



THE RUMBA KINGS

**CONGO'S REAL TREASURE
DOES NOT LIE UNDERGROUND**



SHIFT VISUAL LAB PRESENTS THE RUMBA KINGS DIRECTED BY ALAN BRAIN
WITH THE SUPPORT OF COLECCIÓN GLADYS PALMERA AND AFRICA
MUSEUM STARRING PAPA WEMBA MANU DIBANGO SIMARO
LUTUMBA PAPA NOEL PÉPÉ FELLY MANUAKU VERCKYS ROITELET
GUVANO PAUL MWANGA BRAZZOS MANDA TCHEBWA CLÉMENT
OSSINONDE JEAN-PIERRE NIMY LUBANGI MUNIANIA EDITED BY
ALAN BRAIN HISTORICAL CONSULTANTS ALASTAIR JOHNSTON
MANDA TCHEBWA PRODUCED BY ALAN BRAIN AND MONICA CARLSON

AWARDS / SELECTIONS



OVERVIEW



GENRE: Documentary Film

RUNNING TIME: 94 minutes

FORMAT: HD

ASPECT RATIO: 16:9

DIRECTOR: Alan Brain - brain@therumbakings.com

PRODUCER: Monica Carlson - production@therumbakings.com

LANGUAGES: French and Lingala (with English Subtitles)

FOREIGN VERSION: Subtitles for the film are available in Spanish, English and French.

PRODUCTION COMPANY: Shift Visual Lab LLC

CONTACT: production@therumbakings.com

WEBSITE: www.therumbakings.com

FULL PRESS KIT: www.therumbakings.com/press



***"WE HAVE DIAMONDS, GOLD, COLTAN,
AND ALL THAT. BUT MUSIC IS ALSO WEALTH."***

Simaro Lutumba

PRESS RELEASE

March 20, 2021

Our connection with the giant country in the center of Africa known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo is stronger than we may imagine. We all carry a bit of Congo in our pockets. All smartphones use a metal called coltan and Congo holds 80% of the world's reserve of this mineral. Nevertheless, despite having some of the world's largest mineral deposits of coltan, cobalt, copper, gold, and diamonds, Congo has rarely seen real prosperity. The mining of those minerals has only brought division, wars and poverty to the Congolese people. What has brought them unity, happiness and hope is something else, something that was always there. Literally, from the beginning of time...

The documentary film *The Rumba Kings* shows us that the real treasure of Congo has always been its music, specifically Congolese rumba music, the rhythm that helped Congo fight colonial oppression, that became the soundtrack to the country's independence and that took Africa by storm with its mesmerizing guitar sounds.

The country formerly known as Zaïre, starting in the 1950s and continuing into the 1980s, was the vibrant musical heart of Sub-Saharan Africa, crammed with dancing bars and musical orchestras such as the African Jazz or OK Jazz, bustling with international record labels such as Opika or Ngoma, and most importantly home to some of the biggest stars of African music such as Grand Kallé, Dr. Nico and Franco Luambo.

Through the voices of an extensive array of Congolese historians, music experts, and a comprehensive cast of musicians that includes Congolese superstar Papa Wemba, world renowned saxophone player Manu Dibango, as well as the very last musicians that remain from that era, *The Rumba Kings* is an important tour de force for music lovers.

The film also features never-before-seen footage of the historic performance of Franco Luambo and his OK Jazz orchestra for the 1974 Ali-Foreman boxing match in Kinshasa, known as the *Rumble in the Jungle*.

The Rumba Kings has been more than nine years in the making. Alan Brain, the director, started working on the film in 2012, while he was in the Democratic Republic of the Congo working for the United Nations peacekeeping mission as a filmmaker.

The Rumba Kings is currently entering film festivals around the globe. Please visit the film's website for more information about the film.

www.therumbakings.com



LOGLINE

The Congo, a mineral-rich African nation, fights colonial oppression, finds freedom and forges a new identity through music.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

The Rumba Kings celebrates the epic quest of the Democratic Republic of The Congo, an African nation that fought colonial oppression, found freedom, and forged a new identity through music.

In the 1950s, when the Democratic Republic of the Congo was a Belgian colony, a generation of Congolese musicians fused traditional African rhythms with Afro-Cuban music to create the electrifying beat of Congolese rumba. A beat that would carry Congo through its independence and conquer the entire African continent with its infectious groove, captivating guitar licks, and smooth vocals.

