

Formosa  
MG Productions  
Suka! Productions

Present

A Film by Djo Tunda Wa Munga

## VIVA RIVA!



*“A blast from start to finish” (Variety)*

*“Finally! An African feature film that merges the pleasures of Nollywood with sleek camerawork, satisfying genre thrills and a rare look inside the very heart of the continent. „Viva Riva!“ is unprecedented” (indieWire)*

## **SYNOPSIS**

Kinshasa is a city of silky smooth and pulsating nightlife, always ready to go on forever. The happy few who have it all live the high life, never looking back on those who have nothing and live in envy, dreaming of their turn as kings and queens of the night.

Riva is one of those dreamers who had nothing, until he returned from ten years away, his pockets full of cash and determined to have the time of his life. With his old pal, J.M., he sets out for a night of drink, dance and debauchery.

Queen of the night, mysterious, distant beauty, Nora's dance transfixes Riva. No matter that she belongs to a local gangster, Riva must have her. Could this be something real?

The money Riva is spending belongs to his old boss in Angola, who, in hot pursuit, wreaks bloody havoc every step of his way through town to find Riva.

The dream becomes a nightmare, as Riva suffers the cold light of day – and his glory time runs out in a sordid pit on the edge of town.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In making "Viva Riva!," I wanted to find a new way to talk about life in Kinshasa today - to describe how my hometown works and how it doesn't work. I also felt the time was right to depict aspects of life in the capital that everyone knows exist but no one has ever talked about publicly.

Riva returns home after a ten-year absence with pockets full of cash to do what every young Kinshasan man dreams of. He is king for a rollicking good night - and keeps that night going on and on, scoffing at the plain truth that in the light of day he is nobody. Where can he be headed? The devil may care.

Over the past twenty years, Kinshasans have lived in bedlam, through every kind of spirit-crushing experience imaginable – war, crime, corruption, food and energy shortages, poverty and the breakup of the family structure - yet their clocks still keep on ticking, and life goes on.

As word got out that a film was being made, people all around us in the community began to reach out and help us in ways large and small – any way they could. Shooting the film as we did, we were constantly on our toes, ready to shift the scene, take off or improvise solutions at a moment's notice. We sometimes let people know we were making the film and wanted to use their home, place of business or car. And almost all the time, the answer was "yes, please do." In how many other cities, I wonder, could we have found such cooperation?

There are no acting schools in the Congo, so we made a first round of casting in the very small circuit of local theater companies, then a second round by casting a very wide net over the streets of the capital. We wanted to find Kinshasan actors who could bring something personal to the film – add some spry and sprightly energy to a film that was otherwise anchored in documentary realism.

Twenty candidates were selected to participate in a workshop that stressed screen acting skills and included tai-chi, dance and other exercises to put the players in touch with the way their bodies moved. The work we accomplished led us to sharpen our casting of certain roles and invite some participants into a second workshop where, over two months, we went further into defining characters, without working on specific dialogue, lines for which came later. Dialogue in the final film was entirely scripted – none of it was improvised.

All things were lining up so well on the production that we realized we had been offered a golden opportunity. It was time for us to envision a new world and to take a big step forward as storytellers. The actors, especially, took on the self-assured confidence of pioneers. One of the most challenging aspects of the production was the depiction of frank sexuality in a culture where nude scenes remain taboo and are never even implied. However, once we all resolved that, first and foremost, we wanted to portray the city and its club life in a very real way, as it is today, nothing could stop us. The cast and crew gave it their all every step of the way and took the film over the top with flying colors. For that, I am more than grateful.

One of the most challenging aspects of the production was that I had scripted nude scenes to be depicted in a culture where such scenes are taboo and never even implied. Our first thought was to bring in European or American actors; but then my second assistant, a young Congolese documentarian, pressed me to ask a number of local girls to consider playing the part. I explained to them that I wanted to properly portray the city and its club life, where we all know what is going on behind the walls. I wanted the film to be real.

Our work on "Viva Riva" was resolutely modern. The film dives into its depiction of tough situations so forthrightly that we hope it will help sweep away some of the old school perceptions of Africa and African art. Our aim was simply to work without fear or shame of who we are and the issues we face today.

I hope, especially for young people coming up, that this film will be a convincing argument that we can make it as a society – and that Cinema can be part of our lives. Under the dictatorship, we were not allowed to even think about making films and several decades of Congolese filmmakers went into self-imposed exile.

A young artist I met eight years ago dismissed me as mad when I told him I wanted to make films in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Then he visited the shoot of "Viva Riva," to experience the energy of the cast and crew hard at work; and is now a believer. Our future can be different if we really want it to be.

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKER



Djo Tunda Wa Munga was born in 1972 in Kinshasa. He spent his childhood in the capital of Democratic Republic of Congo. At the age of 10 he left for Belgium. He studied at art school. Later he joined the National Film School of Belgium, INSAS.

