


**the
beautiful
dream**

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Concept Outline

“Toloki told him he was on his way to the city to search for love and fortune. The man laughed again. Toloki wondered what was funny about a quest which was, in his view, so noble.”

“Are people such dreamers where you come from? Zakes Mda

It's called the beautiful game, but for many young African boys football is more aptly called *The Beautiful Dream*.

From the dusty pitches of South Africa's townships to the verdant fields of Cameroon's rural villages, football is played across the continent with pure abandonment, pleasure and indeed with a sense of momentary escape.

But for many young boys underlying the game is the dream of playing professional football, of escaping the grinding and often hopeless poverty of Africa, of turning simple boyhood pleasures and fantasies into realization and fulfillment.

The Beautiful Dream is a full-length documentary project about football, but it is also about a journey of hope, a metaphor for life, a story of struggle and disappointment and at times a surreal fable of success and above all escape.

In three parts, through three different characters, set in three far-flung locales, The Beautiful Dream will chart the universal narrative arc of dreams: aspiration, pursuit, and fulfillment/disappointment.

The first part of the documentary, Aspiration, will be set in Cameroon and focus on the dreams and aspirations of a young football prospect. The documentary will show the context of rural poverty where the dreams of football stardom are first conceived.

Part one will also highlight the role football academies, which are currently proliferating across Africa, play in the recruitment and training of football prospects for professional leagues in Africa and Europe.

The second part of the project, Pursuit, will focus on the life of a young Cameroonian football prospect living in Johannesburg as he struggles to realize his dream of playing professional football.

The documentary will chart his life as he navigates his way through the challenges and disappointments that inevitably occur when dream meets reality.

And, finally, part three, Fulfillment/Disappointment, will explore the elation and frustration that exists on the cusp of realizing or forsaking a dream. Through the life of two professional football players in the U.K., one successful and the other almost, the documentary will follow the dream narrative arc to its conclusion.

Treatment

The Beautiful Dream will capture the life journey of three, young African football prospects as they pursue their dreams of football glory and riches.

It is on one level a very simple human drama of struggle, success and failure. The narrative arc of dream-pursuit-fulfillment/disappointment is a familiar one that appeals on a universal level.

The ability to dream and the capacity to chase those dreams is the stuff of everyday human dramas that are played out on every football pitch, where young boys play with the passion, idealism and naiveté that is the purview of dreamers everywhere.

The Beautiful Dream will transport us, the viewer, as we accompany three football prospects on their football odyssey. Their lives will be fully exposed, including the sometimes insurmountable and impossible challenges they face in their pursuit of football glory.

We will visit their villages where they first dreamt what may have seemed an impossible dream; we will meet their parents who share their dream of escaping poverty; we will visit the football academy where hundreds of other kids now see them as living proof that their dreams are not too fantastic; we will share their moments of elation and their moments of profound disappointment as they anxiously wait to hear back from prospective football clubs; we will share their moments of loneliness and camaraderie as we listen to them talk about their families and newfound friends away from home; in short, we will dream their dreams with them even as we dream our own dreams.

Aspiration: Part 1

'At the core of our aspirations lies the subtlest and highest of needs, which is the most elusive dream to fulfil.' Shaykh Fadhlallah Haeri

It's a sunny afternoon in Bonamoussadi, a small rural village in southern Cameroon.

The occasional horse-drawn cart and dilapidated car rumbles along the village's only road, kicking up clouds of choking dust that momentarily stops the gaggle of children kicking around a makeshift ball made of plastic bags, string and condoms.

From inside a downtrodden café, the distinct clamour of football fans emanate, their enthusiasms following the rise and fall of their team's fortunes on the pitch.

Boozy, blood-shot eyes are glued to the flickering black and white television set perched precariously on the shebeen's bar.

Squashed in a corner at the back of the crowded smoke-filled room, young Bruno Mbende stands, almost proudly. With a glint in his eye, he follows the ebb and flow of the game with cold, dispassionate calculation.

Suddenly, the room shudders with moans of disappointment. Someone yanks the plug out of the wall socket in disgust, initiating a beer-fuelled, racous analysis of the game that borders on religious fervour.

Shaking his head, Bruno, lets out a silent sigh and mutters to himself, "I can do better than that."

There is conviction in his words, certainty.

Bruno has always been fixated with the beautiful game. Ever since he learned how to kick a ball and the older boys let him play with them, Bruno has had fantasies of playing under stadium lights.

Sixteen-years-old and blessed with an intuitive sense of the game, Bruno's dreams lie beyond the horizon of his rural home, beyond Africa.

An indisputable talent, he harbours ambitions of surpassing the fantastic feats of past Cameroonian soccer greats, an ambition cultivated by both his own imagination and the encouragement of his coaches at the football academy.