FULL SYNOPSIS

The Rumba Kings is a joyous exploration of the liberating power of music. In the 1950s, when the Democratic Republic of the Congo was still under harsh Belgian rule, a generation of Congolese musicians decided to use popular music to fight colonial oppression. They fused traditional African rhythms with Afro-Cuban music to create the musical genre known as Congolese rumba, an infectious groove that provided a space of freedom and resistance against the cruelty and humiliation that the Congolese were facing in subjugation.

After its birth, the electrifying Congolese rumba beat never stopped. Congolese rumba carried the country through its quest for independence, producing the most famous African independence anthem ever created, conquering the entire continent with its captivating guitar sounds, and forging the identity of an entire nation.

On one level, *The Rumba Kings* is the stunning story of how the Congolese rumba sound developed and later conquered Africa. On another level, the film is an emotional statement about how music can break barriers, heal wounds, and bring hope.

Through original interviews, music recordings, archival footage, and never-before-seen live music performances, *The Rumba Kings* is the journey of the sound that shaped a nation and gave Africa its own musical stars such as Franco Luambo and the OK Jazz orchestra, Grand Kallé and Dr. Nico and the African Jazz orchestra, who were as popular across Africa as any famous western rock band.

Sit back, press play, pump up the volume and meet *The Rumba Kings*. Because Congo's real treasure does not lie underground.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I was fortunate enough to spend seven years of my life in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from 2007 until 2014. I was there working as a filmmaker for the United Nations peacekeeping mission. When I arrived in Congo, I didn't know at all about its great tradition of music, specifically Congolese rumba. I had no idea that just a few decades ago, Congo was seen by many Africans as the land of the musical gods. I didn't know that some Congolese rumba music stars such as Franco Luambo and the OK Jazz orchestra were as big in Africa as The Beatles were in the West.

The first time I listened to a Congolese rumba song, "Indépendance Cha Cha" by the African Jazz orchestra, I immediately fell in love with the groove and the story around that song. How incredible is that in 1960 a dream team of Congolese rumba musicians accompanied Congo's politicians during the negotiations for independence? This is as unique as it gets. But not only that, during the negotiations those musicians played concerts every night for the politicians to dance! Furthermore, they even composed a song about the event that became the soundtrack not only for Congo's independence but for most of Africa!

These discoveries were just a small hint of how important music was for the Congolese. Many times, I wondered, why have I never heard about this amazing Congolese rumba music before?

My interest grew when I discovered that Congolese rumba music had served as a space of resistance and freedom against the colonial oppression that the Congolese faced when they were a Belgian colony, and that later it had become a true symbol of national identity.

It became my life's mission to tell this amazing story in the most compelling way possible.

Everybody knows about the immense mineral resources of Congo and the wars that those minerals have fueled, yet few people know about Congo's real treasure, Congolese rumba.

- ALAN BRAIN

PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT...

"The Rumba Kings is a powerful musical experience that finally places the Congolese musicians Franco Luambo, Grand Kallé and Dr. Nico in their rightful place among the finest musicians of the world, all the while masterfully showing us why Congo is one of the motherlands of music."

JEFFREY LEVY-HINTE, editor of Oscar-winning documentary *When We Were Kings*, and director of award winning documentary *Soul Power*.



"An amazing film! The beauty, dignity, talent and soul of Congo is perfectly represented. Everyone needs to see this film and together we can rise from the darkness to the light with The Rumba Kings."

MARK JOHNSON, Grammy-winning producer and director of the documentary *Playing for Change*.

"In the documentary The Rumba Kings, Alan Brain, masterfully describes the history of Congolese Rumba and its symbiotic relationship with the Afro-Cuban rhythmic patterns."

JUAN DE MARCOS GONZÁLES, musical director of renowned ensembles *Buena Vista Social Club* and *AfroCuban All Stars*.



"The Rumba Kings vividly documents and portrays the remarkable story of how Congolese musicians adapted 1950s Cuban dance music and turned it into a vehicle for their own creativity."

DR. PETER MANUEL, ethnomusicologist, John Jay College, City University of New York.

PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT...

"Congo guitar gods. The Cuban connection. The Indépendance Cha Cha. What's not to like? This film fills a hole in our knowledge about how music traveled in the postcolonial black world. Beautifully shot and recorded, rich with archival material, its loving dedication to the music and the musicians lights up every frame."