During his studies he directed his first short films, some in the school program and others as independent producer. After, he worked a couple of years in Europe and went back to the Democratic Republic of Congo to work as an line producer in documentary.

The biggest projects were produced for the BBC, ARTE and the Danish TV. He directed a couple of documentaries in the country and wrote his first feature film **VIVA RIVA**.

He created the first production film company in the DRC, SUKA!, which produced and directed a feature film for TV entitled: **PAPY**. It is now broadcast locally and internationally.

He also directed the acclaimed documentary **STATE OF MIND** and produced **CONGO IN FOUR ACTS** in 2009 which premiered at the Berlinale in 2010, screened at Hotdocs and over 50 other festivals to date.

He completed shooting the feature film **VIVA RIVA**, an international production which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival, 2010, and Berlinale in 2011. It is being sold by Beta Cinema. Since Toronto it has sold to USA (Music Box), UK (Metrodome) and Australia/New Zealand (Rialto). In 2011 the film won the MTV Movie Award for "Best African Movie".

Djo Munga was selected as the African Trailblazer for 2010 by Mipdoc.

## CAST

Riva	Patsha Bay Mukuna
Nora	Manie Malone
Cesar	Hoji Fortuna
Commandante	Marlene Longage
J.M.	Alex Herabo
Azor	Diplome Amekindra
Malou	Angelique Mbumba
Mere Edo	Nzita Tumba
Anto	Jordan N'Tunga

## CREW

Produced by Formosa Productions, MG Productions and Suka Productions

Produced by	Boris Van Gils Michael Goldberg
Director	Djo Tunda wa Munga
Co-producer	Steven Markovitz
Screenplay	Djo Tunda wa Munga
Cinematography	Antoine Roch afc
Sound	Marianne Roussy
Production Designer	Philippe Van Herwijnen
Music	Louis Vyncke & Congopunq
Editor	Yves Langlois

## TECHNICAL DETAILS

Length: 98 min

35mm - Color – 1:1:85 – Dolby Digital

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION COMPANIES**

The partnership of Boris Van Gils of Formosa and Michael Goldberg of MG Productions is anchored in their mutual passion for film that mixes genres. Based in Paris and Brussels, respectively, the terrain of their work ranges over Europe and Africa. Both are dedicated to fine craftsmanship, even as their highest goal is always to delight audiences.

"Viva Riva!" is the realization of their ideals, as it blends bravura storytelling style with the realism of contemporary African society. The two producers are already at work on Stephan Stryker's "Montana," with Olivier Gourmet, Vincent Rottiers and Reta Keteb, for release in 2011, and Benoit Mariage's next project, to star François Damiens.

Suka! Productions was founded in Kinshasa and Cape Town by Djo Tunda wa Munga and Steven Markovitz. Together, they have extensive experience in feature films, shorts and documentaries that have played at key festivals including Toronto, Cannes, Berlin, Sundance and Tribeca. They have produced films in every part of Africa, including the critically acclaimed television feature "Papy," the documentary omnibus "Congo in Four Acts" and the acclaimed documentary "State of Mind." They are presently developing a Pan-African project, ImagiNations, a series of six feature films based on contemporary African literature.

## Variety Article about Djo Tunda wa Munga



[http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=print\\_story&articleid=VR1118017356&categoryid=3950](http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=print_story&articleid=VR1118017356&categoryid=3950)

Posted: Fri., Apr. 9, 2010, 8:00am PT

### Filmmaker breaks ground in Congo MIP honoree mentors as he produces and directs

By [KATE HAHN](#)

There are no splashy cinemas with brightly lit marquees in the Democratic Republic of Congo. But that does not stop director and producer Djo Tunda Wa Munga from making films on the streets of the capital, Kinshasa.

After decades of conflict, his native country is rebuilding, and Munga sees filmmaking as part of the new foundation.

"The government has many other problems to resolve -- the roads, the hospitals, the schools," says Munga. "They don't realize art is really important to build the identity of a country and the identity of people."

So the 37-year-old Munga and his production company, Suka!, are stepping in where a busy and budget-strained bureaucracy can't, making both documentary and feature films focusing on the DRC.

Munga wrote and directed the first feature shot in Congo in decades, "Viva Riva!," about a man readjusting to life in Congo after returning from Europe with an ill-gotten fortune. In the documentary arena, Munga directed "State of Mind," which follows attempts by Congolese to overcome conflict-induced psychological trauma, and produced "Congo in Four Acts," four films by young Congolese filmmakers about daily life in their country. "Four Acts" unspooled in the Forum at the Berlin Film Festival in February.

The next generation of DRC filmmakers is a major concern for Munga, even as he edits "Viva Riva!" (with the aim of getting it into a major film festival) and begins work on his second feature. "Four Acts" grew out of a training program for aspiring directors that Munga launched in the DRC three years ago. It was based on an education curriculum designed by his alma mater, INSAS, a film school in Brussels that had been used in several countries to teach professional production skills.

Beyond learning the mechanics of moviemaking, Munga hopes students will reach beyond the old style and content ruts into which films about Africa often slip.

