editor, Insight Magazine

Newlywed, Accra

Director, Academy of Screen Arts

Owner, Abadi Idyll Lodge & Resort

Owner, Chances Hotel

Coordinator, Third World Network Africa

CEO, Channel Two Communications

Crew

Ceri Dingle

Viv Regan

Ian Foster & Andy Hirst

Terri Badham & Sadhavi Sharma

Steve Daley & Helen Sewell

Dominic Bond & Ben Boye

Balint Tusor

Elzemieke de Tiege & Emma Grant

Kaveh Shirdel

Nick Stone

Tory Dunn

Natalie Theobald & Anna Page

Mirkka Juntunen & Eva Tallaksen

Astrid Tsai & Athanasia Pappas

Fiona McKinson & Catherine Zhao

Director

Producer

Cinematographer and Camera

Sound

Assistant Producers & Research

Research Assistants

Editor

Editing Assistants

Web Design

Graphics and Animation

Original Soundtrack

Post-production Assistants

Post-production Assistants

Post-production Assistants

Film Logging & Research

Press Kit

Think BIG

Elaine Wong & Simon Collings
Carol Dodsworth & Asmita Damania
Keresha Thomas & Holly Stead
Kyle Duncan

Film Logging & Research
Film Logging
Film Logging
Technical Advisor

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