NED SUBLETTE, Author of *Cuba and its Music*.



"Beautifully shot and with remarkable archival footage, The Rumba Kings tells an important story that is too little known outside of Africa. I can't recommend this film highly enough, whether for the expert or for audiences new to the glories of African music."

PROFESSOR R.M. Shain, Author of *Roots In Reverse: Senegalese Afro-Cuban Music and Tropical Cosmopolitanism*.

***"CONGOLESE RUMBA, THAT'S US.
IT'S IN OUR BLOOD."***

Roitelet



THE CAST

MUSICIANS

BRAZZOS

Guitarist and Contrabassist



Antoine Mwango Armando (1934-2019), alias Brazzos, was a Congolese rumba rhythm guitar player and composer from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Brazzos was a member of some of the most popular Congolese rumba orchestras of the 1950s-60s such as OK Jazz, African Jazz and Nègro Succès. He started his career in the 1950's playing for the CEFA recording label. Around 1956, Brazzos became a founding member of Franco Luambo's legendary OK Jazz orchestra. In 1960, when Congo became independent, Brazzos temporarily joined Grand Kallé's African Jazz orchestra to perform in Brussels, and participated in the recording of the famous pan-African independence anthem "Indépendance Cha Cha".

GUVANO

Guitarist



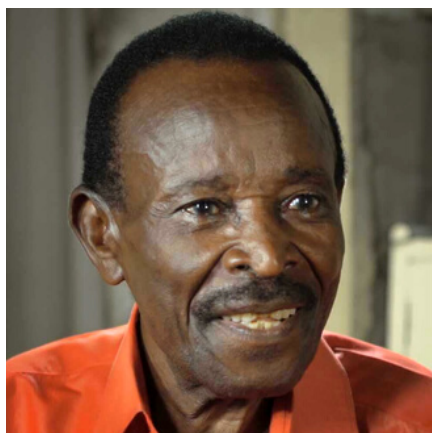
Jean-Paul Vangu Diakanua, alias Guvano, is a Congolese rumba guitar player from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Guvano started playing guitar trying to imitate the style of his guitar hero, the famous guitar player known as Dr. Nico. When African Fiesta orchestra dissolved in 1966, Tabu Ley Rochereau decided to create a new band called African Fiesta National. Tabu Ley Rochereau was impressed with Guvano's guitar skills and decided to hire him as the main guitar player of the band to fill the space left by Dr. Nico. From 1966 until 1968, Guvano played in some of the most famous songs of the African Fiesta National, adding his own guitar playing style to iconic songs such as "Mokolo Nakokufa", "Jolie Elie" or "Mwana Ya Vangu", among many others. Currently, he lives in Kinshasa, and occasionally performs Congolese rumba with his friends.

THE CAST

MUSICIANS

KUKA MATHIEU

Vocalist



Nkuka Mathieu Mwana Bitala (1931-2017), popularly known as Kuka Mathieu, was a vocalist and composer from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Kuka Mathieu was a member of one of the later formations of Grand Kallé's orchestra African Jazz. He started his career in the early 1950s recording for the Ngoma record label. Kuka's singing style was very similar to Grand Kallé, always bringing a strong melodic component to every song. In 1962, Kuka joined the Vox Africa band of Wewando Bombenga. One year later, in 1963, Kuka became a singer in the new formation of the African Jazz where he remained until 1970. After a long musical pause, in 1990, Kuka joined forces with other former African Jazz musicians to create the African Ambiance orchestra and revisit many of the most popular African Jazz songs.

MANU DIBANGO

Saxophonist



Emmanuel N'Djoké Manu Dibango (1933 – 2020), commonly known as Manu Dibango, was a Cameroonian musician and songwriter who played saxophone and vibraphone. He developed a musical style fusing jazz, funk, and traditional Cameroonian music. Manu Dibango is best known for his song "Soul Makossa", that became an international hit reaching the top 35 in the Billboard ranks in 1973, and that was later adapted and used by Michael Jackson and Rihanna in their own recordings. In the early 1960s, after meeting Congolese musician Grand Kallé in Brussels, Manu Dibango moved from Belgium to Leopoldville and became an important member of the Congolese rumba orchestra African Jazz. During his time in African Jazz, Manu participated in the recording of many of the band's most popular songs.