Convinced his future, full of fame and fortune, lies in his ability to sense a play, deft ball control and supreme athleticism, Bruno quit school and entered the regional football academy that was responsible for providing the national side two key players over the past five years.

But an ocean lies between him and his dreams...

Everyday for a week now, Bruno has made the three-hour trip from his village to the coast to talk to the fishermen who dock their trawlers to unload their catch and load supplies.

Everyday for a week now, Bruno has come with a small bag containing his clothes and most importantly a pair of almost-new cleats he inherited from one of his less ambitious friends, ready to jump aboard the first ship that will take him to his destination, Cape Town, South Africa.

Finally, on the eighth day, a ship captain agrees to take him on the 2-week journey south along the Atlantic coast. In exchange for food and passage, Bruno will have to work every day and night, cleaning and packing fish.

Based on nothing more than a vague promise of a tryout with a South African Premier League team from an agent in Johannesburg, Bruno has decided to embark on an epic ocean odyssey in pursuit of his dream. One more step closer to the ultimate dream of playing in Europe...

Director's Notes: Part 1

There is a hierarchy in the fulfillment of needs. It is relatively simple to fulfill basic material or physical needs because they are necessary to basic survival.

However, dreams and aspirations are needs that lie on an intangible plane. They are subject to ephemeral and complex notions such as motivation and inspiration that exists deep within our psyche and soul.

What liberates the mind and soul to dream the seemingly impossible?

Is it the egoism of human nature that convinces us to disregard the balance of probabilities and the objective likelihood of failure to pursue against all odds our dreams?

How do we formulate our dreams?

These are the crucial underlying questions to be explored in Part I of The Beautiful Dream.

Bruno's story will be told through a series of straight documentary style interviews with the primary character set in his context, rural Cameroon.

Other supporting perspectives will be provided through secondary interviews with his family, peers and soccer coaches.

We will see Bruno's desperate living conditions. We will see him practice with his friends and teammates. We will visit him at the soccer academy where he undergoes intense and disciplined training.

In short, we will establish the context in which The Beautiful Dream is first conceptualized.

Part 1 will also utilize a series of highly stylized scenes of Bruno's lonely and introspective boat journey.

We will see him ponder his decision and release himself to the momentum of his decision.

To accentuate the harshness of the journey and the intensity of the light on the ocean surface, both water and sun, these scenes will be shot using an Arri SR3 camera employing a matte box, orange filters and ND grads on Daylight Kodak 16mm film stock.

Part 1 will also critically explore the role of football academies that are proliferating across Africa and in particular Cameroon.

Football academies raise potentially controversial and difficult questions about the 'myth' of escape.

Often financed by corporate interests, these academies recruit children with the promise of opportunities for fame and fortune. With few other prospects as tantalizing as football, desperately poor parents acquiesce in the naïve hope of success.

The vast majority of football academies, notwithstanding a small number of socially progressive schools, provide no other education other than football training.

Simply stated, what are the social responsibilities of football academies?

In contrast to the highly stylized boat shoot, this segment will be approached journalistically, both editorially and visually.

Two DVCAM cameras will be used - the Sony DSR 570 and a Sony PD 150 (2nd unit). Also required is a DV clamshell and a gold and silver reflector. For sound, the R450 rifle mike with boom is essential.

And, finally, Bruno's story will also use a series of stylized 'flashbacks' of his youth, playing football on dusty streets and lush grass during his days in Bonamoussadi.

These scenes will link Bruno to his youth in Cameroon and the innocence of playing football with his friends

To achieve a dreamlike visual texture, these scenes will also be shot on film using a Bolex Camera kit and and a Millican Camera with video take over. These scenes will be shot using 100 ASA 16mm Fuji film stock.

Additional equipment to achieve the desired visual effect include: pencil cam with interchangeable lens, clam shell, super peewee dolly, matte box and orange and ND filters.

Pursuit: Part 2

“Pain gives birth to its own cure.” Jellaludin Rumi

Victor Makongo is growing tired of his present circumstances. He left his native Cameroon almost two years ago with nothing but an agent’s vague promise of a tryout with a Premier Soccer League outfit in South Africa.

The tryout went well, but things got bogged down during contract negotiations and after months of waiting, pleading and hoping, the offer was rescinded.

Now he is broke and his visa has expired.

Hiding in a state of legal limbo from police and home affairs officials in Johannesburg’s notorious Hillbrow slum, Victor is growing increasingly desperate.

He lives in a two-room flat with eight other men, all from Cameroon, who have also come prospecting in the City of Gold. Fuelling the fire within, they continue to dream of one day setting the world’s stage alight.

