

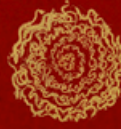
How to Perform a 'Universal Satire' On-Screen?: A Classic Film '*The Gods Must Be Crazy*'

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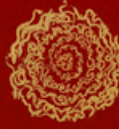
The Gods Must Be Crazy (1980)

Source: Slate



South African cinema has journeyed a long way, evolving from traditional themes to experimental genres. However, a theme that has been consistently maintained in the identity of South African films is 'social satire' - films that conduct social criticism through humor and out-of-the-box narratives. The national cinema has maintained its identity with satirical movies that particularly target environmental issues and the growth of the human lifestyle away from the spirit of nature. But how can a movie perform a 'universal satire' on-screen that is relevant to all walks of life, all around the world? The South African classic *'The Gods Must Be Crazy'* (1980) is the answer, which serves as a great example of a universal satire film.

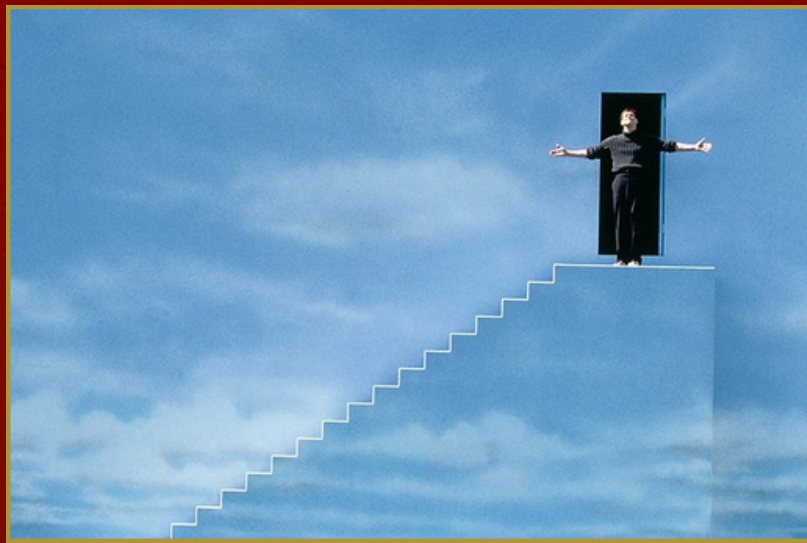
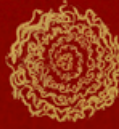
Released in 1980, the prominent film was directed by the late South African visionary, Jamie Uys. The filmmaker's career was dedicated to raising awareness about the value of natural reserves, the deterioration of the environment, and wildlife conservation. But his method was to incorporate quirky characters and dystopian perspectives to invoke humor from audiences, thus, registering our attention towards world issues through unconventional ways. *'The Gods Must Be Crazy'* was an attempt to present the twisted ways of the world and how 'crazy' it seems from a naive man's perspective.



The tribe's bewilderment by a glass bottle

Source: MUBI, and Egypt Today

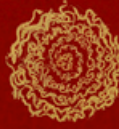
The story follows the protagonist 'Xi', a hunter-gatherer from a tribe in the Kalahari Desert. His life is completely distant from modern advancements and society yet he travels to a bustling city in search of God. This contrast brings out the humor, with Xi struggling to understand the ways of an urban world that he is unfamiliar with. The placement of Xi in such surroundings provides him a perspective of an 'alien' - one who is completely devoid of the understanding and familiarity of the settings. This is established in the first sequence when a soft drink bottle is assumed as a 'gift from Gods' by the simplistic tribe. The skillful structure of the glass bottle establishes the difference between what's miraculous for the tribe and what's usual for city folks. Eventually, Xi sets on an adventure to return the glass bottle to the Gods residing in the far city, as he assumes - an intriguing ground for satire.



***The Truman Show* (1998): Another social satire based on an escape from Illusion**

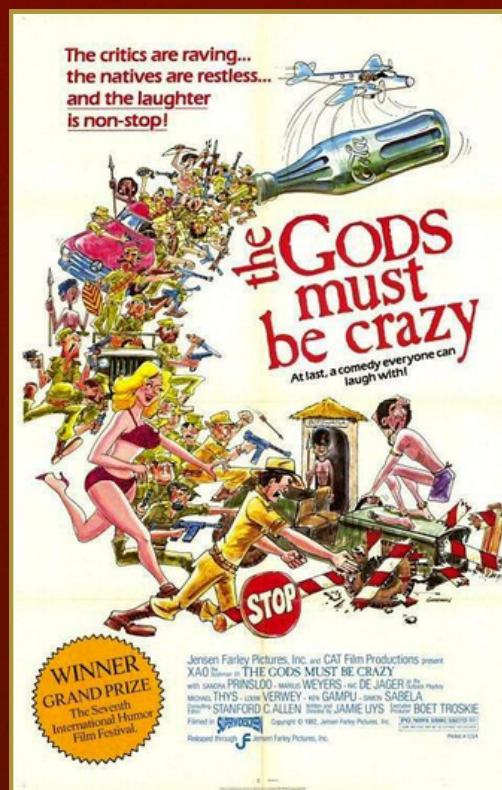
Source: Medium

The satire of *'The Gods Must Be Crazy'* is universal as the gap of understanding between urban and rural lives, and metropolitan and naturally-grounded people exist in most parts of the world. The film critiques the complicated and unmanageable ways of cities that view tribes or villagers as unsophisticated, however, the truth is far from this perspective. Xi is baffled by the exploitation and deterioration of nature in the city, with pollution, deforestation, smoke, and an unpleasant approach of people. His idyllic vision of God's land is shattered by his experience, as he throws the glass bottle off a cliff in the final scene. This also represents the migrants who travel to bustling cities with high expectations but meet an ulterior reality. The film also draws a comparison with the protagonist of the sci-fi dystopian American film *'The Truman Show'*. Both the protagonists are alienated in their new worlds. In the finale of both films, the protagonists surpass the illusion of the world and set on their individual paths.



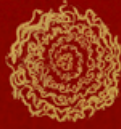
Xi throws the glass bottle off a cliff in the final scene
(the background of clouds intentionally represents his perspective of the 'heaven')

Source: Cinema 1544 (WordPress)

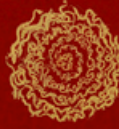


Creative visualization of the film

Source: Film Affinity



Such movies provide us with a new perspective on our mundane lives. *The Gods Must Be Crazy* also proves how the simplistic living of tribes aligns more with the sustenance of natural vegetation and wildlife. Xi's pure connection with his people and nature in the film conveys a sentimental message of nature conservation. Thus, the film's thoughtful satire is one of a kind and has inspired many other filmmakers to create movies with profound environmental narratives.



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