

JEROME PIKWANE Transcript: 22 June 2024

GABI ZIETSMAN [INTERVIEWER]: So for the first question, can you tell me a bit about just your background in film and your career?

JEROME PIKWANE [INTERVIEWEE]: My background in film - I started off as a commercials director, and then I went from that to doing film. So it started off in short film and then after spending, I think, 10 to 12 years directing commercials, I made the leap to film.

GABI ZIETSMAN: OK. And why did you want to make films?

JEROME PIKWANE: Well, I always wanted to make films. I never wanted to really be a commercials director, you know? Commercial director just made the most sense. I started directing commercials in the mid - I think they call it Noughties, is that the way you put it? So it was like 2005 and then, you know, at that time there wasn't really, you know, much of a long form, you know, film industry of what you see now. There wasn't the same amount of infrastructure - we didn't have the big streamers supporting filmmakers, so you know to eat, to make, you know, put food on the table, you had to choose commercials. And I was fortunate because at that time, commercials were booming. It was a very lucrative industry, so I was very fortunate that also within that space you get to play with the latest toys, you know, whereas if you were directing for television back then, you wouldn't have necessarily have had the opportunities to, you know, get to use the latest technology, the way in which we in the commercial field [could], because with commercial you burn so much per second, you know, in terms of your budget, whereas with long form, you kind of have to stretch it out. So, did that and then, you know, worked on the script [*The Tokoloshe*] for years and worked on different scripts. But this one kind of came together at the right time – but yeah, it was a process. It was quite a long process and then, you know, opportunity availed itself and we made the film.

GABI ZIETSMAN: OK. And what are some of the biggest film influences in your career?

JEROME PIKWANE: It depends - I am cinephile, so I really love film and I try and watch everything, you know, Orson Welles, and you know, just everything, you know? I was a very strange kid in that regard that, you know, I watched film that most kids would be like, "Yoh, this is rough". I mean, I was watching *Raging Bull* at 12 years old, you know, and I could recite the lines and the other kids were like watching *Rambo*. But even with *Rambo*, I love that sort of film as well, but I just love film as an art form. My influences have changed from time to time. It depends where I am in my life, you know.

I don't know if I'm deviating from your question - but for this film, it just made economic sense more than anything else, you know? Like horror is a great launching pad for up-and-coming filmmakers, and I knew that, because it's just that you can really stretch the budget with horror. There's things you can get away with horror that you can't with other genres. I mean action, you know, you're gonna have to have a bit of a budget, whereas with horror, you know, if you have a strong enough concept, it's really theatre of the mind, you know what I mean? You're playing with people's minds more than anything else.

So if you ask me what my film influences are, it goes from film to film. I mean, for this film, I'd have to say - because Africa doesn't have a strong track record of, you know, horror, it would have to be Western and Asian horror. So it'd be like, you know, De Palma and you know, like *Carrie*, I love *Carrie*, the original *Carrie*, the one from the 70s. I love - I don't know if you can say this man's name in today's film lexicon and... I'm deviating again. I'm sorry to say, but those filmmakers who influence you when you're young and you don't kind of know their character, so it's a strange relationship you start developing with your 'heroes'. So the film that influenced me is *Repulsion*. I don't know if you've seen that?

GABI ZIETSMAN: No, I'm not very familiar with *Repulsion*, but I'll have a look at it .

JEROME PIKWANE: It's this black-and-white film from the 60s and it really, you know, it's one of those films that I think is great for young film makers to watch in terms of just how you can maximise having nothing. I mean, it was made in the 60s, but I still think it's a pretty strong psychological horror film.

What else is there? There are so many films that influenced me. John Carpenter, *Halloween*, Wes Craven, I mean - but like I said it, it depends where you're at in your life. I'm writing stuff now that's completely different. I'm writing an action film [where] completely different types of filmmakers influenced me in that regard. You know, the film I'm working on now is more of an homage to like 90s action. So it depends, I think it's just project to project. I'm a cinephile, so I love movies. But yeah, for this film [*The Tokoloshe*], it would have to be De Palma and films like *Rosemary's Baby* - that was also a huge influence. People kept saying Hitchcock, which was strange...

