

Encounters Audience Awards named

Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, which ran from 7-24 June 2012 in Cape Town and Johannesburg, screening 52 documentaries from across the globe, including 16 world premieres, has announced its Audience Awards. (video)

Bryan Little's *The African Cypher* won the Audience Award for Best South African Film. His celebration of local street dance culture sold out all five screenings, with a sixth added to meet demand. This is the second time he has won the Encounters' Audience Award: his *Fokofpolisiekar: Forgive Them For They Know Not What They Do* documentary was named Best South African Film in 2009.

Joe Berlinger's *Under African Skies* won the Audience Award for Best International Film. A sell-out success, it tells the inside story of Paul Simon's trip to South Africa to record Graceland and his return last year to celebrate its 25th anniversary.

Undermined cultural embargo

The bestselling, Grammy-winning album introduced African music to the world and has been included in numerous Best Album of All Time lists by the likes of *Rolling Stone* and *Time*, but the trip was heavily criticized at the time, as it undermined the cultural embargo against Apartheid. *Under African Skies* depiction of the inherent conflicts between the arts and politics were particularly topical in light of the recent Brett Murray controversy.

"This year's festival proved that there's an audience hungry for quality documentary films," says outgoing festival director Mandisa Zitha. "12 different films sold out and we saw strong audience responses to a wide variety of films, including *Under African Skies*, *An African Cypher*, *Marley*, *Saving Rhino Phila*, *Call Me Kuchu* and *Anne Frank Remembered*. We were also very happy with our new partnerships with Al Jazeera English and The Fugard Theatre, which both worked incredibly well this year."

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