THE CAST

MUSICIANS

PAPA WEMBA

Vocalist



Jules Shungu Wembadio (1949-2016), also known as Papa Wemba, was a singer and musician from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who played Congolese rumba, soukous and ndombolo. Papa Wemba's music path started in 1969, when he joined the music band Zaiko Langa Langa. This band made Papa Wemba very popular in the Congolese music scene. In 1974, Papa Wemba left Zaiko Langa Langa to create his own band called Viva La Musica, that would consolidate his status as an African megastar performing all over the world. In 1992, Papa Wemba recorded and produced an album in collaboration with famous British musician and producer Peter Gabriel, and also went on tour with him. Papa Wemba was one of the most popular musicians of his time in Africa and played an important role in the world music scene.

PÉPÉ FELLY MANUAKU

Guitarist



Pepe Félix Manuaku Waku, alias Pépé Felly Manuaku or Manuaku, is a Congolese rumba guitarist, composer, lyricist and arranger from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His style of guitar playing is considered as the third style of Congolese rumba guitar, after the guitar styles of Dr. Nico (Fiesta) and Franco Luambo (Odemba). From 1969 until 1979, Manuaku was the main guitar player of Zaiko Langa Langa, an early band of Congolese rumba megastar Papa Wemba. There, Manuaku introduced Congo and all Africa to his jarring guitar playing style creating popular rhythms that defined a generation such as "Cavacha", "Cavacha Taambour", "Siatapata" or "Beta Six". Those rhythms eventually evolved into the very popular "Ndombolo" music that nowadays reigns in Congo. He currently spends his time recording and traveling between the United States, Europe and Congo.

THE CAST

MUSICIANS

PETIT PIERRE

Percussionist



Pierre Yantula Elengesa, alias Petit Pierre or Pierrot, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, was the main percussionist of the African Jazz orchestra from 1960 until 1963. In 1960, at a very young age, Petit Pierre traveled with the African Jazz to Brussels to perform for the Congolese politicians who were negotiating Congo's independence from Belgium. For Petit Pierre, this trip was a life-defining experience since the band ended up performing more than 60 concerts in Belgium, France and the Netherlands. During this trip, Petit Pierre participated in the recording of the iconic song "Indépendance Cha Cha". Pierre continued performing with the African Jazz until 1963 when a traffic accident forced him to stop his musical career. Currently, he lives in Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

ROITELET

Vocalist, Guitarist, and Contrabassist



Augustin Moniania (1934-2014), alias Roitelet, was a Congolese rumba vocalist, guitarist, contrabassist and composer from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Roitelet performed and recorded with most of the legendary record labels of the golden era of Congolese rumba such as CEFA, Opika, Loningisa and Esengo. Roitelet started his musical career when he was 16 years old, recording for the Opika label. Later, the Belgian musician Bill Alexandre called him to record for his CEFA label. In 1955, Roitelet started recording for the Loningisa label, where he met most of the musicians that would soon become the first line up of the OK Jazz orchestra. In 1956, Roitelet became an official member of Franco Luambo's OK Jazz. He was also a member of Beguen Band, Rock'A Mambo orchestra and Kin Cassonade band.

THE CAST

MUSICIANS

SIMARO LUTUMBA

Guitarist



Simaro Massiya Lutumba Ndomanueno (1938-2019), simply known as Simaro, was a Congolese rumba rhythm guitar player, composer and lyricist from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He was one of the key members of Franco Luambo's OK Jazz orchestra. Simaro started his career in the Micra Jazz orchestra in the early 1950s. In 1961, Simaro joined the OK Jazz orchestra where he spent most of his musical career. Simaro is considered as one of the great composers of Congolese rumba, probably the greatest, not only for his sweet guitar melodies, but also for his creative and deep lyrics that invited the listener to reflect on some of the most transcendent aspects of life. Due to this lyricism, the Congolese nicknamed him "the poet". When Franco Luambo died in 1989, Simaro became the leader of the OK Jazz orchestra. In 1994, he dissolved the OK Jazz orchestra and created a new band called Bana O.K. (The Sons of the OK). Some of his most famous songs are "Mabele", "Ebale Ya Zaïre" and "Testament Ya Bowule".



