

# Celebrations as Tsotsi wins Best Foreign Language Film Oscar



There were celebrations across South Africa and the local film and production industry today, Monday, 6 March 2006, as South Africa's official entry for the 2006 Academy Awards, Gavin Hood's 'Tsotsi', walked away with the coveted Best Foreign Language Film Oscar.



'Tsotsi' had secured a string of awards on its road to the Oscars and was up against 57 other films vying for nomination in the Best Foreign Language Film category at the global film industry's most prestigious film event: the Oscars. The nomination of 'Tsotsi' in this prestigious Academy Awards category set the entire industry on tenterhooks.

"The award is considered the Holy Grail for international films seeking to break into the US market, and the competition is stiff," said Helen Kuun of Ster-Kinekor Distribution Marketing at the time of the nomination.

'Tsotsi', based on the novel by Athol Fugard, is about six days in the violent life of a young Johannesburg gangster. Director Gavin Hood attributes the film's success to its authenticity. "The characters and the themes represented in 'Tsotsi' have had a profound effect on audiences around the world."

A story of hope and redemption, 'Tsotsi' challenges the audience to change its attitude towards the young gangster who has made bad choices in his life based on difficult circumstances. The word *tsotsi* means an urban criminal, street thug or gang member.

Tsotsi stars Presley Chweneyagae, Terry Pheto, Zola, Kenneth Nkosi, Mothusi Magano, Rapulana Seipemo and Zenzo Ngqobe among others.

Tsotsi cost US\$5 million dollars to make and was filmed on location in Kliptown, Gauteng. The film was co-funded by South African and UK financiers, with local financiers including the Independent Development Corporation (IDC) and the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF).

## Awards

'Tsotsi' was the first film in more than seven years to win both the Standard Life Audience Award for most popular film and the Michael Powell Award for Best Film at the 58th Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF).

Producer Peter Fudakowski, commenting after the Edinburgh accolades: "The EIFF's discovery of Tsotsi places the film in

the excellent company of other Edinburgh winners, such as 'Rabbit Proof Fence, The Full Monty, Amelie, Billy Elliot, and Buena Vista Social Club', so as co-producer I am confident that Tsotsi will also turn out to be a great international commercial success."

## Accolades

'Tsotsi's' Oscar for Best Foreign Film at this morning's Academy Awards is a triumph for all South Africans... according to comment in hand at the time of publishing.

Leading SA producer, Anant Singh in his comments today: "Congratulations to the 'Tsotsi' team for bringing Oscar Gold to South Africa. It is fantastic that after many years of isolation, South Africa has had Oscar nominations in consecutive years with 'Tsotsi' this year and 'Yesterday' last year. This sends out a clear message to the world that the South African film industry has come of age.

"Our heartiest congratulations also go out to Cape Town based, Dion Beebe for winning the Best Cinematography Oscar for 'Memoirs of a Geisha'. Dion is a very talented cinematographer and his Oscar success is well deserved."

And from the IMC: "Once again we have shown that we can compete with the best in the world on any terrain," says the CEO of The International Marketing Council, Yvonne Johnston. "Our sportsmen and women are winning Olympic Gold, our scientists and inventors are honoured with Nobel Prizes and now a South African movie has won the highest possible accolade in the industry."

Johnston says 'Tsotsi' is a uniquely home-grown product that has captured the imagination of the global entertainment industry. "This is a South African story as told through the eyes of South Africans, made in this country with a local cast and crew. We want to congratulate the director, the actors, the producers and everybody involved in the making of the movie. I am sure that the world has taken note of this remarkable achievement and that this will provide another shot in the arm for the local film industry," says Johnston.

The Video Lab team made up the post production guru's, and included: Brett Manson - SA's only digital intermediate colourist who took cinematographer, Lance Gewer's imagery further, giving the film it's unique look through grading the digital intermediate in Lustre; Isaac Lui - master realistic 3D animator, who animated the tricky CG ants over the baby's face. This 3D work was pulled together by craftsman compositor Cyril Schuman. Jason Basson managed the image data, keeping track of multiple deliveries. Tracey Williams supervised and produced the visual effects, digital intermediate and multiple deliveries. Special thanks from Video Lab also went to John Brink, Gerhard Roets, Dominika Marcisz, Axel Kompat, Leila Wreyford, Desmond Allen, Greg Kirby, Tallen Chow, Wiggie Ellenberger & Gerhard Kriel.

And blowing their own trumpet, University of KwaZulu-Natal's Opera School & Choral Academy (OSCA) graduate, Mark Kilian, co-wrote the score for Tsotsi with another South African composer, Paul Hepker.

More accolades are expected to stream in today as the news is digested.

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