



A few weeks ago, [UR4Africa](#) and [Black Brown and Digital NYC](#) hosted a massive twitter chat for and about African Content Makers.

A key point repeated throughout the session was that many filmmakers don't know where to start when it comes to finding resources that speak to the unique needs of African film and media makers. So when a Wiki link to countless African film festivals went out, I thought I'd address what everyone was thinking: How do we actually know which of these is worth the effort?

Tapping agency experience and resources to see which, if any, would stand out, I found that these made the cut. Here are five African film festivals to help you grow your craft as a film, media and content maker.



For a festival started in 2010, AFRIFF is a rising star on its hustle. The Nigerian fest is held annually in November, and intent on walking its talk to advance Africa's creative economy through national and international joint ventures that include development partnerships with Hollywood studio [Relativity Media's Relativity School](#), as well as a [screenwriting program](#). Short & feature narrative, doc, animation entries welcome and free. Get on this, and apply now.



Also FREE to enter, South Africa's longest-running fest boasts African premiers and an international mix. African & South African films feature, while entry- and pro-level filmmakers get craft development love ranging the [Talents Durban](#) program's multi-day

intensives for selected African filmmakers; to [The Durban FilmMart's](#) pitching & packaging forum. Awards include a doc financing prize and a one-year representation deal with [Restless Talent Management](#).



Dubbed the “African Cannes,” this biennial film & TV fest is vested in raising African film standards, and thus, only accepts work produced in Africa by Africans. Its Film & TV Market (MICA) connects makers with buyers & distributors while the support of donor countries & orgs like Germany, China, **UNICEF** and **AFRICALIA** enable them to showcase talent to an international market and develop their craft. Entry is FREE. Enter.

The East African film, music and arts festival is a cultural event of panels, screenings and networking for filmmakers from around the world annually in July. Submissions are based on a yearly theme – 2015 is “Season of Visions-” with a closing night of awards to doc, short, animation, talent and jury winners. Specialty awards include a **UNICEF** and **Sembene Ousmane** Award.



Aka “Hillywood” for the land of a thousand hills, the Rwanda Film Festival is also held every July in Kigali, Rwanda. Also theme-based – this year’s theme is “Imagination is more important than knowledge”– the fest has world attention for its social impact focus, with a traveling program for locals who’ve never seen a film in their native tongue. The 11-year old fest occurs each July, and evokes a warm, sincere vibe of moving locally to resonate globally.



Ultimately, it’s about your end goal. Got something to say to more than your block? Find fests that’ll give you world stage. Afrofuturist **Wanuri Kahiu** screened *Pumzi* at Sundance, and the world, including Hollywood, noticed. **Sara Blecher’s** *Otelo Burning* reframed Shakespeare in a coming of age opus that won her global context with 17 international awards. And say what we will of the plot in **Andrew Dosunmu’s** *Restless City & Mother of George*, but the artist’s moody, immersive, fine art show-and-tell of our people and culture **dropped the mic**.

Sundance may be outside the continent but is undeniably committed to nurturing artists and talent. Their groundbreaking **festival** is just one in their arsenal of programs dedicated to supporting artists and talent via scholarships, grants and residencies. The Institute affords coveted experiences for emerging filmmakers in story or innovation.

For example, during their New Frontier program in 2012, then-college student **Palmer Luckey** developed a **VR headset** for an immersive journalism story on **hunger**. That invention is now the Oculus Rift, which he sold to Facebook for \$2B in 2014. Your turn.



Which festivals have you participated in, and what was your experience?