

# KINSHASA NOW

AN INTERACTIVE VIRTUAL REALITY MOVIE  
BY MARC-HENRI WAINBERG



MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE  
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA  
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2020  
Venice VR Expanded

## PRESS KIT

## 2020

a production WAINBROSSE PRODUCTIONS produced by MARC-HENRI WAINBERG CATHERINE BOES script MARC-HENRI WAINBERG director MARC-HENRI WAINBERG with MIKA BANGALA VAINQUEUR KANGA CHANCELVIE KAPONGE DAVID LEMBA PATRICK MAKAMBO a coproduction RG 6 CRÉATIFS ASSOCIÉS  
WM FORCEVILLE editing LUCAS DOPPELT REALITY SOUND DEMUTE STUDIO music STROMBO with the support of LE CENTRE DU CINÉMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL DE LA FÉDÉRATION WALLONNE-BRUXELLES CREATIVE EUROPE MEDIA VLAAMS AUDIOVISUEEL FONDS PRODUCTION COFINANCED BY WALLIMAGE CREATIVE AND THE CANADA MEDIA FUND  
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF DUFTY PRODUCTIONS BELGA PRODUCTIONS BELGIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TAX SHELTER UNICEF BELGIUM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TRUST MERCHANT BANK FONDATION JEAN-FRANÇOIS PETERBROECK GROUPE FORREST INTERNATIONAL WALLONIE-BRUXELLES INTERNATIONAL

# KINSHASA NOW



## CONTENTS

- 03 Director's statement
- 04 Synopsis
- 04 Presentation of the project
- 06 Interview with the director, Marc-Henri Wajnberg
- 09 Production team, cast & project specs
- 10 About the director, Marc-Henri Wajnberg
- 11 Contacts and partners

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

## MARC-HENRI WAJNBERG



In 2013, after having directed *Kinshasa Kids*, I became aware of the widespread lack of knowledge about the phenomenon of street children and the interest that this problem aroused among teenagers. I decided to share this situation with what I imagine to be their tools: internet, new technologies, virtual reality.

That's how the film *Kinshasa Now* was born. The film *Kinshasa Now* is an experience where the viewer is immersed, through a virtual reality headset, in the middle of the streets of Kinshasa, where he/she will feel the difficulties of a street child. As the story unfolds, the spectator will drive the story through a set of various choices.

Children's rights are the main theme of *Kinshasa Now*. The sub-themes are family, poverty, hunger, religion, child abuse, transport, health, the informal economy, natural resources, conflict, solidarity, resilience, music, sport and the right to education.

As I had done with the actors in my film *Kinshasa Kids*, I took care of the reintegration of the five child actors in *Kinshasa Now*. I placed the four boys in a centre where they could learn to read and write, and Chancelvie, the girl in the film, in another centre for street girls. I'm in contact with these children and I follow their academic progress.

We are preparing a tour of *Kinshasa Now* in schools, reintegration centres, public places in the Democratic Republic of Congo but also in Belgium. The child actors of the film will take part in the tour, in the same way that the child actors of *Kinshasa Kids* had animated the debates of the film tour : <https://youtu.be/7S7tdK-ljK4>

Through this film, and the other films I made in Kinshasa, I want to give a voice to street children as well as artists, performers, musicians who invent, create in difficult living conditions. That's why they participate in all my projects.

This phenomenon of street children is not specific to the Congo, it is found in many other parts of the world. Poverty, beliefs, wars and migrations are the main reasons of this issue.

Making a film in virtual reality requires sophisticated equipment, cameras with several lenses that film 360° all around the camera, but also towards the sky and the ground.

The staging, which is done at 360° unlike a classic film, implies having to hide in order not to appear in the image. In all the scenes of the film, I had to camouflage myself in a place that allowed me to observe the actors' performance.

Very complicated, especially when shooting real life situations, such as busy streets, markets or churches.

It was a very risky project, but I managed it and I'm very happy that the film was selected in competition at the VR Expanded section at the Venice Mostra, the most prestigious virtual reality festival in the world!

# SYNOPSIS

Mika, 14 years old, is accused of being a witch and chased away by his family. As the story unfolds, the spectator will drive the story through a set of various choices. Forty different scenarios are possible.

# PRESENTATION OF THE PROJÉT

The interactive movie in virtual reality *Kinshasa Now* is an experience where the viewer is immersed, with a VR 360° headset, in the streets of Kinshasa, and discovers the everyday life of a street child. The movie is shot in real locations, with real actors. The experience exists in a linear version of twenty-five minutes but also in an interactive version where the duration varies from seven to twenty-five minutes, depending on the viewer's choices.

The interactive version was selected for the official VR Expanded competition at the Venice Film Festival 2020. It is the only Belgian production at the 77th edition of the festival.



