

Matt Mueller



"Perusing the Dubai programme deciding what to see when your knowledge of Arab and African cinema is on the rudimentary side can generate a fog of confusion, so a film titled "Death Metal Angola" stands out like a screaming neon sign. Jeremy Xido, who directed this absorbing, beautifully shot documentary, which had its world premiere in Dubai, is a Detroit-born multi-talent (he has a European-based contemporary dance company and acted in "The Machinist") and was in Angola researching another documentary about a Chinese railroad when he discovered that the war-torn nation has a flourishing death-metal scene. An ex-Portuguese colony, Angola was wracked by civil war for nearly four decades (until the US, China and Russia stepped up to end the conflict, lured by the country's abundant natural resources); its people are haunted and scarred by their history; and the angry aggression of death metal offers an ideal outlet for expressing that angst. One Angolan musician describes the music as "a scream in revolt against what happened in our past that helps us remove the debris and suffering of war".

At the film's epicentre is a woman named Sonia Ferriera, a rock 'n' roll lover who not only acts as godmother to the nation's death and thrash metal scene but runs an orphanage in Huambo, a city that witnessed more horrors than most. The stories and experiences relayed in "Death Metal Angola" are unfathomable and devastating, but there is a sense of hope for the future; the music... well, not to my taste but you can't help feeling moved watching these musicians sing their pained lyrics. Xido couldn't finish his film in time to try for a Sundance slot but is hoping South By Southwest will go for "Death Metal Angola", which would be a stronger fit anyways because of the film's musical connections. I hope he makes the cut but even if he doesn't, I predict a long festival life, if not more, for Xido's superb film."

<http://blogs.indiewire.com/thompsononhollywood/dubai-film-festival-the-attack-winter-of-discontent-death-metal-angola>

