

Chineze Anyaene goes home to create IJE

IJE follows the story of sisters Chioma and Anya, who grew up in the Nigerian countryside. Anya moves to America, and years later is accused of killing three men in Hollywood. Chioma travels from Nigeria to Los Angeles and, with the help of an attorney, discovers the dark secret her sister wants hidden might be the only thing that can win her freedom.

The idea for *IJE* was born when director-producer Chineze Anyaene decided to shoot a feature film for her thesis at the New York Film Academy. "I was born and raised in Abuja, Nigeria, and I wanted a film that would have an international appeal merging the African and American culture together," says Anyaene. "With a small budget for a huge project like this I brought on board my producing partner Paula Moreno and cinematographer Keith L. Smith."

Anyane and Smith decided first and foremost that they were looking for "truth" in the look they created for *IJE*. "We didn't necessarily want a beautiful film," explains Anyane. "We were after a solid mood and strong drama. Since almost 25 percent of the film takes place in a courtroom, we didn't want a flat, fluorescent-lit space. My plan of attack was to light it up, then start turning off light just before we rolled camera. It plays truthfully."

After discussing a variety of capture options, Smith and Anyane decided that film was the best medium for the story. "As we began discussing the visual style of the film, we made preliminary decisions on wardrobe, make-up, design, color, texture, and tone, and it was evident that film was the best choice, specifically for its reproduction qualities."

The filmmakers chose KODAK VISION3 500T 5219 film as their primary stock, and VISION2 200T 5217 and VISION2 100T 5212 as their medium films. "From experience, we both felt that 5219 was just magic in terms of how it handled the 'fall off light' - meaning where and when the light falls off, the stock would save us," says Anyane. "You tend to spend less time working on filling in the dark areas of the frame. The 5219 performed beautifully, and was so smooth in its transition to black. The color reproduction is also very accurate. The tonality of the stock is so smooth at the extreme end of the characteristic curve, so there is little to no stutter or clipping like you find in digital photography."

Smith had a Panaflex GII camera system from Panavision Woodland Hills. Almost 85 percent of the film was shot with Panavision's 11:1 Primo zoom lens, along with a couple of Zeiss Super-Speed lenses for some handheld sequences.

One sequence that stands out visually for Anyane takes place at the end of the film when the sisters are in the prison's visiting booth. From behind the glass partition, Chioma implores Anya to find her voice. "The sequence is lit so cleanly with very simple crosslight and diffused back light. ... Nothing beats a solidly well lit close up. I've always felt that in the end, it's all about the faces. This is truth in photography. The performances here seemed to resonate astoundingly."



Production of *IJE* began in July of 2008 in Jos, Nigeria, and then was completed in the U.S. in December of that year. "Our postproduction plan always included the digital intermediate process," says Anyane. "We had a wonderful colorist, Joseph Parisella at Entertainment Post, who worked hard on the film. He really treated the film like it was something special. During the session he'd be clicking away at the console while we'd stare at the screen and watch the images come alive. In the end, the digital intermediate process allowed us to tell the story a little deeper."

IJE is currently on the festival circuit. "Our biggest hope is to get *IJE* a worldwide distribution because it will educate people on the African culture, most importantly Nollywood, a Nigerian film industry that has grown."