A movie directed and produced by Marc-Henri Wajnberg

Shooting pictures : <https://we.tl/t-YVd3lemLbI>

360° Screenshots : <https://we.tl/t-Z0yTK6PZ4D>

Movie posters : <https://we.tl/t-E30Ylmwdi6>

Pictures of Marc-Henri Wajnberg : <https://we.tl/t-bGwyaGqUuj>



# INTERVIEW OF THE DIRECTOR

## BEFORE TALKING ABOUT YOUR FILM CAN YOU DEFINE THE PARTICULARITY OF YOUR WORK, WHAT ADVENTURE DOES IT REPRESENT FOR YOU?

I would have liked to be an explorer, to discover new worlds. I started studying biology at the University of Brussels, to look for other worlds, and finally I came to the cinema industry to invent my own worlds. I like to meet other cultures and tell their stories. This need to discover territories that are unknown to me allows me to move forward.

## WHERE DOES YOUR INTEREST/PASSION FOR KINSHASA COME FROM?

First of all, the desire to go elsewhere. I have taught film classes in Cuba, made films there as well as in Moscow, Denpasar, the Caribbean, Mumbai, Rio de Janeiro, etc. I have a friend who's a music producer, Michel Winter, who organised a world tour for Congolese musicians, but they weren't getting their visas and I had a feature film I had to make in China that was taking a nosedive. So I suggested to Michel that I could go with him to film his musicians in Kinshasa to give them that opening to the world that visas didn't allow them to have. I knew the art scene in Kinshasa was very active, inventive and energetic. So I went off to do some scouting in Kinshasa and the confrontation with this city was a shock. I had to completely rethink my documentary project about these musicians. The film became a fiction, in the style of a documentary: *Kinshasa Kids*, the story of a group of shégués children, considered as witches, who form a music group to ward off bad luck (children who live in the streets are called: shégués, phasers or yankees).

## WHAT DID YOUR ENCOUNTER WITH KINSHASA CHANGE FOR YOU?

Everything! The discovery of another culture, relationships with artists, another way of conceiving my work. My films are about passion, and it is out of passion that I continue to direct and produce. My previous feature films, whether *Just Friends*, or *Kinshasa Kids*, but also my documentaries on Oscar Niemeyer, or the photographer Evgueni Khaldéi talk about passion, about going after one's dreams. The films I made in Kinshasa are part of this aspect where humanity, relationships, the will to move on, to change things are the driving force behind the film... and my own.

## IF YOU HAD TO SUM UP THE INTERACTIVE FILM KINSHASA NOW IN A FEW WORDS...

Mika, 14 years old, is accused of being a witch and chased away by his family. To face this transition, he has to learn the street codes, find a way to eat and sleep, but also to protect himself by joining a street gang. As the story unfolds, the spectator will drive the story through a set of various choices. Forty different scenarios are possible. *Kinshasa Now* is a new way of making films and a powerful tool to raise awareness. I wanted the film to bear witness to this reality.

## WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO SHOOT A FILM IN VIRTUAL REALITY?

I took part in many debates after the screenings of my feature *Kinshasa Kids*, in cinemas and in schools. I realised the interest that the film aroused, but above all the lack of knowledge about the phenomenon of street children. This social reality is not peculiar to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but can be found in all the countries where the Churches of the Revival are massively present, in Latin America, Europe or Asia. It is important to talk about this phenomenon, through cinema and with a technology that allows a strong immersion. Explaining the phenomenon of street children in the form of fiction with *Kinshasa Kids* (but which has the style of a documentary), but also with a documentary *Sorcerer Children*, *Kinshasa* (which has fictional aspects) or a virtual reality film with interactive choices *Kinshasa Now*, combines my different interests. Humanly first, my work makes sense. Then, artistically, as a filmmaker, writing and directing a story in virtual reality allows me to explore new territories. Indeed, it was necessary to conceive a story that evolves differently according to the choices of the spectators since the sequences are interactive - choices are proposed during the film and the user decides the direction of the film without the film being interrupted. This story, interpreted by street children in Kinshasa, must be watched with a virtual reality headset that places the viewer at the centre of the action.

I talk a lot about form and style, which is why the anchoring of the thematic choices addressed in this film is a guarantee of the legitimacy and relevance of my project.

