

# The best African films of all time

At the Tarifa-Tangiers African Film Festival (FCAT), international critics have voted for the best African films of all time. *Touki Bouki* by Djibril Diop Mambéty tops the list of best African films.



Touki Bouki film

FCAT celebrates its 15th year of publicising and subtitling the most relevant cinema productions from the neighbouring continent into Spanish. To mark this anniversary, 10 critics from different countries have voted for the best films in the history of Africa. This is the first classification based on expert opinions of a cinematography which has gradually gained a foothold in Spain in recent years.

Almost all of the participants concurred in placing feature film *Touki Bouki* (1973) by Senegalese director Djibril Diop Mambéty, at the top of the list, labelling it the best African film of all time. In the words of French critic Olivier Barlet, Mambéty's film depicts "the rupture of a society whose members are torn between their home country and the world beyond".

The film marked a turning point in African cinema, featuring "an avant-garde aesthetic". *Touki Bouki* provided an inexhaustible source of inspiration for directors in the 1970s, and continues to be a reference for new generations of filmmakers.

Meanwhile, the critics voted *Yeelen* (Brightness) by Malian director Souleymane Cissé into second place. As Italian critic

and professor at Rome 3 University Leonardo de Franceschi notes, the film “describes the initiatory journey of a young man whose destiny is to confront his father for power”.

Winning the Critics' Prize at the Cannes Festival in 1987, Cissé “constructs a cryptic, visually dazzling tale, which depicts the death of the divine and the advent of a new Africa, born of fusion”.

The third most highly voted film by the critics is *La Noire de...* by Ousmane Sembène, considered the father of Sub-Saharan African cinema. As Senegalese expert Aboubacar Demba Cissokho notes, this work is “the first feature film made by a director from black Africa which tackles, among other themes, the issue of racism”.

In turn, De Franceschi emphasises that the film “continues to be a highly modern act of accusation against European neo-colonialism, the exploitative dynamics which continue to mark North-South relations and the alienation which desertifies interpersonal relationships”.

## Top 10

In fourth place is Ethiopian film *Teza* by Haile Gerima. All of the films following this in the classification received the same number of votes and are listed below in alphabetical order:

1. *Touki Bouki* by Djibril Diop Mambéty (Senegal, 1973)
2. *Yeelen* by Souleymane Cissé (Mali, 1987)
3. *La noire de...* by Ousmane Sembène (Senegal, 1966)
4. *Teza* by Haile Gerima (Ehtiopia, 2008)
5. *Daratt* [Dry Season] by Mahamat Saleh Haroun (Chad, 2006)
6. *Hyènes* by Djibril Diop Mambéty (Senegal, 1992)
7. *La Vie sur terre* by Abderrahmane Sissako (Mauritania, 1998)
8. *Sarraounia* by Med Hondo (Mauritania, 1986)
9. *Soleil Ô* by Med Hondo (Mauritania, 1967)
10. *Xala* by Ousmane Sembène (Senegal, 1975)

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