Every morning Victor gets up to train at a local inner-city park and every Sunday afternoon he joins a legion of other African football prospects in a friendly game of football.

Their weekly gatherings are as much about football as it is about moral support. It’s tough being a *makwerakwera*, a foreigner, in Johannesburg. Despite its cosmopolitan reputation, life in the City of Gold is perilous, filled with xenophobic pitfalls.

Just the week before, two of his friends, one from Nigeria and the other from a village close to his home in Cameroon, were picked up during a police sweep. One was released after paying a R300 bribe, but nobody has heard from the other.

Rumours abound that he was taken to the notorious Lindela detention centre in Krugersdorp, but nobody really knows.

Often in a state of deep contemplation and sometimes depression, Victor walks the grimy streets of Hillbrow pondering how far he has deviated from his intended plans.

If only he could join his cousin, Jean-Claude in London...

Director's Notes: Part 2

The simplicity of the game and the minimum equipment needed to play it has allowed football to transcend all social and cultural boundaries.

Within its context, all of humanity's emotional complexities are laid bare as a broad metaphor of our lives.

The characters' aspirations of international success are harboured in the hearts of millions of young boys and girls throughout the world. Thus their tale is a universal one, for we all have dreams and we all have aspirations; it's what makes us innately human.

But the ability to dream is often challenged by the realities that emerge during the pursuit. It is when dream meets reality, that character is truly tested.

Dreaming is the past time of the indolent, but sustained pursuit is the life work of achievers.

Perseverance, dedication, discipline, luck and above all hope. These are the characteristics that separate the dreamers from the achievers.

Part 2 of The Beautiful Dream will explore this dimension of the dream narrative arc.

Again, Part 2 will include a series of stylized scenes that will visually express the emotions conjured by the realizations that inevitably come when dream meets reality.

Victor's reality is circumscribed by the gritty streets of Hillbrow and the cosmopolitan skyline of Johannesburg. Everyday Victor walks - almost floats - through the streets of the city, the hectic reality of life in Africa's biggest city in stark contrast to the dreams that continue to linger in his imagination.

This aspect of Victor's story will be visually reinforced through a series of stylized scenes of life in Hillbrow and Johannesburg shot on film using an Arri SR3 camera kit with 500 ASA tungsten balanced 16mm film.,

One of Victor's most challenging hurdles is the xenophobia that belies Johannesburg's cosmopolitan reputation. The intensity of suspicion, prejudice and even hate he faces as an African makwerakwera is a constant and demoralizing factor that diminishes the purity of his dream.

Constant police harassment, difficulties finding work and profound social isolation are important realities that need to be deconstructed to comprehend the broader context in which The Beautiful Dream is pursued.

To aesthetically reinforce this dimension of Victor's story, a journalistic approach using a loose handheld style will be employed.

The Sony DSR 570 and the Sony PD 150 (2nd unit) and R450 rifle microphone and boom will be required to interview home affairs officials, South African PSL players and coaches and other secondary characters who will flesh out this dimension of The Beautiful Dream.

Fullfillment/Disappointment: Part 3

“Some go forth, some are led, some weep, some blow flutes, some become strong, some superfluous, some oppress, some are destroyed.” Lao Tzu

Life in Europe is not what Jean-Claude Essombe had thought it would be.

On a four-month loan to an English premier league team from the South African PSL, he had hoped to make London his new home, but with only a few weeks left in his contract, the coach isn't promising an extension.

With his days numbered, he is bitterly disappointed at being overlooked.

Virtually a living legend in his native Cameroon and a star in South Africa, he rues the day he might have to return in the shame of failure.

Attending a glamorous football banquet, Jean-Claude sits on the fringes of high society watching the world's football elite shine under the bright lights of fame.

His eyes focus on Eric Djembe-Djembe. Jean-Claude remembers training with him during their days in Johannesburg, remembers sharing his plans with Eric when they were both struggling to get out of Hillbrow.

They both managed to make the leap, but now, he's sitting near the back of the banquet hall, at a table filled with reserve players, and Eric is at the head table, his recent contract with Manchester United being feted.

“I should be up there,” he says.

There is conviction in his voice, certainty.

Director's Notes: Part 3

In pursuit of their dreams, all three of our heroes are quickly introduced to a powerful and sophisticated protagonist, modern-day professionalism.

The world of professional football can often be a brutal battleground that mercilessly crushes the weak.

Faced with major challenges, all three characters have the opportunity to experience individual growth.

Adversity requires each individual to search deep within for the remedy. Dealing with the challenges put to us by life is the litmus test for our resolve in the pursuit of our dreams.

Nowhere is this litmus test more apparent than in Jean-Claude's situation. Tantalizing close to fulfilling his dream, he watches Eric Djembe-Djembe and ponders the missing element.