GABI ZIETSMAN: No, I don't know if I see Hitchcock in [*The Tokoloshe*]

JEROME PIKWANE: Yeah, I didn't either. I mean, maybe *Psycho* a bit, because that's a psychological horror, but not that much.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Maybe little bit of *Psycho* but I don't really see the Hitchcock aspect as much.

JEROME PIKWANE: Yeah, so those are the guys, you know guys like De Palma and these strange small films that I watched growing up. And then you obviously have, you know, like I said, your big directors who I think influence - a lot of directors like I said, De Palma and Wes Craven, but then you have your more artistic [ones].

Like I said, I was a strange kid. [When] I went through my adolescence, I started off really into Hollywood films and then the more I got into film, I was like, "what else is there?" And I started getting to Asian film and, you know, and got into European arthouse films. So I think with this film - particularly because of the limitations we had as filmmakers, me and my writing partner - [when] we wrote this, it was kind of like, you know, look at the filmmakers and the films that you can actually achieve with your limitations. You have a lot of young filmmakers talking about how they're gonna do a *Lord of the Rings* with no budget and no credibility. You know what I mean? So, it's like work with what you have as opposed to what you don't. So we looked at lot of like the arthouse stuff, you know, like I said, each project you have to look at something you can reference that is within reach, I always say. I think in

filmmaking, one has to also be quite pragmatic. You have to be a dreamer, but when you actually make the film, you have to be pragmatic. You have to get the film made. You know with this film it was, yoh...

But ultimately, you know, all these films influence you, and then you find like what the theme is, and whatever that theme is, influences what you do. It's almost like a relay, you know, the film that influences you get you to one point and then the next point you kind of have to know, the film has to become its own entity, it has to become its own thing. And that thing, I think, comes subconsciously - because you don't sit there going, "You know I want to write a story about abuse or whatever," that's not what I set out to do. Especially as a filmmaker, as an entertainer, cause ultimately you wanna, you know, do something that people are gonna be entertained by. But there is something, a seed that forms from that idea and that theme informs what you do.

GABI ZIETSMAN: That was very insightful. So would you want - I know you're working on an action but would you want to make another horror again? Why or why not?

JEROME PIKWANE: Oh no, I definitely would. I mean, I've written another horror film, but it's a bigger budget, so it's a bit tricky, and also there's a certain way that I wanna do it, that's why there's a delay with that. Especially if you want to do it a certain way with a certain budget and because it's horror there's budget restrictions, especially in South Africa.

But I want to do all sorts of things, you know? I don't wanna be a horror director or an action director. I wanna be a director. I wanna make films, you know. I want to eventually develop my own style that is strong enough that whatever that is, is what I am delivering. So it's a journey. It's a process. I think as an artist you always try and find your voice and I think as a director I'm still young, so there's still [time], you know, directing is a lifetime thing, you know? I think you get better, they say, the older you get so - I'm hoping I get really good when I get to my 70s, you know? But yeah, it's a lifetime thing, but yeah, I just wanna make films, whatever type of films.

GABI ZIETSMAN: And how would you describe the general African film landscape and specifically the African horror film landscape?

JEROME PIKWANE: I think that African horror landscape is kind of non-existent. But like I said, you know, I don't know if I'm the right person - like, I know horror as a genre, but I'm not really part of that community. You know what I mean? Like I said, I like films. It was very informative for me when my film went to all these festivals - it's a different world, like even as a filmmaker you [realise] these people are really into this. You have people walk around like Freddy Krueger and all these characters and you know, it's like, obviously makeup. But like their eyes hang out of the eye socket and they're like taking selfies. It's a very strange world, so I don't know if I'm the the one to ask about that landscape.