***"WE HAD BANDS THAT WERE AS FAMOUS AS THE
BEATLES OR THE ROLLING STONES."***

Clément Ossinonde

THE CAST

EXPERTS

ANTOINE MANDA TCHEBWA

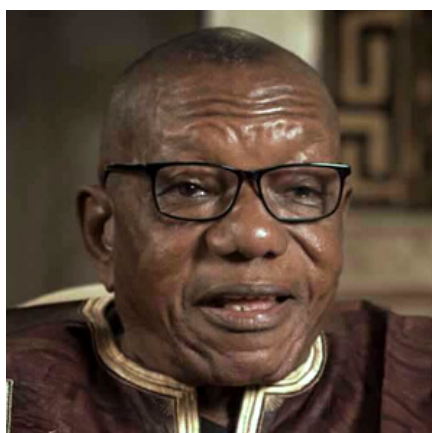
African Music Historian



Manda Tchewa is an interdisciplinary researcher, historian, and author from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His main body of research relates to Bantu and Afro-Caribbean traditions, culture and music. He holds a doctorate in Human Rights from the UNESCO Chair at the University of Kinshasa. Manda Tchewa has been a consultant for several African and international organizations such as the African Union, the International Organization of La Francophonie and UNESCO. He is a former director of the National Radio and Television of Congo (RTNC) and a former artistic director of the African Performing Arts Market (MASA) in Abidjan. Currently, he is the professor of Bantu civilizations at the UNESCO Chair "Bantuphonie Network" at the Omar Bongo University in Libreville, Gabon, and the director of the International Center of Bantu Civilizations (CICIBA) located also in Libreville. Manda Tchewa has published more than 25 books about African civilizations, focusing on their history and their cultural traditions, 12 of them are devoted to Congolese rumba and Afro-cuban music.

CLÉMENT OSSINONDE

Music Columnist



Clément Ossinonde is a music journalist from Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of Congo, the country that lies on the other side of the Congo river, across from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Clément has hosted several radio shows in Radio Congo and Radio Liberté. He is a former director of the Union of Congolese Musicians (UMC) and the National Union of Writers and Artists of Congo (UNEAC). Clément has devoted his life to the promotion and development of Congolese rumba. He publishes regularly in several websites such as *Starducongo* and *Mboka Mosika*. Clément has written several books about Congolese rumba, among them: *L'histoire de la Rumba Cubano Congolaise* and *Panorama de la Musique Congolaise*.

THE CAST

EXPERTS

JEAN-PIERRE FRANÇOIS NIMY

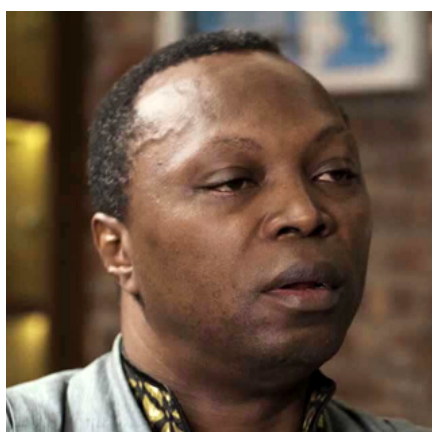
Congolese Music Historian



Jean-Pierre François Nimy Nzonga is a musicologist, historian and former minister from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He graduated in political and diplomatic sciences in the Université Libre de Bruxelles, and he holds a degree in history from the Catholic University of Louvain-La-Neuve, both in Belgium. He is the author of the book *Dictionnaire des immortels de la musique congolaise moderne*, an exhaustive and rigorous work that presented, for the first time, the biographies of more than 330 Congolese rumba musicians, all explored and documented from a historical, sociological and anthropological perspective.

LUBANGI MUNIANIA

African Art Historian



Lubangi Muniania is an art educator from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, specializing in the visual and performing arts of Africa. Lubangi worked as the Director of Education at the Museum for African Art in New York. He has produced educational events for organizations such as Harvard University, Yale University, Columbia University, the United Nations, Africa-America Institute, Sony, AT&T and NBC. Lubangi has been the producer of several documentary films related to the Democratic Republic of the Congo such as the Bill Moyers PBS Journal episode about the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the *Memories of Lumumba* film for the Museum for African Art of New York. Currently, Lubangi Muniania is the President of Tabilulu Productions, an organization dedicated to promoting a positive image of Africa that aims to challenge many misconceptions about Africa, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

