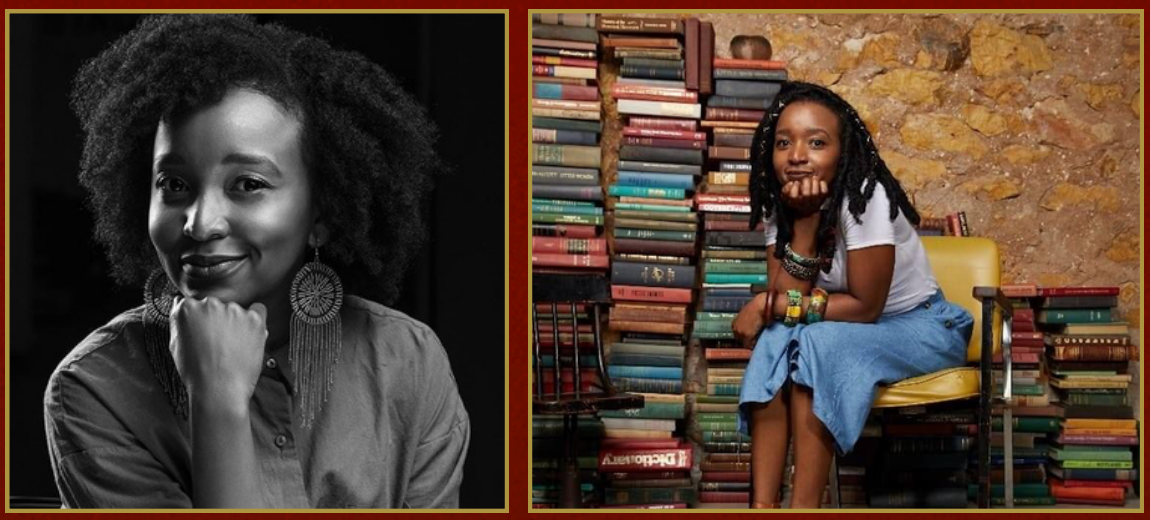
Nosipho Dumisa: A Rising South African Filmmaker

Author: Chethana Srivatsa



South African Filmmaker Nosipho Dumisa
Source: Gambit Films and Graca Michel Trust

Nosipho Dumisa is a South African writer, director, and producer. Dumisa hails from the coastal town of Margate in the KwaZulu-Natal province. She is well-versed in the Zulu and Afrikaans languages. There is an interesting story at the beginning of Dumisa's filmmaking career. She wanted to be an actor, so she enrolled in a performance course at a film school. However, an administrative error led to her being enrolled in a writing and directing course instead, and this is where she discovered her passion for filmmaking. She went on to graduate in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in motion picture medium from AFDA. Along with a few of her friends, she founded a production company called Gambit Films in Cape Town.



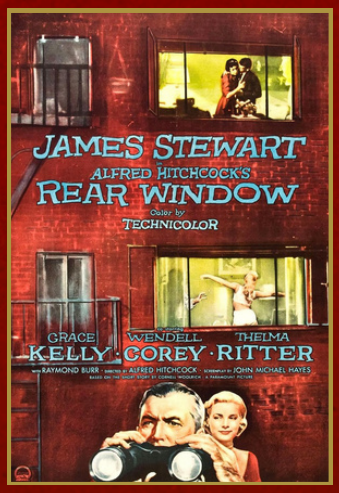
Poster for Dumisa's 2014 Short Film, *Nommer 37*
Source: IMDb

She made her first short film, *Nommer 37*, in 2014 and then adapted it into a feature-length film of the same name in 2018. This crime thriller portrays the story of a man who is wheelchair-bound after he sustains serious injuries during a deal gone wrong. He is heavily in debt to a violent loan shark. When he witnesses a murder through the binoculars his girlfriend gifts him, he plans to find his way out of his debt by blackmailing the gangster who committed the murder. The story goes on to explore all that "can go wrong when ambition, curiosity, greed, fear, and horrific bad decision-making collide" (July, 2018).



***Nommer 37* (2018) was Dumisa's Feature Debut**

Source: IMDb





Number 37* was Inspired by Hitchcock's 1954 Classic *Rear Window

Source: IMDb and Bloody Disgusting

The film was inspired by Alfred Hitchcock's 1954 film *Rear Window* and has been described as "a grisly, twisted South African re-envisioning of Hitchcock's most voyeuristic film" (Anderson-Moore, 2018). Dumisa mentioned in an interview that loved the concept of *Rear Window* but couldn't relate much to the neighborhood in the film. So, she built a fictional neighborhood for *Nommer* 37, which was inspired by real neighborhoods in Cape Town that were originally built during the apartheid era to "keep different racial groups from leaving the area" (Anderson-Moore, 2018). While she initially wrote the screenplay in English, Dumisa eventually shifted to Afrikaans, particularly a dialect specific to the subculture of the Cape Flats. This makes the movie more authentic and is quite a significant move, as "this subculture wasn't really allowed to use this dialect in media" for a long time (Obenson, 2018).





