

***Soul Train* wins Gold Panda in Chinese TV festival**

Soul Train, the South African documentary by Bruno Mokoena, won a Gold Panda for Best Documentary, Cinematography at the 10th Sichuan TV festival, which took place in Chengdu, China from 6-8 November 2009.

Considered the most professional, influential and international program competition held in China, the 2009 International 'Gold Panda' Awards received 3493 entries from 62 countries and regions. The festival is well known for its dedication in recognising the best international documentaries on society, anthropology and nature and environment.

The film was Mokoena's final project at the BigFish School of Digital Filmmaking, produced with fellow student Tsholofelo Monare as the camerawoman. It has already received recognition, as in July 2009, it was the opening film at the Encounters Film Festival.

Bruno's film portrays the existence of a subculture of different religious groups of commuters who board the train to work daily. On their journey to and from work, each religious group holds a service in a coach and the train carriages are transformed into charismatic places of worship.

Taking a ride into a 'new' world

"*Soul Train* is a wonderful example of a documentary that reveals and uncovers an aspect of daily South African life that many of us know nothing about," says Jacques Pauw who was the mentor on the film. "Churches on rails, I asked him when he presented the idea to me. Yes, he said there are preachers in those wagons - every day, every hour, all the time. He determinedly took his camera, got his team together and headed off to Park Station in Johannesburg. The result is that he took me and every other viewer on an unforgettable journey of discovery and enlightenment. And that is exactly what filmmakers are supposed to do."

Dr Melanie Chait, director and founder of BigFish is delighted that not only are BigFish former students getting well paid jobs on completion of their training but that their student films are winning international awards.

Says Bruno Mokoena, "I would like to thank BigFish for giving me this opportunity and a platform to tell these stories."