

RDC partners with Juno Films for national theatrical release of “Train of Salt and Sugar”



Elizabeth Sheldon Launches Juno Films as Sales-Distribution Company

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August 2, 2017 – Veteran executive Elizabeth Sheldon has launched [Juno Films](#) as a distribution-sales company to partner with agents, producers, and filmmakers for investment, sponsorship, and distribution strategies.

Sheldon has two decades of experience in distribution and international sales, with a specialty in distribution to the educational and non-profit market. Juno Films’ distribution model calls for bringing together specific films with organizations or individuals to financially support the film’s release in North America in addition to community outreach.

One of Juno’s initial acquisitions, “Train of Salt and Sugar” by Licinio Azevedo, will be financially supported by **Railroad Development Corp.** with a national theatrical release in early 2018. The film, which won the independent Italian critic’s prize at Locarno in 2016 and the best film trophy at the Joburg Film Festival, is based on historical events during the civil war in Mozambique on the rail line connecting the northern cities of Nampula and Cuamba.

Henry Posner III, chairman of RDC, said, “As the former operator of this railway, which served as the region’s lifeline during the civil war, we see supporting the film as a way of honoring its historic legacy. This builds on our initial support of publication of the English language version of the screenplay as a book in 2007.”

Juno has also acquired North American rights to the Swiss-German documentary “Cahier Africain” by Heidi Specogna, based on the testimonies of 300 Central African women, girls, and men revealing what Congolese mercenaries did to them in the wake of a 2008 conflict. The film was awarded the German National Film Award (Lola) for best documentary and the Swiss National Film Award for best documentary.

Juno will offer the film for festivals and a limited theatrical campaign as well as to the educational market through its educational portal Cinedu.com beginning in September, followed by a consumer digital release in early 2018.

Both films were licensed from RushLake Media. Juno is looking to co-acquire worldwide rights for select films with RushLake.

Philipp Hoffmann, founder and managing director of RushLake Media, said, “I’m glad to kick-off a long-term cooperation with Juno Films, by bringing two outstanding titles from our current line-up to North American markets. Elizabeth and I share the same passion for arthouse films, particularly from the African continent, and the potential a changing distribution landscape can offer for quality cinema.”

<http://variety.com/2017/film/news/elizabeth-sheldon-juno-films-sales-distribution-1202511807/>

Distribution/Sales Company Juno Films' Launches from Elizabeth Sheldon; Will Release Two Films to Start

By Anita Busch on Aug 1, 2017



Elizabeth Sheldon, the former Chief Operations Officer of BOND/360, has launched a new film distribution and sales company called Juno Films and has acquired her first films for release.

The first is *Train of Salt and Sugar* from filmmaker Licinio Azevedo, which will be financially supported by **Railroad Development Corporation (RDC)** with a national theatrical release in early 2018. The film, which won the Independent Italian Critic's Prize at Locarno in 2016 and the Best Film trophy at the Joburg Film Festival, is based on historical events during the civil war in Mozambique on the rail line connecting the northern cities of Nampula and Cuamba.

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Juno has also acquired the North American rights to the Swiss and German award-winning

documentary *Cahier Africain* from filmmaker Heidi Specogna. Filmed over seven years, Specogna captured the testimonies of 300 Central African women, girls and men revealing what Congolese mercenaries did to them in the wake of the last armed conflict in 2008. The film was awarded the German National Film Award (Lola) for Best Documentary and the Swiss National Film Award for Best Documentary.

Juno will offer the film for festivals and a limited theatrical campaign as well as to the educational market via Juno's educational portal Cinedu.com with Public Performance Rights and EVOD beginning in September 2017 followed by a consumer digital release in early 2018.

Both films were licensed from RushLake Media, with whom Juno is looking to co-acquire world-wide rights for select films. Rushlake Media is a digitally oriented sales and distribution company (VOD) and has been developing its international sales arm with a strong focus on African films and the African market.

As COO of BOND/360, Sheldon oversaw the release of *The Settlers*, *Strike a Pose*, *Karl Marx City* and *The War Show*. Prior she was the Senior VP at Kino Lorber. While VP at Lorber HT Digital, she launched the Alive Mind Cinema label.

The early stage of her career was built in the educational market, where she oversaw acquisitions and business development for two of the leading North America educational distributors.

<http://deadline.com/2017/08/juno-films-elizabeth-sheldon-film-distribution-sales-company-1202140127/>

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Director Licínio Azevedo on His Wartime Drama ‘Train of Salt and Sugar’

Christopher Vourlias | November 1, 2016



Courtesy Uruçu Media

JOHANNESBURG — Long before it rumbled onto the screen for its African premiere this week, as part of the first [Joburg Film Festival](#), Licínio Azevedo wondered if his war-time drama, “[Train of Salt and Sugar](#),” would ever leave the station.

