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# THE MONEY ORDER

"THE OTHER CINEMA", LONDON, JAN '75

(Le Mandat)  
 Senegalese title MANDABI  
 France/Senegal 1968  
 Director OUSMANE SEMBENE  
 Production COMPTOIR  
 FRANCAIS DU FILM  
 (Paris)/FILMS DOMIREVE  
 (Dakar)  
 Producer OUSMANE SEMBENE  
 Screenplay OUSMANE SEMBENE  
 Photography PAUL SOULIGNAC  
 (Eastman Colour)  
 Editors GILOU KIKOINE,  
 MAX SALDINGER

With  
 Ibrahima Dieng Makuredia Guey  
 1st Wife Yunus Ndiay  
 2nd Wife Issen Niang  
 Shopkeeper Mustafa Ture  
 Businessman Farva Sar  
 and Mussa Diuf, Serine Ndiay,  
 Serigne Sow, Christophe M'Doulabia,  
 Madoun Faye, Mamadu Cicoko.  
 Wolof version with English subtitles.  
 Shown at the London Film Festival,  
 1969.  
 90 Mins Colour 16mm

"THE MONEY ORDER is a striking picture of Senegalese life in 1968. The hero, an innocent trapped by his own society, is forced into corruption in order to survive. This man, who had lived in peace with his community, comes into conflict with it when he is sent a money order. His conflicts with a rigidly structured, corrupt and plundering administration when he tries to cash the order, throw him completely off balance. His story is told with irony, but an irony that touches and wounds. Ousmane Sembene says of his own work: 'I make films. I am on the side of the people'."  
 --MARIE CLAIRE LE ROY,  
 Africa Report

"What we saw went far beyond anyone's expectations – a wonderful handsome, and *real* comedy. . . . We had seen what we were always looking for – a new film master and a new kind of film. It lifted the whole festival – here was the masterpiece that could justify any film festival. . . . None of Sembene's three films could have been made by any visitor to Senegal. Nor could they have been made in any other African country. But they teach that continent a lesson of vital importance: do it yourself and in your own way. Filmmakers in the black communities . . . should



study the deep individuality of Sembene's films."  
 --JAY LEYDA

"The arrival of MANDABI upon Senegal's commercial screens in October 1969 was a major landmark in the evolution of Senegalese cinema . . . the first test of the thesis that African directors could contribute to African development by raising significant issues. The fact that MANDABI had won a prize at the 1968 Venice Festival was only an incidental reason for the interest aroused by its commercial distribution. The unprecedented nature of the event stimulated wide discussion throughout Dakar. The news that MANDABI was in Wolof stirred considerable comment, if not virtual disbelief; and curiosity ran even higher because it was widely rumoured that President Senghor was displeased with it – was it the massive belches of the Muslim traditionalist leading character,

Ibrahima Dieng, or the film's political bite that irritated him?

"The most frequent popular reaction to MANDABI was 'Bahrna', Wolof for (roughly) 'Good, that's right'. Europeans viewing the film in Dakar were aware that Senegalese viewers, responding spontaneously to the Wolof dialogue, felt a kind of pride of ownership in it; it stirred a significant sentiment of national honour. While reaction to the use of Wolof was unanimously positive, however, the film's political message aroused more controversy. Some found its critique of the new elite too harsh. Sembene was accused of playing upon poverty for the sake of sensationalism, of creating a bad image of his country. Opponents of the regime, on the other hand, found the criticism sugar-coated and the political tension dissolved in the comic sequences.

"Whatever the opinions of Sembene's social criticism, he has consistently drawn his subjects from the drama of Senegalese life, reflecting a genuine concern with the social problems of post-colonial society. This fact may explain a noticeable lack of official enthusiasm for his work. While popular interest ran high, there was a kind of official non-recognition policy during MANDABI's run in Dakar. The daily paper, Dakar-Matin, did not review it while it was being shown publicly. It is true that shortly after the Venice award, it had been given an official gala showing in the handsome Sorano Theatre to the diplomatic corps and high officials, by invitation only; but the government made no attempts to bring the film to the public; MANDABI reached the man in the street only because one of the French distribution companies, Comacico, was convinced that it was a profit-making enterprise.

"The official chill toward Sembene's work is comprehensible enough. MANDABI is a political film lightly disguised as a farce. Using non-professional actors in most roles, Sembene achieves a convincing portrayal of the tribulations of a common man confronting an impervious bureaucratic establishment. African governments are no less sensitive to criticism than others, and they are perplexed to find filmmakers treating political themes and at the same time soliciting the state to support their endeavours."  
 ROBERT A MORTIMER,  
 Africa Report

"In MANDABI I denounce in a Brechtian manner the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over the people. This is a bourgeoisie (just to mention it) of a special kind, which does not so much consist of well off people (but that'll come) but of intellectuals and civil servants. These bourgeois use their connections, their rank to dominate the people and make their fortune."  
 --OUSMANE SEMBENE (in an interview)

Ousmane Sembene's novel, 'The Money-Order', is published by Heinemann (London 1972).