Stills from *Nommer 37*
Source: IMDb and Prime Video

The feature film premiered at the SXSW Film Festival, where Dumisa was nominated for the Gamechanger Award. The film won the award for Best Editing and was nominated for six awards at the South African Film and Television Awards. Dumisa won the Coeval Noir jury prize for Best Director at the Fantasia International Film Festival and the Young Blood Award at Razorreel for the film. It has been praised as an “impressive debut feature” and a “riveting, contained thriller that has something to say about the literal and metaphorical lack of mobility of its residents” (Obenson, 2018).



Blood & Water

Source: IMDb and Glamour South Africa

After producing the television series *Suidooster* (2015-2020), Dumisa made her television directorial debut with *Blood & Water*. It was the second South African series to be picked up as a Netflix original after the crime drama series *Queen Sono*. *Blood & Water* premiered in 2020 and focuses on the story of a girl who transfers to an elite high school. She suspects that a popular student at the new school is actually her sister, who was kidnapped as a baby. She then sets out to investigate and get to the bottom of the mystery. The series won three South African Film and Television Awards and was nominated in eight other categories. It made history as the first South African series to be ranked first in the USA (Samanga, 2020).







Stills from *Blood & Water*

Source: Variety, Teen Vogue, and IndieWire

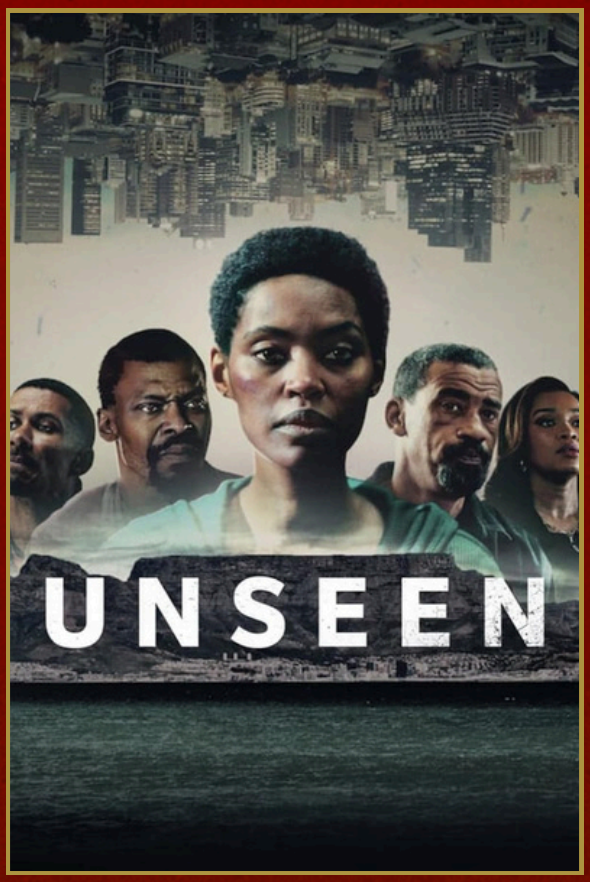
The series explores themes of human trafficking, loss, and grief through its central characters, who make bold statements and challenge stereotypes (Samanga, 2020). Although *Blood & Water* "features elitist teens trudging through their imaginary universe amid large to small-scale conflicts, its story is unequivocally created on the premises of identity and unbiased representation" (Nwogu, 2020). Representation is an important part of the series, which also features characters who unapologetically embrace their sexuality, like the pansexual fan-favorite character Christopher Ackerman. Characters speak in the languages of English, Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans, Tswana, Shona, and Sesotho. The fourth season of the series was released in March 2024, and the fifth season is currently in production and set to be released in June 2025.



***Blood & Water* is a Groundbreaking Series**
Source: Ready Steady Cut

Through Gambit Films, Dumisa also acted as an executive producer for the 2023 crime thriller series *Unseen* and the 2021 film *Indemnity*, which was nominated for Best Film at the Fantasia Film Festival. She has served on the feature films jury of the Neuchâtel International Fantastic Film Festival in Switzerland. She has made waves as a notable writer-director, earning the reputation of a “master of suspense” who knows how to keep the viewers on the edge of their seats (Keteyi, 2024). She is a prominent name amidst the “South African new wave of young filmmakers making bold statements with international appeal” (Obenson, 2018). Her “ability to weave intense, gripping narratives is setting new benchmarks in the industry, making her a name to watch in global cinema” (Keteyi, 2024). Dumisa is a promising name to watch out for and a beacon of hope for the South African film and television industry.





Dumisa's Production Credits Include *Indemnity* and *Unseen*

Source: IMDb

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