

# Did Beyoncé find inspiration from SA's *Five Fingers for Marseilles* for *Cowboy Carter*?

Beyoncé has cited the South African Neo-Western *Five Fingers for Marseilles* as one of the key influences shaping her new album's creation. The innovative artist rides into new territory with *Cowboy Carter*, an epic sonic journey across the African diaspora's rich legacy in Americana.



Source: [variety.com](https://www.variety.com)

Like *Cowboy Carter*, *Five Fingers for Marseilles* boldly reclaims frontier mythology, demanding space for marginalised voices in a genre that's long excluded them.

"It's a huge honour to have made a mark on an artist as bold and innovative as Beyoncé, and to be included among filmmaking royalty like Tarantino and Scorsese," say the filmmakers, "as well as to have South African film recognised in this way. The hope is that it leads to more eyes on the film around the world and on our incredible local films and filmmakers across the board."

The album is an experiment, each song its own version of a reimagined Western film. She took inspiration from films like *Five Fingers for Marseilles*, *Urban Cowboy*, *The Hateful Eight*, *Space Cowboys*, *The Harder They Fall* and *Killers of the Flower Moon*, often having the films playing on a screen during the recording process.

"My process is that I typically have to experiment," Beyoncé says. "I enjoy being open to having the freedom to get all aspects of things I love out and so I worked on many songs. I recorded probably 100 songs. Once that is done, I am able to put the puzzle together and realize the consistencies and the common themes, and then create a solid body of work."

The work undulates from singing cowboy and Blaxploitation to Spaghetti westerns and fantasy with Beyoncé weaving between personal experiences, honouring Black history, to exaggerated character building. From the grit of South Africa to the sounds of the South, these projects are united in reclaiming Black and African cowboy stories. They shatter ceilings and forge new paths, redefining a genre and industry.

### **Rewriting the rules of the West**

Shot in 2017 in the unforgiving Eastern Cape mountains and the town of Lady Grey, *Five Fingers for Marseilles* rewrites the rules of the West to tell a story of resistance, as well as a warning about the cyclical nature of violence.

The film showcases an all-star ensemble South African cast including Vuyo Dabula, Hamilton Dlamini, Zethu Dloomo and Mduduzi Mabaso. It premiered to high acclaim at the Toronto International Film Festival 2017, continuing to a long list of festival accolades and awards including multiple SAFTAs and 'Best Film' and 'Best Film in an African Language' at the African Movie Academy Awards 2018.

Directed by Michael Matthews and written by Sean Drummond, the film was produced by Be Phat Motel Film Company and Game 7 Films, in association with Above The Clouds, Stage 5 Films, with the financial assistance of the National Film and Video Foundation and the DTI.

The film was cast by the late, great Moonyeenn Lee, lensed by Shaun Harley Lee, Pierre Vienings designed costumes, Franz Lewis designed the production, Daniel Mitchel edited, with a score by James Matthes, featuring Derek Gripper and sound design by Morne Marais and Sound and Motion Studios.

Producers Asger Hussain, Yaron Schwartzman, Sean Drummond and Michael Matthews brought the ambitious film to life, alongside co-producer Dylan Voogt, Marcelle du Toit and their dynamic team at Stage 5 Films, with key support from the local community of Lady Grey. The film was executive produced by Jeff Hoffman, Paulo Areal, Joshua A. Green and Dumi Gumbi.

Against all odds, the stellar cast and crew gave urgent voice to a story the world hadn't seen before.

The film is distributed in South Africa by Indigenous Film Distribution and represented globally by XYZ Films and Reel

Suspects. In South Africa it is streaming now on Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Showmax.

Cinematography and Still images by Shaun Harley Lee & Graham Bartholomew.

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