Set in northern Mozambique in the 1980s, “Train” is a harrowing account of the extraordinary risks ordinary people were forced to take in order to survive the country’s brutal civil war.

A personal journey roughly 30 years in the making, Azevedo acknowledges the challenges he faced in bringing “Train” to the big screen almost derailed the film.

“This is a movie made with a lot of blood, sweat and tears, which is absolutely essential in a country like Mozambique, where there is no infrastructure” for filmmaking, says Azevedo.

The Brazilian-born helmer had the idea to make a documentary about the railway nearly three decades ago, when passengers risked their lives to travel from northern Mozambique into neighboring Malawi, where they were able to trade the salt their country produced in abundance for precious supplies of sugar. The perilous journey of several hundred miles could take months to complete, as the locomotive chugged inch by inch through miles of menacing bush, facing guerilla attacks and saboteurs while passing abandoned villages bearing the scars of war.

Azevedo began traveling along the rail line himself, interviewing passengers to see how their lives and dreams had been shaped by both the war and the journey. When the funding for his planned doc never materialized, he decided to write a novel instead, focusing on a romance aboard the train between a young nurse and an army lieutenant – what he describes as “a simple story of love and war.”

Published in English as “Train of Salt and Sugar” in 2008, the book was then adapted for the screen by Azevedo and scripter Teresa Pereira, a co-production between Portugal’s Ukbar Filmes, Mozambique’s Ébano Multimédia, France’s Les Films de l’Étranger, Brazil’s Panda Filmes, and avant-garde South African company Urucu Media, with the support of South Africa’s M-Net and its Portuguese channel in Africa, Jango Magic. Pic world premiered this year in front of an audience of more than 5,000 in the Piazza Grande in Locarno, where it won the Independent Italian Critics Award for best film.

“We took a lot of risks,” says Azevedo, whose crew spent seven weeks shooting in the bush aboard more than a dozen rusty train carriages. The helmer spent months lobbying the government for permission to use the state-owned railway for the movie, but as production was set to get underway, Mozambique’s long-simmering tensions began to boil over. Abandoning a hard-fought peace process that had helped the country rise from the ashes of war, the same guerilla fighters who terrorized Mozambique three decades ago began renewed attacks in the north of the country. The film Azevedo spent years hoping to make was suddenly in jeopardy.

With just days to spare before principal photography was about to begin, Azevedo decided to call in favors from the country’s leaders, many of whom he met when they were young soldiers fighting in the very war the film depicts.

Once the government came onboard, it gave surprisingly robust support for the film, not only giving Azevedo access to trains and stations, but supplying many of the real-life soldiers who appear in the movie.

The production, though, faced other challenges. Filming in rural areas still bearing the scars of fighting, Azevedo and his crew worked tirelessly to sensitize local communities to his fictional depiction of the war.

Mozambican thesp Melanye de Vales Rafael, who plays nurse Rosa in the lead role, remembers the real-life experience many of the extras brought to their roles when they were told to scramble at the sound of gunfire.

“They knew exactly where to hide,” she says.

Living under a military dictatorship in Brazil in the 1970s, Azevedo began his career as a journalist, covering a turbulent period in Latin America, even as revolution began to foment in Portugal’s colonies across the Atlantic. While the country’s military rulers banned reporting on the independence movements that would soon give birth to Mozambique and other African nations, Azevedo followed the wire reports that arrived in Brazil over the Telex. By the time he moved to Guinea-Bissau, where he began teaching journalism in 1976, he already felt an intimate connection with the continent, confessing to a desire to draw closer to his “African brothers.”

The following year he moved to Mozambique, where he was recruited to help establish a National Film Institute by Ruy Guerra, the Mozambican-born helmer who was one of the pioneers of Brazil’s Cinema Novo movement. It was a remarkable career move for Azevedo, working alongside Guerra, Jean-Luc Godard and Ken Loach to help create a cinematic lingua franca that the Marxist government in Mozambique hoped would become “an instrument to create national unity,” he says.

Azevedo began by writing the scripts used in documentary voiceovers. From there he moved into directing, experimenting with a hybrid style of documentary and fiction that would help him to discover his cinematic voice. In Mozambique he directed a number of award-winning documentaries, while also becoming a driving force behind the small community of filmmakers in his adopted nation.

Growing up in Brazil, Azevedo says he felt a natural affinity for the strands of magical realism that infuse Mozambican storytelling, recalling the works of the great Latin American novelists like Gabriel García Márquez. “Train” is filled with elements of magic and comedy, underscoring the powerful persistence of hope and the imagination, even in times of war.

In Locarno, an audience member asked Azevedo how a commander who appeared to die in battle could suddenly be resurrected later in the movie. “It’s magic,” Azevedo recalls telling him. “There’s no rules in magic.”

<http://variety.com/2016/film/festivals/director-licinio-azevedo-on-his-wartime-drama-train-of-salt-and-sugar-1201904856/>