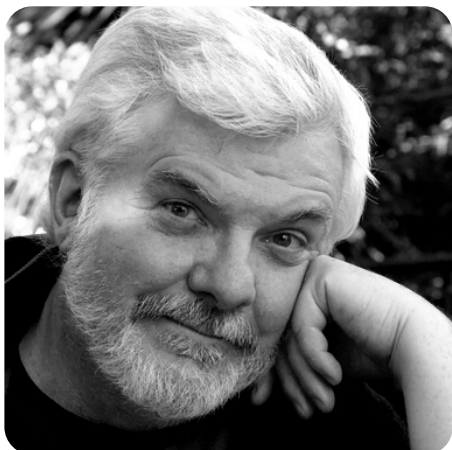
THE CREW

ALAN BRAIN - Director



Alan Brain Delgado is a Peruvian-American filmmaker and journalist. His 26-year career includes editing and directing commercial ads, short and long form documentaries, feature-length movies and TV series. Alan Brain has worked as story editor for several prominent Peruvian journalists such as César Hildebrandt, one of the most important Peruvian journalists of the last decades. Alan has also collaborated as an editor, in several projects of the renowned Peruvian Hollywood Film Director and Producer, Luis Llosa. From 2008 until 2014, Alan worked as a documentary filmmaker for the United Nations mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There, Alan developed a passion for Congolese music and started working in *The Rumba Kings*.

ALASTAIR JOHNSTON - Consulting Producer



Alastair Johnston is an author and small press publisher from the United States of America. He taught Visual Studies at the University of California from 1979 until 2011. After spending several months traveling through Africa, in 1983 he became passionately interested in the music of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since then, he has written about Congolese music in *WIRED*, *Whole Earth Review*, *Songlines* and his own online magazine called *muzikifan*. Alastair is the author of the only biography and discography of the legendary Congolese rumba guitar player, Nicolas Kasanda, alias Dr. Nico.

THE CREW

MIRELLA BELLIDO - Sound Designer



Mirella Bellido is a sound supervisor and sound designer from Peru. She has worked on the sound of more than 20 feature-length films, fiction and documentary, from different countries such as France, Canada, Chile and Peru. She has been part of the sound team behind the award winning Peruvian film *Retablo* and the commercially successful Peruvian film *Once Machos*. She is currently working on the post-production of two new Peruvian feature-length films, *Among these trees that I have invented* and *Antonia in life*.

BRIAN STECKLER - Music Composer



Brian Steckler is an award winning composer for film, television, and media as well as an independent record producer, songwriter, and mixer from the United States of America. You can hear his recent work on the NBC hit sitcom, *Perfect Harmony*, in multiple Netflix and Hulu shows, and in the award winning documentary film called *Hand Rolled - A Film About Cigars*. His 25 year career includes creating Clio winning Super Bowl ads while living in Nashville, and writing and producing multi million selling pop songs for major labels in Los Angeles.

***"CONGOLESE RUMBA WILL
NEVER GET WRINKLES."***

Papa Wemba



DIRECTOR'S FAQ

What motivated you to make this film?

I was fifteen years old when I listened to a Beatles song for the first time growing up in Lima, Peru. I was forty years old when I listened to a song by Congolese musician Franco Luambo and his OK Jazz orchestra for the first time. It's difficult to believe that, in order to truly know the vast artistic wealth of the nations that make up the African continent, it's necessary to tear down the immense wall behind which the cultural hegemony of the West has hidden these treasures. There are musical geniuses sitting behind that wall, waiting for their turn to shine on the world stage. Real giants who, had they been born in New York, London, Vienna, Bonn or Paris, today would have hundreds of books written about their lives, and dozens of reissues of their music. I hope that *The Rumba Kings* will allow music fans that aren't already familiar with African music to break that wall, and enjoy the vibrant rhythm of Congolese rumba.

What were some of the creative challenges you faced making this film?

