

Emmy nomination for A Lion's Trail

A Lion's Trail, an hour-long documentary film directed by Francois Verster and produced by Verster, Mark Kaplan and Dan Jawitz, has been nominated for a 2006 Emmy Award for "Outstanding Cultural & Artistic Programming" by the US National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. The film tells the story of how Solomon Linda, a Zulu isicathamiya musician, wrote Africa's most famous song, "Mbube", how this became the inspiration for the multi-million dollar pop classic "The Lion Sleeps Tonight", and how Linda died with hardly any benefits from the success of the song.

The announcement was made on Sunday, 23 July 2006. Says Lois Vossen, series producer at ITVS Independent Lens, which broadcast the film in the US and put it forward for nomination, "I am extremely pleased and proud that A Lion's Trail has been nominated for an Emmy Award... This is a great honor, of course, and one [the filmmakers] fully deserve."

The winners of the awards will be announced on Monday, 25 September at a black tie awards ceremony in New York City, and the director and producers have been invited to attend the event.

It follows the efforts of journalist Rian Malan, folk singer Pete Seeger and others in trying to redress the wrongs of the past. Travelling into the musical worlds of South Africa, England and the US, A Lion's Trail celebrates the song's timeless power while revealing injustices within the international recording industry.

The film - together with efforts by Rian Malan, US parties and local lawyers - was partly instrumental in persuading local and international rights holders on the song (including The Richmond Organisation, rights holders on "Wimoweh") to cede future income on the song to the Ntsele (Linda) family. Last year, after a campaign by local copyright lawyers, a settlement was reached whereby Disney paid out a large amount to the Ntsele family in Johannesburg for income from the song through The Lion King.

Comments Verster, "This is great news, and comes on the heels of much happy news over the past year in terms of money going back to Linda's family!"

A Lion's Trail has won various festival awards around the world (including Best Documentary at the Portobello Film Festival, Best Documentary at the 2003 Stone Awards and the Silver Dhow at the Zanzibar Film Festival), and has been broadcast in over fifteen countries. It was produced by Undercurrent Film and Television, Rapid Blue and Ice Media, and was funded by SABC3, the National Film and Video Foundation, the BBC, SBS, RTBF and the IDC. It is being distributed by First Hand Films in Zurich.

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