"What I say to young filmmakers is, don't think too much about how the Western culture shot our country," Munga says.

"Focus on what you want to do, the people you love, people you are interested in -- most important is to find our voices."

Munga was encouraged from an early age to find his. He grew up drawing, reading and going to the cinema in a DRC that he describes as more open than it is today. But due to escalating conflicts in the country, his parents sent him to attend school in Belgium when he was 9 years old.

In Brussels, he studied art. Then his brother casually suggested he try a film workshop. He was hooked, and in his late teens attended film school in Belgium.

Documentaries grabbed his attention. He shot his first in Belfast in 1998, asking residents how they viewed themselves compared to how the rest of the world saw them.

"The main purpose of a filmmaker is to make film where it's needed," Munga says.

The philosophy has led to years of filming difficult subjects, but Munga's outlook is bright: "I really try to find a way to tell a story I am enjoying."

One way he does that is by allowing the two genres in which he works to influence each other.

"I just shot a feature film, and the way I create my images is actually not far from reality," says Munga.

He is an admirer of Surrealist filmmaker Luis Bunuel's merging of a dream-world with society's realities and sees a stylistic overlap between documentary and narrative film.

"The best feature films are those that are really close to documentary, and maybe the other way around," he says.

Munga's next project is another feature set in the eastern part of DRC focusing on the civil war. But he knows he can't be the country's lone voice and hopes to establish Congo's first film school.

"We can tell the story of the corner of our street, but we'll also interact with the rest of the world because we have globalization," he says. As a young film student, Munga longed for African filmmaker role models. He wants to make sure that kids growing up in DRC today won't have a problem finding them.

Read the full article at: <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118017356.html>

Recent articles on Viva Riva in Variety:



[http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=print\\_review&reviewid=VE1117943718&categoryid=2863](http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=print_review&reviewid=VE1117943718&categoryid=2863)

Posted: Sun., Sep. 26, 2010, 5:29pm PT

## Viva Riva!

(Congo-France-Belgium) A Formosa presentation in co-production with MG Prods. and Suka! Prods. Produced by Boris Vans Gils, Michael Goldberg, Djo Tunda Wa Munga. Co-producer, Steven Markowitz. Directed, written by Djo Tunda Wa Munga.

With: Patsha Bay Mukana, Manie Malone, Hoji Fortuna, Alex Herbo, Marlene Longage, Diplome Amekindra, Angelique Mbumba, Nzita Tumba, Jordan N'Tunga. (Lingala, Portuguese, French dialogue)

By [ROBERT KOEHLER](#)

**A blast from start to finish, writer-director Djo Tunda Wa Munga's "Viva Riva!" marks the Congo as an African filmmaking center to watch. Reveling in genre codes and reminiscent of Tony Scott's mix of adrenaline and style, this sexy actioner, hinging on gasoline smuggling, betrayals and hot-blooded eros, is certain to travel to fests looking for a fun, well-made genre programmer. Non-Francophone buyers will be indifferent to pic's attractiveness purely because of its place of origin.**

Riva (Patsha Bay Mukana) is a likable Kinshasa-based hustler aiming to smuggle a sizable cache of pricey gasoline from a shady bunch of Angolans. His focus is understandably distracted by the stunning Nora (Manie Malone, a knockout from head to toe), the mistress of tough local crime boss Azor (Diplome Amekindra). With thugs to the right and left of him, Riva presses his luck with Nora by his side, and Munga matches his hero's nerve. Antoine Roch's digital cinematography and Yves Langlois' acute editing support the helmer's ambition for moviemaking that's neither African art cinema nor cheapo Nollywood escapism.

Camera (color, DV), Antoine Roch; editor, Yves Langlois; music, Louis Vyncke, Cyril Atef, Congopunq; production designer, Philippe Van Herwijnen. Reviewed at Toronto Film Festival (Discovery), Sept. 9, 2010. Run time: 98 min.





[http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=print\\_story&articleid=VR1118025624&categoryid=19](http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=print_story&articleid=VR1118025624&categoryid=19)

Posted: Wed., Oct. 13, 2010, 8:08am PT

**Music Box nabs 'Viva Riva!' in U.S.  
U.K.'s Metrodome, Oz/NZ's Rialto take pic  
By [ED MEZA](#)**

BERLIN -- U.S. distrib Music Box has picked up surprise Toronto hit "Viva Riva!" by Congolese director Djo Tunda Wa Munga. The Kinshasa-set drama chronicles the rise and fall of a Congolese smuggler who makes a fortune overnight selling gasoline on the black market. Munich-based sales company Beta Cinema has also sold the pic to the U.K.'s Metrodome and Rialto for Australia and New Zealand.

"Viva Riva!" was produced by Formosa (France), MG Prods. (Belgium) and Suka! (Democratic Republic of Congo), with backing from Canal Plus. Beta will present "Viva Riva!" at the American Film Market, which begins Nov. 3. -- Ed Meza