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Second Babylon programme to kick off for European, African filmmakers

23 March, 2011 | By Kate Eberle

The second annual Babylon International programme for European and African filmmakers, run by Scenario Films, is set to launch in Berlin in May.

The programme, which will accept 15 projects, will begin with script and production development workshops and networking in Berlin between May 3 and 7.

Participants will reconvene for a production lab at the Nigerian Film Institute in Abuja, Nigeria in September. The programme will ultimately select five projects to be marketed at the Berlinale in February 2012.

"We're looking forward to lots of exciting new projects and a pretty equal split between African and European filmmakers," said Scenario Films producer Fiona Howe, who added that Babylon's purpose is "to increase diversity in the audiovisual landscape."

The Babylon film development initiative has run cross-cultural filmmaking workshops in Rotterdam and Cannes with its Babylon Europe programme since 2007.

Last year the programme expanded to include Babylon International, which aims to link filmmaking in Europe with other continents. The programme is funded by the EU's Media Mundus and the Nigerian Film Corporation.

"It was a very successful pilot year, we had really positive feedback all around," said Howe. She added that the programme's success came "against the odds" after local violence forced the programme's second workshop to relocate from Jos, Nigeria to Abuja at the last minute.

This year, Babylon International has taken steps to provide a smoother programme experience. Despite an original application deadline of March 7, Babylon extended the deadline to March 15 so that more applications could be reviewed, while making sure that accepted filmmakers would have the necessary six weeks before the programme to obtain visas.

Last year's Babylon International programme accepted 14 projects and began during the Berlin International Film Festival in February; eight projects continued with the Abuja workshop in April. Participants included Funke Oyebanjo and Sebari Diете-Spiff's *The Land*, Farouk Lasaki's [pictured] *Wahala*, Chike Ibekwe's *Letter to the Prof* and Jide Bello's *My Brother's Sin*, all of which were selected to receive financing from the Nigerian Film Corporation.

Howe noted that the accepted projects for 2011's programme will be announced in mid April on Babylon's website at www.babylon-film.eu.



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