The main creative challenge was related to the way these Congolese rumba stars were going to be portrayed in the film. I noticed that popular African music, Congolese music in particular, has been usually portrayed in documentary films from an ethnographic and compassionate point of view, highlighting the musicians' struggle and their surrounding environment instead of focusing on their music or achievements. So, as a music fan, films with this singular lens can be disappointing because you end up watching detailed scenes of African musicians in their daily lives and environment, but you do not get to see sequences where their performances and their music are portrayed in a professional way. And this clearly affects the perception of the viewer. So, it became clear that I needed to craft a film that presented these Congolese rumba legends as real stars, providing proper space for their performances and for their music. As much as the film has a strong social narrative, we have tried to keep its DNA very musical, always thinking about the fans of Congolese rumba who have been in touch with us for the last four years. We have made our best effort to include long uninterrupted sequences of archival music performances of these music icons - most of them never-before-seen and none in this quality - so fans can enjoy the music.

DIRECTOR'S FAQ

What have you learned through the process of making this film?

I learned a lot about the musical link that unites Cuba and Congo. The Cuban music that arrived in the Belgian Congo in the 1930s in musical records, the one that inspired the Congolese to create Congolese rumba, was Son Cubano. It was not Cuban rumba. Musically speaking, Cuban rumba and Congolese rumba are completely different, and they only share the word “rumba”. The Congolese only used the word “rumba” to name their music because it was a very popular word that many people, at that time, used to label most of the music coming from Cuba. What inspired the Congolese was Son Cubano, which musically is very similar to Congolese rumba. The twist comes when we discovered that there was a Congolese element in the creation of the Son Cubano. Because it was created in Cuba, in the late 19th century, with the contribution of a significant group of Congolese that were sent to Cuba as slaves during the transatlantic slave trade. We managed to put together a sequence that made a compelling case about the Congolese roots of Cuban musicians Benny Moré and Arsenio Rodríguez, two of Cuba’s biggest stars. Unfortunately, this sequence became too much of a detour from the core narrative of the film and did not make it to the final cut.

How long did it take to make this film from inception to final edit?

I began researching the topic in 2012 while I was in Congo. The filming started one year later, in 2013, and the film was finished in the first months of 2021. So, it took me around nine years from inception to final edit. It wasn’t easy and I experienced countless valleys and mountains. Along the way, I developed a very friendly, super cool and passionate, network of Congolese rumba fans and experts from every corner of the world -- from Japan, to Kenya, France, Belgium, USA, Colombia, and Denmark. A virtual community of Congolese rumba lovers that have cheered, advised and supported this project over all these years. They are all friendships that will last a lifetime.

What kept you going during the nine years it took you to finish the film?

I always felt a strong responsibility towards all the musicians that shared their life stories with me and that performed for the film. I met these passionate artists during my last years in Kinshasa and we became friends.

DIRECTOR'S FAQ

Unfortunately, many of them have passed away along the years that it took me to complete the film. It's extremely painful to think that they will not get to see themselves in the documentary. This film is a late homage to all of them: Simaro Lutumba, Moniana Roitelet, Munange Maproco, Kuka Mathieu, Brazzos, Papa Wemba and Manu Dibango. *The Rumba Kings* documentary represents, literally, the last chance we have to hear their amazing stories about Congolese rumba.

Did you encounter any major obstacle while producing the film?

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has extremely poor audiovisual archives and it was very difficult to find decent quality videos and photos to portray the stardom of these Congolese musicians. This forced us to pursue every possible avenue of archival research. From museums and archival organizations, to private family collections, fans collections, and even online auctions. Sometimes, we would spend a whole month trying to locate a book that contained one photo that we needed, or we would spend weeks communicating with collectors all around the world to find the best vinyl copy of one single song. In Kinshasa, we spent months tracking down the best quality copies available of the videos we used in the film. But it did not end there. We have restored, frame by frame, most of the archival music performances in the film to provide the viewer with the best possible experience. We have also gone to great lengths to improve the sound of each song in the film. We knew that *The Rumba Kings* is a music documentary and the music needed to sound great.

Most of the speakers in the film are Congolese, was this an intentional decision?

When, in 1960, Congolese national hero Patrice Lumumba was in prison, weeks away from his assassination, he wrote in a letter to his wife: *"The day will come when history will speak. But it will not be the history which will be taught in Brussels, Paris, Washington or the United Nations. It will be the history which will be taught in the countries which have won freedom from colonialism and its puppets. Africa will write its own history, and it will be, to the north and to the south of the Sahara, a history of glory and dignity."*

I'm not Congolese, I'm Peruvian. But, I have done my best to honor those words. It was clear to me that this story needed to be told by Congolese themselves - experts and musicians alike.