But I do know that with my film, our strategy was - we had to go overseas and we had to create hype with the overseas film market and the film festivals overseas. We did very well there - we punched above our weight, we were very fortunate, you know, we had a really good team guiding us in terms of what festivals we should do. And yeah, so that was a strategy because we knew that, you know, if we came out in South Africa with this film - like our premiere was in South Korea, you know, our world premiere, so we knew we had to generate some sort of hype so that people know. I do think people in South Africa, South Africans in general, we are a conservative country. And I think in general, when you are dealing with horror as a genre, [for] South Africans it kind of, you know, repels them. I think especially black South Africans. My own family were like, "What's this movie you're making? Like what?" So because of, you know, the spiritual aspect, which is another story, but yeah, it's not a popular genre in this country, you know, it's a tough one. But like I said, if you want to showcase yourself as a filmmaker and you wanna do it with minimal resources, horror is, I think, a good stepping stone. It's a good way to get in there as a film director.

GABI ZIETSMAN: And do you think that conservativeness also applies to other African countries and other African industries?

JEROME PIKWANE: Oh yeah, definitely. Well, I mean, I think most African countries are conservative because, you know, but what is conservatism? It's trying to keep a way of life

which, you know as liberal as film is, I understand that, you know, I understand. And the world is moving more that way. It definitely did affect - I mean, if you really want to make a film, with no hassle, with minimal hassle. I mean, making a film is always hard to make [with] minimal hassle.

I think the genre now that people are pumping is, you know, romcoms. I don't think overseas people are into romcoms as much as we are now in Africa, which is very strange because, you know, at the one end you have – I don't wanna try and make this thing political - but it's interesting because you're trying to tell young women like, "You should go out and, you know, conquer the world and do your thing". But on the on the end, you're also telling them like, "Ja, if you meet the right guy, then your problems are it solved", like I don't know, it's weird. Anyway, it's a very strange thing. It's not my cup of tea, I'm not that guy, you know? That's one genre I'm not [interested in].

GABI ZIETSMAN: No, I do agree with you, especially if you look at some African productions on Netflix, like romcoms are definitely like number one.

JEROME PIKWANE: No, it's crazy. I mean, it's, jeez, like [the way they're] pumping it, it's almost industrialised now, like romcoms in Africa. I think almost that it's taken what soap operas were, or telenovelas. It's the amount that's coming out is crazy. I mean, I can't tell the difference anymore, to be honest with you.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Yeah, just, because I am Afrikaans and the Afrikaans film industry is like its own thing, and I've definitely seen just with streaming there has been a shift in how Afrikaans stories have been told, because there's currently on Showmax [a show called] *Wyfie*, which is like a telenovela style, but it's like super modern as well. And I have to say, it's the first time I've seen a leap in Afrikaans filmmaking, from where it was, so it's an interesting direction that Afrikaans is going, but anyway...

JEROME PIKWANE: But those are a lot of Afrikaans films, that they call it, *windpomp* [windpump] dramas, literally.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Yeah, the whole small *dorpie* [town] story.

JEROME PIKWANE: Yeah. And there's always like a windpump it's also, like, a romcom, isn't it? And [there's] like always some pop singer.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Yeah, it's always a romcom.

JEROME PIKWANE: It's like a pop singer as the lead guy or something or you know.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Yeah, it's just like with *Wyfie*, it's like something completely different. It's like a bit more like *Euphoria* almost. And it's like there's sex and there's like alcohol, drugs.

JEROME PIKWANE: What? What show is this? It's like *Euphoria*?!

GABI ZIETSMAN: Wyfie - it is a fantastic show. I love it.

JEROME PIKWANE: Now I wanna see it because it's like *Euphoria*.

GABI ZIETSMAN: It's just like from where Afrikaans [stories] has been, this series has really just blown my mind and it's something I really wish I had as a teenager almost, because seeing something in my language that's actually modern, and like with it and actually talks about real stuff that young people deal with.

JEROME PIKWANE: That's happening right now, yeah.

GABI ZIETSMAN: So I think it's just a really fantastic [show]. It's also like well done. It's really well-produced as well.

JEROME PIKWANE: OK. I want to definitely check it out.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Okay, so generally, what do you think African audiences' attitudes towards horror films might be?