## **HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR VR ADVENTURE IN A FEW WORDS? WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE TO SHOOT IN VR?**

It's the most complicated film I've ever directed. Shooting a film in Kinshasa is no easy task. Many people still have the idea that it's forbidden to film or take photos. This ban was put in place by Mobutu to avoid showing the decay of the regime. Kabila father and son had followed suit. The ban was eased a few years ago provided you have an authorization to film. I shot the film in a tense pre-electoral period. When you shoot a film in Kinshasa, many passers-by observe the scene. For a classic film, you can ask them to stay behind the camera, but for a film where the camera's lenses film in 360°, it's difficult to hide people. It was complicated. Difficult to get the authorizations, because you needed several for each place, difficult to explain to passers-by or extras that the camera was filming from all sides and difficult to stage hundreds of people at the same time. But the result is there!

## **KINSHASA NOW IS A TRANSMEDIA PROJECT, CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT?**

There is the virtual reality film *Kinshasa Now*, the documentary *Chancelvie*, an educational kit co-written with UNICEF and Belgian teachers, a book and a website. We will make a tour in DRC to show the virtual reality film and the documentary. Children from both films will participate in the tour and in the debates. We will also organize a tour for Belgian school. I hope I'll be able to set up a virtual reality cinema in Brussels so that as many people as possible can see the film.

## **DID YOU LOOK FOR ACTORS WHO RESEMBLED THE IDEAS YOU HAD ABOUT THE CHARACTERS, OR THE OTHER WAY AROUND?**

Kinshasa Now is a fiction, but it is close to documentary. As with *Kinshasa Kids*, it was important, for the credibility of the subject, that the roles be played by children who have really known this situation. Their life stories influence my screenplay. I saw hundreds of children to form my cast of lead actors. The approach of this film is close to documentary. Once the child actors had been chosen, I adapted the story so that it fits them and their lives, so that fiction and documentary become intertwined and the boundaries between the genres become blurred.

## **WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE AS A DIRECTOR IN KINSHASA ?**

I have been going to Kinshasa regularly for ten years. There I have directed and produced a feature film, two documentaries, a web film for Arte, and a virtual reality film. I have also produced five documentaries and two CDs. I have a bunch of musician and visual artist friends whom I meet every time with pleasure. This relationship of trust with them allows me to break down barriers with street children. On the other hand, directing these children is not easy. The mutual trust grows as rehearsals and filming progress.

## **ARE YOU STILL IN CONTACT WITH THE STREET CHILDREN IN YOUR FILM?**

As I had done for *Kinshasa Kids*, I placed the child actors of *Kinshasa Now* in rehabilitation centres to teach them to read and write. The only girl in the group, Chancelvie, left the centre because she no longer felt comfortable there. To make sure she was healthy, I went to look for her. I found her, after several months, outside Kinshasa. Chancelvie was pregnant. We decided to make a documentary about her, about her everyday life, her desires, her dreams and of course the birth of her baby. I shot over a period of six months and I am currently editing the doc.

I work with an organization that manages about a hundred reintegration centres in Kinshasa: the REEJER (Network of educators of street children in Kinshasa). The person at the head of this network is Rémi Mafu in whom I have the greatest respect and total trust. It is through him that contact is continuous with the children in my previous films. That's how Emma, one of the children from Kinshasa Kids to whom I had given a camera, made a documentary about his life. He helped me with the casting of *Kinshasa Now* and was an assistant on the set. Another, Samy, who wanted to learn music, was able to fulfil his dream by joining Master Tschamala's percussion group Beta Mbonda (which was the subject of Marie-Françoise Plissart's film *Kinshasa Beta Mbonda*).

## **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A STREET BOY AND A STREET GIRL IN KINSHASA?**

Children in Kinshasa move around in gangs that they call stables. These clans are gendered, boys among themselves and girls among themselves. At least, during the day. Girls are less visible on the streets, which is why the group of children in *Kinshasa Now* consists of four boys and one girl. There are more boys than girls on the streets. Exacerbated violence and the need to prove one's virility through domination are highly conveyed in the boys' groups.

But in my next film, a documentary called *Chancelvie*, which I am currently editing, there are only girls. This documentary will show the difficulty of being a young woman on the street, without protection, in Kinshasa. The situation of street girls, although fewer in number than boys, is catastrophic. Often forced into prostitution, many are already mothers.

## **YOU HAVE CREATED MANY DIFFERENT WAYS TO EXPERIENCE THIS FILM, WHY DID YOU WRITE 40 OF THEM?**

There are financial conditions that impose limits in the realization of such a project. Secondly, we are also limited by the technical capacities of VR headsets and computers. Shooting with real actors and sets is heavier - from a byte point of view - than animation. I was not trying to create a catalogue of the life and death options facing street children, but to show certain paths, to suggest reflections following the choices that the spectators will have made.

## **HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO WRITE, DIRECT, SHOOT AND FINALISE KINSHASA NOW?**

It took me five years to write the project, to test how virtual reality works by shooting a model in Kinshasa, to find partners, financing, shoot the film, edit it and finally finish it with the great gift of being selected in Venice.