DIRECTOR'S FAQ

What do you hope audiences will take away from seeing *The Rumba Kings*?

I hope audiences get to experience the joy of this music and, hopefully, decide to start their own journey not only in Congolese rumba but in African music in general. I assure you that it will be a beautiful trip, full of pleasant surprises around every corner. It is our responsibility to create awareness about the vast number of cultural expressions, in this specific case musical ones, that aren't adequately represented in the mainstream media. We all have a chance to change the tide every time that we share a song with our friends or family. I hope that viewers finish this film with a desire to head to Kinshasa to groove to some amazing live Congolese rumba music!



***"EVERYBODY DREAMED
OF GOING TO KINSHASA."***

Manu Dibango

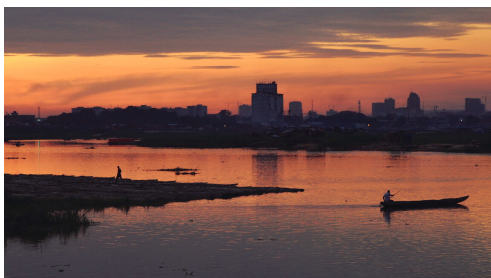
SOCIAL MEDIA



FILM STILLS

You can download high resolution film stills, promotional photos and posters from our site at:

www.therumbakings.com/press



FULL CREW AND CAST

Directed by

Alan Brain

Produced by

Alan Brain

Monica Carlson

Consulting Producer

Alastair Johnston

Historical Consultants

Manda Tchebwa

Alastair Johnston

Editor

Alan Brain

Sound Designer

Mirella Bellido

Original Music

Brian Steckler

Featuring

Antoine Nodule Montswet "Papa Noel"

Armand Mwango "Brazzos"

Augustin Muniania "Roitelet"

Daniel Rex Lusukamu Diame

Faugus Izeidi

Jean Goubald

Jean Nsita-Matama "Rolly"

Jean Paul Vangu "Guvano"

Jeannot Bombenga Wewando

Joseph Munange "Maproco"

Jules Shungu Wembadio "Papa Wemba"

Manu Dibango

Moise Luntadila Nsona "Fracasseur"

Mukubuele Nzoku "Bikunda"

Featuring

Nkuka Mathieu Mwana "Kuka Mathieu"

Paul Mizele

Paul Mwanga

Pierre Yantula Elengesa "Petit Pierre"

Pepe Felly Manuaku Waku

Simaro Lutumba

Verckys Kiamuangana Mateta

Yossa Taluki

Additional Interviews

Aime Bassay

André Yoka Lye Mudaba

Biyevanga Lengemi

Clément Ossinondé

Christos Papadimitriou

Jean Lema "Jamais Kolonga"

Jean-Pierre Nimy Nzonga

Lubangi Muniania

Manda Tchebwa

Mathilda Benatar

Raoul Yema Die Lala

Victor Cornelis

Yves Luambo

Additional Voices

Thomas Kanza

Cinematography

Alan Brain

Opening Sequence Cinematography

Cristopher Luna Victoria

Camera

Corey Florin

Junior Makolo

Olivier Le Blanc

Raf Claes

FULL CREW AND CAST

Production Assistants

Aime Bassay
Bianca Muñiz
Cedric Matimbo
Kevin Jordan

Archival Producer

Alan Brain

Colourist

Cesar Perez

Rotoscopy

Ajesh Thomas

Graphic Design

Anni Buchner
Srdan Pesic

Motion Graphics

Shift Visual Lab

Sound Re-recording Mixer

Mirella Bellido

Music Performances Mixer

Mark Simmons / Pacific Studios

Sound Recording Engineers

Doris Beya
Job Kaba Kalombo
Mike Sona
Zola Tempo

Studio Musicians

Axel Mayiza Konde
Babel Djonga Ngonda
Guylain Nzuzi Kiala
Isaac Nsingi Odjima
Jacobo Garcés Quiroz
Job Kaba Kalombo
Mike Sona
Robert-Jan Zandvoort
Stanislas Kalamba
Toussaint Kimbembu
Kizito M. Like

Foley Artist

Oliver Magana

Dialogue Editor

Mirella Bellido

Sound Post Production Assistant

Christian Ñeco

Additional Original Music

Angel Lorenzo Ramos

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SUPPORT OF**



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