JEROME PIKWANE: Like I said, I think we are dealing with a very conservative group, myself included, I know from my family, you know. I don't think African because it's, you know, it's tricky, I'd rather just say South African because then it's more, you know, and even saying that I'm not an expert, but just speaking from my own locale, I think South Africans are conservative. I think especially, you know, as black South Africans we're very conservative. You have your black Christians, you have your black Africans that practice, you know, indigenous beliefs, religious beliefs.

So, if you look at all that, you know - and our film dealt with psychospiritual aspects of the culture. People weren't necessarily okay with that, you know, some people didn't react that well, but like I said, you know, it's a genre, we knew that it wasn't gonna, you know, play well to South Africans, you know, especially the type of genre, you know? We're dealing with incest, we're dealing with the rape, we're dealing with a lot of heavy stuff. This is not *Final Destination* where people's heads are getting logged off by an invisible antagonist. We dealt with some heavy stuff, so we knew that people weren't gonna, you know, flock in their droves necessarily. But I think I made the film I wanted to.

GABI ZIETSMAN: So just generally, how do you think Africa is represented in film in general?

JEROME PIKWANE: Well, I mean usually not nuanced. You know, it's usually wild animals. I mean it's, you know, cliched, but it's just the usual cliché. There's a narrative or perspective that's being peddled by the West about certain regions of the world, you know, and I think it's, you know, it's also lazy filmmaking. It's kind of like when you see Mexico - Mexico's always sepia for some reason. Or Moscow is blue because it's like it's continuously freezing there, you know, it's like all these weird things. Africa is the same, it's like shacks, it's animals, it's poverty, you know? I don't think it's become nuanced.

I was excited when I saw - and this might be silly - what Marvel did in terms of the *Black Panther* [movie]. I didn't realise how necessary that was in terms of like, just from a cultural aspect, that sort of film. It's sad that it wasn't made by us rather than a Western conglomerate making a film about Africans. But yeah, I didn't realise how necessary it was

for especially the younger people's psyche. Because growing up, we did not have black superheroes. I mean, the first time I saw black superhero was Spawn, you know, that was the first time. I grew up with Superman and Batman, and then I when I saw my son dressing up as Black Panther, I was like, "Wow, this is amazing, like they actually needed this".

But anyway, yeah it's getting better, but it's not nuanced. It's warlords, it's the usual story, and it's usually like one country or it's like this vague thing. African films are never nuanced when it's made by the West, films about Africa. It's never like, "this is set in Senegal," unless it's an arthouse film obviously. But in terms of like mainstream - no, I don't think you're gonna get that.

GABI ZIETSMAN: And how much do you think that European/Hollywood filmmaking practice have an impact on African film makers from the continent?

JEROME PIKWANE: I don't think much. I think that's good because it helps our industry grow. I think the more we're exposed to each other's industries, you know, the service industry and all this because I think it's good. Obviously there's an economic benefit, but I don't think it impacts us that much. I don't think the way we see ourselves is gonna change. I think it's more about changing the way they see us as opposed to the way we see ourselves, you know.

GABI ZIETSMAN: And so, you know, funding is such a crucial challenge in the African industry and how much of an impact does that have on the kind of film you make?

JEROME PIKWANE: Huge. There are certain films that's near-impossible to make. Like there's a pipeline, you know, like Netflix or, I don't know if I'm allowed to say people's names, but like Amazon and, you know, all these different streamers - there's obviously a pipeline. With all these big conglomerates coming in now, you know, they're gonna dictate the type of films we have to make. And it's unfortunate and it's sad, but that's how it is. And they get told by some algorithm. It's a very interesting time to be a filmmaker. It's not a great time to be independent, because if you're not part of that, whatever that is, that machine, if you're not commissioned, it is a struggle to get films made. It really is.

I think the game you have to try to play is that you have to be a genre filmmaker. There was a time when we were growing up, you know, you had filmmakers who were making art, really strong arthouse films, you know like Darrell Roodt and Gavin Hood. They came from this very independent [era], they had a very strong voice in terms of the type of films they wanted to make, but that's gone. In terms of like arthouse, independent - you have to make what you're told. You're gun-for-hire these days pretty much. But I'm hoping that it will turn, you know, that audiences' taste will change. But like I said, there is a certain type of film that people wanna watch. Unfortunately you have to pander to the masses.

