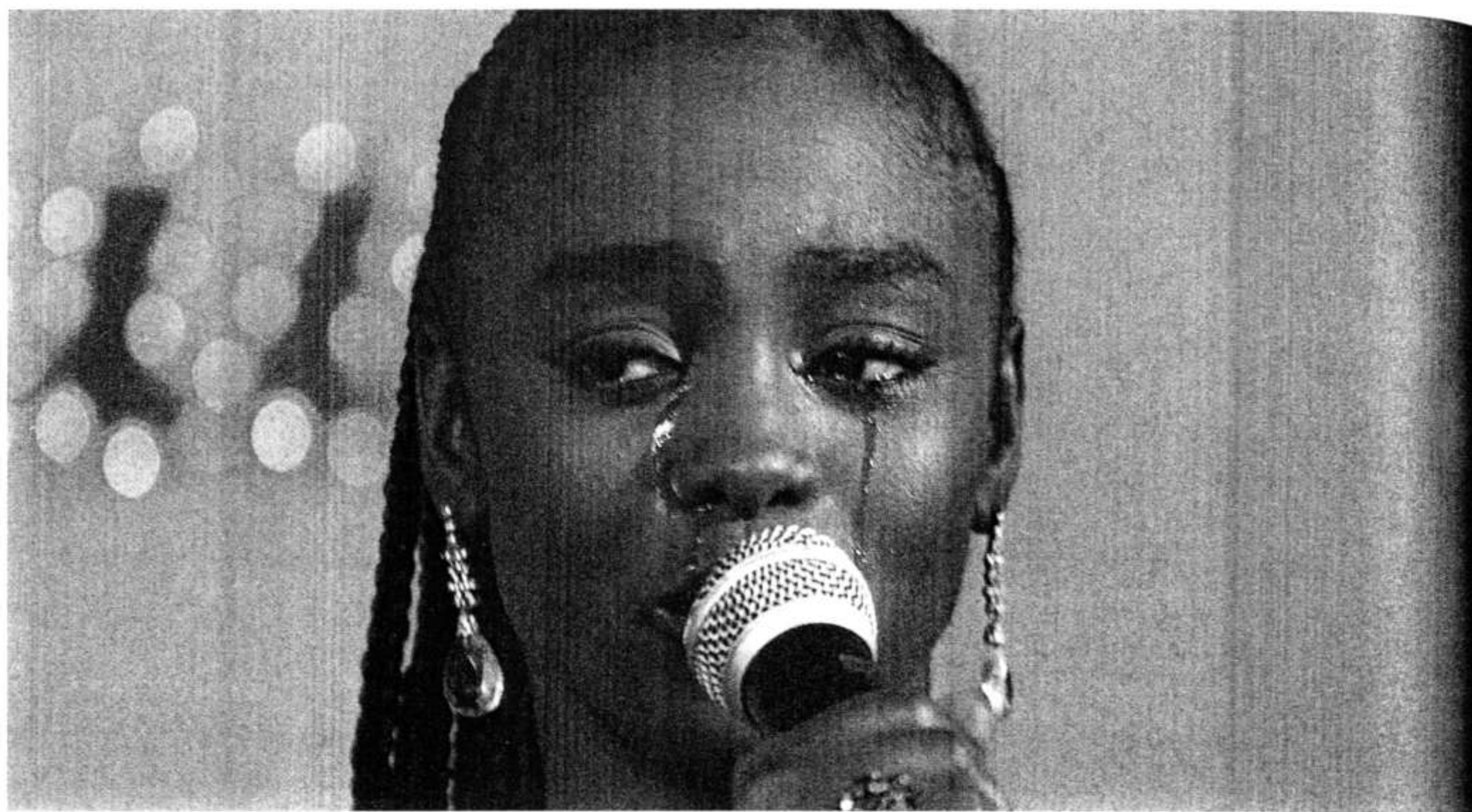


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Bamako

Abderrahmane Sissako

FRANCE/MALI/USA, 2006
Bambara

115 minutes ■ Colour/35mm

Production Company:

**Archipel 33/Mali Images/
Chinguitty Films/ARTE France Cinéma/
Louverture Films**

Executive Producer: **Danny Glover,
Joslyn Barnes**

Producer: **Denis Freyd,
Abderrahmane Sissako**

Screenplay: **Abderrahmane Sissako**

Cinematographer: **Jacques Besse**

Editor: **Nadia ben Rachid**

Production Designer:

Mahamadou Kouyaté

Sound: **Dana Farzanehpour**

Principal Cast: **Aïssa Maïga,**

Tiéoura Traoré, Hélène Diarra,

Habib Dembélé, Djénéba Koné,

Hamadoun Kassogué, Danny Glover,

Elia Suleiman, Zeka Laplaine,

Samba Diakité, Aminata Traoré

Production: **Archipel 33,**

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(see page 430)

Abderrahmane Sissako grew up in a mud-walled house in Bamako, Mali's capital city. Now one of Africa's most celebrated filmmakers, he returns to that modest family home to take on no less than the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In the courtyard once presided over by his late father, Sissako gathers lawyers, judges and witnesses to put globalization itself on trial.

Staying true to the aesthetic precision he developed in his previous films, Sissako begins *Bamako* in quiet observation, as the courtyard denizens prepare for the proceedings. A European judge hunts for just the right pair of sunglasses at a local vendor. A bar singer and her husband ignore the hubbub; they have problems of their own. But as witnesses begin to present their stories of the injustices wrought by policies imposed from afar, the film builds to a spirit of burning, righteous anger. Real Malians, real lawyers and real judges speak their minds freely here, giving the film an even greater urgency.

And yet there are moments of surprising humour. At one point a full-on Western breaks out in the middle of *Bamako*, as Danny Glover rides into town leading a rogue's gallery that includes Sissako's fellow filmmakers Elia Suleiman and Zeka Laplaine. There's a dusty shootout, of course – but with global stakes. An onscreen title screams "Death in Timbuktu."

Sissako has confronted African crises before – migration in his *Waiting for Happiness*, colonization in *La Vie sur terre* – but not near-

ly so head-on. *Bamako*, by contrast, becomes a soaring opera of dissent, with Africans delivering arias of outrage and cutting critique. The film reaches its climax in a heart-stopping chanted testimonial by Samba Diakité. His words are left untranslated, but the pain and power in his voice are unmistakable.

With *Bamako*, Sissako has made an audacious structural adjustment to the narrative of blame and amnesia that so often colours how rich countries view Africa. Poverty, the film insists, is not Africa's curse. On the contrary: as witness Aminata Traoré says, Africa is a victim of its wealth.

■ Cameron Bailey

Abderrahmane Sissako was born in Kiffa, Mauritania and raised in Mali. After studying at the Russian State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) in Moscow, he directed several short films including *Octobre* (93) and *Sabriya* (96), followed by the documentary *Rostov-Luanda* in 1997. His feature films include *La Vie sur terre* (98) and *Waiting for Happiness* (02), both of which screened at the Festival, and *Bamako* (06)

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