The intensity of this moment, both visually and emotionally at the very cusp of failure and fulfillment, captures the essence of dreaming.

What is it that Eric has that Jean-Claude doesn't? Is it simply talent? Is it luck, hope or even cunning? What will Jean-Claude do? What did Eric do?

Part 3 of The Beautiful Dream will again employ both a highly stylized and journalistic approach to consider the final element of the dream narrative arc: the moment when either failure or fulfillment is realized.

The visual elements of fulfillment, such as scenes from Eric Djembe-Djembe's life as a superstar player for Manchester United will be shot on film. In contrast, Jean-Claude's life story will be shot on video.

The two different visual textures will continue to contrast the competing elements of failure and fulfillment, the intrinsic conflict in the dream narrative.

Project Background and Proposed Timeline

Brief Background

The Beautiful Dream was conceived as a documentary project when veteran Canadian journalist Wilson Lee and Cameroonian football player Victor Makango met in the winter of 2002 in Johannesburg.

Lee immediately recognized the poignancy and potential of Victor's story as a highly viable documentary film project. Research and project development began immediately and several drafts treatments of the project were written.

A number of potential directors were considered, but Jahmil 'Q' Qubeka was recruited because of his highly honed visual sense and his extensive experience in documentary filmmaking, television commercial directing, and in-studio directing.

Qubeka's recruitment to The Beautiful Dream team brought a significant boost to the project through the director's association with DC Studios.

The affiliation brought crucial resources for the immediate needs of the project's development as well as available resources for production.

DC Studio's involvement introduced the project to four other key team members: Mandilakhe Mjukela, Daron Chatz, Sean Butterworth and Alan Glass. Their involvement brings a wealth of expert production and financial management to the project.

SABC Commission and The Encounters Documentary Film Festival

With a comprehensive treatment for The Beautiful Dream completed and a highly qualified team of professionals and a fully equipped production company recruited for the project's development, the concept was pitched to the recent 5th annual Encounters Documentary Film Festival August 2003.

An international panel of respected documentary filmmakers selected The Beautiful Dream from over 100 other submissions for the festival's highly successful and rigorous development program.

Most significantly, The Beautiful Dream was commissioned for production by SABC 1 with a commitment of R160,000.

In the meantime, The Beautiful Dream will be presented to a panel of filmmakers and commissioning editors at two crucial documentary film venues: Sithengi in Cape Town October 2003 and IDFA in Amsterdam November 2003.

Amsterdam and Cape Town, two of the largest venues for African documentary film projects to secure funding through both African and European broadcasters and funding agencies, present significant opportunities to raise additional funding for The Beautiful Dream.

The Beautiful Dream is also eligible for funding through other agencies and venues, such as the South African National Film and Video Fund. Applications have been submitted and a response should be forthcoming by summer 2003.

In the meantime, all other avenues of funding are being pursued with vigor and optimism to complete the development phase of this project by fall 2003.

Once a significant portion of the funding required is secured, principal photography will commence and continue from fall 2003 through to winter 2003.

Editing will then commence and be completed by spring 2004.

Timeline and Production

Winter 2002:	project conceived
Fall 2003:	project development completed
Winter 2003:	project commissioned by SABC
Spring 2003:	project further developed through the Encounters Documentary Film Festival
Summer 2003:	project presented at Sithengi in Cape Town and IFDA in Amsterdam
Fall 2003:	begin principal photography
Winter 2003:	begin editing
Spring 2003:	project completion for broadcast and distribution

The Team

The Beautiful Dream project benefits from a multi-talented group of individuals who bring a wealth of expertise and tangible resources.

Jahmil Qubeka and Mandilakhe Mjekula recently completed a full-length documentary called Qula Kwedini about Xhosa ritual circumcision, which was screened at the 5th annual Encounters Documentary Film Festival to critical acclaim.

Three of the core team-members – Jahmil Qubeka, Mandilakhe Mjekula and Sean Butterworth – are members of DC Studios. This partnership will bring to the project immediate access to camera and sound equipment as well as technical support and advice.

Director of Photography Daron Chatz is the founder of DC Studios and is a widely acclaimed cameraman with numerous credits in film and photography.

Additionally, DC Studios will provide a full range of editing and other post-production facilities, as well as support and advice.

Research consultant, Victor Makongo, is a professional soccer player from Cameroon currently living in Johannesburg and struggling fulfill his dream of playing in the South African PSL. Victor brings authenticity and crucial access to the story.

Wilson Lee is a Canadian journalist with ten years experience in both television news and current affairs, which raises strong co-production possibilities with Canadian broadcasters including the CBC, both French and English, and TVOntario.

Please see attached cvs and company profile for additional details.