GABI ZIETSMAN: What does African horror mean for you? Do you think that as a genre exists, or is it rather a horror film set in Africa?

JEROME PIKWANE: I think it's the latter. I think we're gonna get to a point where we have that, where it's like, you know what a Japanese horror film is, you know what an American slasher is. I don't think you know what an African horror is because it's so new as a subgenre in the lexicon of African filmmaking. So, I think it's gonna take a while. I think we're forming it right now. I hope more, you know, young people come up and make these films, cause ultimately, what are these things? They're allegories, right? They talk about our society, they talk about our culture and they're allegories for maybe a certain time, you know, that zeitgeist of that moment.

When you look at my film, when it was coming up, it's very much a post-MeToo horror film and I didn't plan on making that, cause I don't think of myself per say as a feminist. But it was like, like I said - a film's gonna become what it's gonna become. And it became that, you know, it was about the most marginalised, disenfranchised individual in society, which is a black, female migrant worker. And that was because, in horror film, you kind of want someone that is the most vulnerable. That's the kind of horror films I enjoyed watching, and usually they are women, because historically in society, women were the most vulnerable, right? So that's what horror films traditionally were. You look at *Alien*, you look at *Halloween*. You look at, you know, all these different films and you know who's the most vulnerable. So that's where the film started. It was just like, you look at the most vulnerable person and you have the supernatural horror, then you have the man-made horror, which is

the, you know, the [break in audio]. And that darkness in itself, that social construct in itself is horrific at times.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Yeah, okay. And so it's fine if you don't know this term, but before knowing what this term means, what do you think the Black Fantastic means to you?

JEROME PIKWANE: The Black Fantastic? Yoh, I don't know.

GABI ZIETSMAN: What's your first impressions of that?

JEROME PIKWANE: I don't wanna speculate it.

GABI ZIETSMAN: So, the Black Fantastic is an art theory of genre. So, it does come from America. It is grouping any films that are about black identity, so like Afrofuturism, magical realism, horror, and how it takes African spirituality, African history, African culture and uses it in films, but in a sincere way, where it decentres whiteness and colonialism and all that stuff. But the Black Fantastic is very much defined around diaspora identity by creating a global black identity. But the way it's like presented and talked about, it kind of doesn't really include African experience, like people who are from Africa who live in Africa.

What do you think of a term like that?

JEROME PIKWANE: Yoh, I don't know - Black Fantastic. That's a tough one then. You know, I think it's tough because is one talking about race or is one talking about culture? Because race and culture are two different things. What people don't understand is like, black people have a lot of similarities in terms of culture, but we're not necessarily like, you know, this one huge grouping. So, I think it's a very tough one, because yes, as a black person obviously whether you're in Joburg or London, you've had similar experiences, but the same could be said of women, whether you're a white woman or a black woman, you've had similar experiences with certain type of men. You know what I mean? I think that's why it becomes very tricky when one has these broad conversations about race and culture. You have to have it more than once. With this type of film, what we could do is we could have a nuanced

discussion where we try to not have this polished over, generic discussion about race and gender and so forth. Because I think with that sort of statement, with that sort of phrase, it can become very loaded.

GABI ZIETSMAN: I guess it's more of a genre theory.

JEROME PIKWANE: Yeah, I mean it could become very loaded, you know, in terms of it could mean a lot of things to different people, so I'm worried to kind of like dive into that pool, you know?

GABI ZIETSMAN: That's perfectly fine. Let me just check time. So what kind of impact do you think Africa's colonial history has on modern filmmaking, on the continent, and perhaps the horror genre [as well]?

JEROME PIKWANE: Yoh, these are big questions for Saturday morning. I think most of African film is gonna be contemporary. You're not gonna find that many African films that deal with your immediate history, but I think in terms of just as a people, I don't know, I think it's contemporary. I think we're dominated by those that give us the money, unfortunately. We're going through a period right now - I have to say, in 2014 or 2015, roundabout then, I was very excited because when I got into the long form game and I started developing my film, there was a lot of guys, you know, my generation that in terms of Africa that were coming up and you could see even though they were making genre films, the genre films were allegories for what was going on in the country at that time, you know. And I thought it was very exciting and interesting. It kind of feels now it's sort of fizzled out with going into a very generic, corporate form of storytelling, which is sad, but I think that's just across the board. I think that's where we're at in terms of filmmaking and you can see that in the numbers films are doing, the attendance is down. We're making very safe, comfortable films, you know, which is not not the type of films that interest me.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Yeah. And do you think some of that colonial history is kind of a long thread that's still running through this corporatisation of film?

