

6 of the best: South African highlights on Showmax this November

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Buddha in Africa; Trackers; The Herd; Carnage; the winning Silwerskerm short films; Stroop; and more..

BUDDHA IN AFRICA | DOCUMENTARY

In a Chinese Buddhist orphanage in Africa, a Malawian teenager finds himself torn between his African roots and Chinese upbringing. Once the star performer with dreams of becoming a martial arts hero like Jet Li, Enock is now in his final year of school and has to make some tough decisions about his future. Will he return to his relatives in his home village or study abroad in Taiwan?

Set against China's expanding influence on the continent, *Buddha in Africa* provides a unique insight into the impact of cultural soft power on the identity and imagination of an African boy and his school friends growing up between two cultures.

Directed by South African Nicole Schafer, *Buddha in Africa* won Best South African Documentary at this year's Durban International Film Festival, was the opening night film at Encounters, and screened at HotDocs. It's currently screening to sold-out audiences at IDFA, arguably the world's top documentary festival, as part of their prestigious Best Of Fests line-up.

[TRACKERS | SERIES](#)

Based on South African author Deon Meyer's best-selling novel of diamond smuggling, rhino poaching, and an international terrorist plot to attack Cape Town, *Trackers* has already shattered viewership records to become the most popular show on M-Net in 2019, beating out even smash international hit shows like *Game of Thrones*. It's the first show ever to dislodge M-Net's untouchable Sunday Night Blockbuster Movie Premiere slot – *and* earn more viewers – and is trending at the top of the charts on Showmax.

A co-production between M-Net, HBO-owned US network Cinemax (*Warrior*, *Banshee*), and Germany's public broadcaster ZDF, *Trackers* stars SAFTA nominee James Gracie (*Semi-Soet*), multi-award-winner Rolanda Marais (*Die Byl*), Thapelo Makoena (*Generations*), Sandi Schultz (*Die Spreeus*), Trix Vivier (*Waterfront*), SAFTA winner Emmanuel Castis (*Erfsondes*), and British actor Ed Stoppard (*The Pianist*). *Tsha Tsha* star Sisanda Henna's performance as villain Inkunzi has already landed him a leading role opposite Megan Fox in her upcoming film *Rogue*.

[THE HERD S1-2 | SERIES](#)

28 years ago, Bhekisizwe Mthethwa (Sello Maake Ka Ncube) was fired from his job at a butchery due to his leg injury. With no job and a hungry wife and baby, Bheki sought out the guidance of the local witch, MaMngadi (Winnie Ntshaba), who promised him a bright future if he was willing to make a great sacrifice.

When we meet Bheki in the present, he's married to MaMngadi, with three more children, Muzi (Sparky Xulu), Nkosana (Paballo Mavundla) and Dumazile (Cindy Mahlangu). But when Bheki must choose a successor to his cattle business, his big sacrifice still weighs heavily on his soul, even as his children go into battle over what each believes to be rightfully theirs.

This hit Mzansi Magic supernatural drama was nominated for Best Drama at this year's SAFTAs and recently won the Jury's Special Prize at the Seoul International Drama Awards.

CARNAGE S1 | REALITY

Mad Max meets Top Gear in the Kalahari in this insane reality show that pits motorheads against one another in weaponised mutant cars.

In this steampunk desert challenge, six teams transform ordinary vehicles into lethal weapons, then face off in three brutal arenas designed to push their cars to the limit. Then they'll go up against monster mutant trucks – the massive Pusher, the evil Shredder, and the lethal Finisher – to either earn a place in the final or on the scrapheap.

Hosted by Lethal Bizzle, Vick Hope and former cricketer Freddie Flintoff, this is top-notch popcorn TV.



SILWERSKERMFEES SHORT FILMS

You can now binge-watch 14 short films from this year's kykNET Silwerskerm Film Festival. Since its launch in 2011, the festival's short film competition has introduced a wealth of new talent into the Afrikaans film industry, including the likes of Nosipha Dumisa (*Nommer 37*) and Christiaan Olwagen ([Kanarie](#)).

Look out for [Oedipus: Die Musical - 'n Dokumentêr](#), which won Best Short Film, Best Director (Stefan Benadé), Best Actor (Canya Cruywagen), Best Supporting Actor (Ludwig Binge), Best Editing (Canya Cruywagen) and Best Hair and Make-Up (Charné Burger).

Other winners include [Hoe om 'n perd te teken](#) (Best Actor and Best Screenplay for Luan Jacobs) and [Binnelandse Sake](#) (Best Actress for Ansu Visser and Best Sound Design for Wesley Ayliffe), [My Gelykenis](#) (Best Cinematographer for Janhendrik Burger and Best Production Design for Idelette Jordaan and Nadine Minnar), [Janneman](#) (Best Supporting Actress for Ilse Oppelt), and [Die Begrafnis](#) (Best Costume Design for Juanita Ferreira).

[STROOP | DOCUMENTARY](#)

Stroop: Journey into the Rhino Horn War is a gripping wildlife crime thriller of a documentary that takes the viewer on a rollercoaster ride between Africa and Asia. Two first-time filmmakers, award-winning editor Susan Scott (*The Last Lions*) and 50/50 presenter Bonné de Bod, embed themselves on the frontlines of the rhino poaching crisis, where they are given exclusive access to the war as it unfolds on the ground. Carving out six months for the project, the two women quickly find themselves immersed in a world far larger and more dangerous than they had imagined, only emerging from their odyssey four years later.

This hard-hitting South African documentary has ignited world-wide awareness of rhino poaching, screened at numerous film festivals and picked up 25 awards to date. Earlier this month, *Stroop* took the 2019 Video Media (Long Form) award at the prestigious SAB Environmental Media of the Year awards. One of the film's characters, renowned wildlife rehabilitator Karen Trendler, was also honoured with the Nick Steele Memorial Award for Environmentalist of the Year - the top nod at the award ceremony. *Stroop* also won Best of Festival at The International Wildlife Film Festival and was shortlisted for the presenter and impact awards at Jackson Wild, arguably the Oscars of the wildlife film world.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE

Other recent local releases on Showmax include [Dream: The Lebo Mathosa Story](#) (express from BET Africa); the SAFTA-winning soap [Suidooster](#) (kykNET); the SAFTA-winning dating show [Die Kliek](#) with presenter Jack Parow; Desmond Dube's hit pyramid scheme crime drama, [Impilo: The Scam](#) (Mzansi Magic); the Cape Flats high school telenovela [Arendsvlei](#) (kykNET); the box office hit [Broken Promises 4-Ever](#); [Kwakhle Kwethu: Dineo & Solo's Wedding](#); the always popular [Living the Dream with Somizi](#); and Season 3 of the SAFTA-nominated [Huisgenoot: Ware Lewenstories](#), which takes an in-depth look at some of the biggest stories the household-favourite SA magazine has covered, from the murder of Leigh Matthews to the case of the Waterkloof 4; the death of Suna Venter, one of the SABC 8, to the Driehoek High School pedestrian bridge collapse.

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