## **DO YOU HAVE A PROJECT IN PROGRESS OR IS IT A LITTLE EARLY TO TALK ABOUT IT?**

I've got plenty of other projects! Apart from the documentary *Chancelvie* in post-production described above, we're leaving Kinshasa! A feature-length film, a comedy about the passion (once again) to achieve one's dreams: *The Perfect Movie*. *Flebelep*, an animated series for children, with little characters who evolve in the real world. *¡Resist!* a documentary series about communities that have chosen alternatives to our consumerist system of life...

## **HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOUR SELECTION WAS ANNOUNCED?**

Very happy. The possibilities of showing a film in virtual reality are limited. A selection in competition at the Mostra immediately gives the film international visibility. I am already being contacted by other festivals.●

# PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Countries of production   | Belgium - Democratic Republic of the Congo  |
| Genre                     | Social  |
| Year                      | 2020  |
| Running time              | 60 minutes of film with various duration from 7 to 25 minutes depending on the viewer's choices |
| Type of immersive project | seated VR 3DoF  |
| Available on              | Oculus Rift & HTC Vive  |
| Shot on                   | Z CAM S1 (Monoscopic)   |
| World Premiere Screening  | Venice International Film Festival (September 2020)   |

## TECHNICAL LIST

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Written and directed by      | Marc-Henri Wajnberg                                 |
| Producer                     | Marc-Henri Wajnberg                                 |
| Executive producer (Belgium) | Catherine Boes                                      |
| Executive producer (DRC)     | Théophile Djwa Mbane                                |
| Coproducer (Belgium)         | Wim Forceville                                      |
| Coproducers (France)         | Vic Demayo ; Guilhem Olive & Pierre-Emmanuel Legoff |
| Production manager (Belgium) | Catherine Boes                                      |
| Production manager (DRC)     | Théophile Djwa Mbane                                |
| DOP                          | Wim Forceville & Jimmy Abidts                       |
| Sound engineer               | Philippe Fabbri                                     |
| Translator                   | Théophile Djwa Mbane                                |
| Music                        | Fabrice Kayumba ; Strombo & The Stromboli           |
| Editing                      | Lucas Doppelt                                       |
| Sound editing                | Demute Studio, Christian Esteves                    |

## MAIN CAST

|                          |                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Mika                     | Mika Bangala       |
| Vainqueur                | Vainqueur Kanga    |
| Kid with an army t-shirt | David Lemba        |
| Patrick                  | Patrick Makambo    |
| The girl                 | Chancelvie Kaponge |



# MARC-HENRI WAJNBERG

WRITER, DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER

## BIOGRAPHY

Marc-Henri Wajnberg studied cinema at the INSAS, Brussels. He's a writer, director, actor and producer.

His productions are eclectic: in total, he produced 3000 very short films – including the very famous collection of Claps, broadcasted internationally.

His short film *Le Réveil* with Jean-Claude Dreyfus was awarded at Cannes and received 22 international prizes.

He directed and produced many documentaries including *Oscar Niemeyer, an architect committed to his century*, which was awarded in several international festivals. He coproduced a film by Lars Von Trier: *The Five Obstructions* and directed two feature films ; *Just Friends* and *Kinshasa Kids* (selected in Venice, Toronto, Busan, New York...).

## SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

### KINSHASA KIDS

FICTION

60 FESTIVALS (VENICE, TORONTO, BUSAN, NEW YORK, ...) - 8 AWARDS INCLUDING THE HUMAN RIGHT'S AWARDS

### OSCAR NIEMEYER, AN ARCHITECT COMMITTED TO HIS CENTURY

DOCUMENTARY

13 AWARDS

### EVGUENI KHALDEI, PHOTOGRAPHER UNDER STALIN

DOCUMENTARY

3 AWARDS

### LE REVEIL

SHORT

21 AWARDS INCLUDING THE RAIL D'OR - SEMAINE INTERNATIONALE DE LA CRITIQUE, CANNES FESTIVAL

### JUST FRIENDS

FICTION

MUSIC COMPOSED AND INTERPRETED BY MICHEL HERR AND ARCHIE SHEPP \* CHOSEN TO REPRESENT BELGIUM AT THE OSCARS (HOLLYWOOD 1994), 13 AWARDS

### ALMANIAK

SERIES - 365X50"

DAILY BROADCASTS FOR SEVERAL YEARS IN 25 COUNTRIES

### WOLINSKI

SERIES - 40X20"

BROADCASTED IN MORE THAN 40 COUNTRIES

### CLAP

SERIES - 1200X8"

DAILY BROADCASTS FOR SEVERAL YEARS IN 50 COUNTRIES, 5 AWARDS

# CONTACT



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# OUR PARTNERS

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