JEROME PIKWANE: Yeah, I think whoever controls the money, controls the narrative. So, you're gonna get a certain type of film because those type of films they have commissioned, you know? There's certain films that aren't everybody's cup of tea. In terms of forming our identity, as an industry, I think that's still happening, but it is happening, I have to say. I think we are telling our own stories, it's just the type of stories we're telling is what I'm questioning.

As you saying with this Afrikaans '*Euphoria*', you know just put it that way, that to me is interesting. I think we need more of that sort of, especially with youth, you know. Film, if you're gonna save this thing, this industry and this form, I think you have to speak more to that, to the youth and what's going on there. With this sanitized, especially I think with - I don't wanna say black cinema – but I do think it's so extremely sanitised right now, it's very sanitised, you know it has to fit into a little box.

GABI ZIETSMAN: So what was the main inspiration for *The Tokoloshe*?

JEROME PIKWANE: Yoh, there was no main inspiration. The inspiration was to get a movie made, you know, so I can make other films. I think [we] all start off as a fan, you make the things you wanna see. So, I wanted to see a South African horror film that I've never seen before. You couple that with the fact that you know budgets are tight. We had under like R8 million or something to make this film, which is a very tight budget. And the whole idea was, you know, to make something that you could do within a controlled environment so that the economics, don't get out of your control, which didn't work out that way. Because we one of our main sets burnt down. It was very strange how this film did become spiritual, because it was just so many... and I've had this happen twice now. I did like a TV series as well also dealing with the occult. And it's just like a lot of strange things started happening. So I do think there is something to it.

But yeah, the idea was just to make something that I would wanna watch, you know, cause end of the day, I'm my first viewer. I'm the first audience member. I don't know what other people wanna watch, I know what I wanna watch as a film fan and you know, make something that's like, budget friendly, and has a market. Might not be a market in South

Africa, but we knew there was a market for this sort of thing globally. So it was, you know, it was, it was very calculated.

GABI ZIETSMAN: So, like you were aiming for the international market, who is the typical audience that you had in your head for this film? Who did you want to speak to?

JEROME PIKWANE: You know, the typical audience is for this sort of film, from research, is your 14-year-old to 40-year-old male, which is a very huge audience across races. Your female segment is growing and is growing rapidly for the horror genre. What I thought would be attractive about the film is that this sort of story has been told over and over again in various parts of the world, but now you're telling the story of an African bogeyman, from that perspective, so I thought if I could tell a global or a universal story in a way that everyone could relate to across the world, then I've done my job and that was kind of what we're trying to do. How do you tell a South African story that is universal?

GABI ZIETSMAN: Can you tell me a bit about your co-writer - what was that collaborative process like? Were you guys trying to bring your different experiences to the film? How did you work together?

JEROME PIKWANE: It's hard to put down, you know, because I I've known the guy for like, 20 years. I don't know if you know Richard Kunzmann?

GABI ZIETSMAN: No, I haven't had a look at his stuff yet.

JEROME PIKWANE: We have similar tastes in terms of, you know, genre wise, the type of films in the horror field and thrillers. We started off collaborating years ago, you know and then we became friends. We stopped working together, but our friendship continued, and years went by, then we came back to the story. I think the best way to describe it is, I kind of I'll come and I'll say, "I'll bring my filming background". So, I think he understands what works in terms of a story on a page, but I understand what works from a filming point of view, you know, because a novel and a film is completely different, as you know, pacing, etcetera.

I think we bring that differences and also cultural differences. It's about leaning into each other strengths there. I think whenever you have that sort of dynamic partnership where you have these very different cultural backgrounds, the thing that unites you obviously is your love of film, you know. He's a white South African male, I'm a black South African male, he lives in Europe, I live in South Africa, but I think our love for film, and also, I think our love of culture. It's hard to say African film because as you know, South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, it's culturally very different. So I can only speak on, you know, my immediate culture, which is South African, and with that kind of partnership, you just lean into those things, you lean into like those cultural aspects, you know?

What makes South Africa fascinating? What are the cultural differences? And those are the things that we drew upon, and I think that's what the strength of the film was - the fact that we didn't try and make like some sort of American horror film, you know, cause that would have just failed. It would have failed, you know, because they do it so well. So, what we wanna do, and that's why the cinematography was so important to us, we wanted to make something that looked good but also was unmistakably South African. You know, if you watch this thing, the cultural aspect should also draw you into the film, you know, because I think that's one of our strong selling points is, is our culture.

GABI ZIETSMAN: OK. I think what we're going to do - just one last question and then we'll dive a bit deeper into the film [*The Tokoloshe*] itself for the next session.

Is there anything you would have liked to have done differently in the film?

JEROME PIKWANE: No, because you know, what I'm hoping for is, as the years ago by, the film develops its own sort of cult status, and I'd like that, you know, for my first film to do that, this would be really cool. In hindsight, looking back when the film came out, the wounds are fresh, cause making a film is so, especially when you're emotionally attached to it and you've written it and you've invested years into it, you can be so attached to it that you don't look. When I look back now, there was so many things that I wish I had and I wish hadn't happened. But those incidents kind of inform the film and what the film is. So no, I

think at the time I'd wished I had more money and I did more Hollywood stuff, but I think what was cool about it, is that this [is an] independent art house horror film from South Africa. We were trying to go with like a Bababook - I don't if you ever seen *The Babadook*?

GABI ZIETSMAN: Yes, I've seen *The Babadook*.

JEROME PIKWANE: And what is weird is that at the time our film had came out, we were making the film when that film was coming out. So it was interesting because that's a very independent art house film. It's not a studio film, and I love that film, by the way, because it does use horror as an allegory, and I think that's the type of thing what I wanted to do with horror. I'm not interested in in horror, almost as pornography, you know what I mean? Like where people are just body count, man. Their heads are getting logged off and it's cool, it's fun if it's done comically, but I think also because we live in a country like South Africa, we treat violence a bit differently than to the Americans and the Europeans. American day to day violence is real. So that's the type of what I wanted to do, like horror as an allegory.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Have you seen *Talk To Me*?

JEROME PIKWANE: Oh yeah.

GABI ZIETSMAN: The director from *The Babadook* was a mentor on *Talk To Me* to me, so I also thought that blew my mind a little bit as a horror - it felt like a new generation of horror almost.

JEROME PIKWANE: But that's what *The Babadook* was, you know, previously. But I think *Talk To Me* was a really good film. Like, really good. But I do think it is more commercial. It's definitely a departure from – *The Babadook* is like cult, you know, it's a cult film. It's almost like Dario Argento, you know, that sort of vibe in the sense of... not the style of filmmaking, obviously, but in terms of like cult, you know, it's, you know, yeah.

But yeah, it's an interesting time. I think we're entering a golden age of horror - just the amount of good horror films are coming out is unbelievable - globally. South Africa not so

much but *8: A South African Horror Story* was good though I have to say it. I don't know if you seen it?

GABI ZIETSMAN: Yeah, *8* is the reason I'm doing this dissertation, because I interviewed Tshamano Sebe, who plays the sangoma, the villain, and he kind of started the idea for this dissertation, because I'm also a film critic for News 24 and I also do interviews and features. And he said that, you know, there's like a hesitancy to write about these stories within a horror context and he said "Africa will eat you alive". So, how is the horror as a genre approached by African filmmakers and why is there not a lot of it. But I feel horror is, like you said earlier, it's such a good stepping stone for filmmakers. And in a country, a continent [where] resources are limited, you would think there would be a stronger horror industry in that way. So I'm kind of trying to unpack that.

Yeah, but I think we'll leave it here for now.