

BAMPFA Debuts New 4K Restoration of David Schickele's *Bushman* (1971)



Landmark Independent Film Receives Theatrical Rollout in Partnership with Milestone Films and Kino Lorber

(Berkeley, CA) December 14, 2023—A new 4K restoration of David Schickele's *Bushman* (1971) will make its North American debut next year, marking the first time in decades that this celebrated landmark of American independent cinema will be widely available. Overseen by the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) and The Film Foundation, the

restoration will be distributed worldwide in all media by Milestone Films and Kino Lorber. Funding for the restoration was provided by the Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation, with additional support provided by Peter Conheim, Cinema Preservation Alliance.

Following a spotlight presentation in January at The Museum of Modern Art as part of the museum's annual preservation film festival To Save and Project, *Bushman* will have a weeklong theatrical run at New York City's BAM Rose Cinemas beginning on Friday, February 2. That presentation will coincide with the restoration's West Coast premiere at BAMPFA on Saturday, February 3, which will include an onstage conversation with Schickele's family members, cast and crew, and the film archivists who worked on the restoration. The film will receive a reprise screening at BAMPFA on Saturday, February 24.

Although it has been nearly impossible to see for decades following its initial release, *Bushman* is widely regarded by film scholars as a major milestone of Black representation in American cinema—and as an important historical document of the West Coast counterculture from which it emerged. Blending narrative and documentary techniques, the film follows the experience of Gabriel, a Nigerian immigrant teaching in San Francisco during the 1960s who gets swept up in the tumultuous social movements of the era. Originally conceived as a comedic drama set at what was then San Francisco State College, the project took on a more serious tone during filming, when the campus was convulsed by a monthslong series of racial justice protests led by the Black Student Union and the Third World Liberation Front.

A rare onscreen depiction of the African immigrant experience in the United States, *Bushman* stars the nonprofessional Nigerian actor Paul Eyam Nzie Okpokam, a close friend of Schickele's who met the filmmaker during his service in the Peace Corps in the early 1960s—an experience that Schickele later chronicled in his mid-length documentary *Give Me a Riddle* (1966), which will accompany the *Bushman* screening at BAMPFA. Widely celebrated during his lifetime as a successful musician, Schickele (1937-1999) also amassed a distinguished body of work as a film director, editor, and actor, receiving a Guggenheim Fellowship for filmmaking in 1979.

Though it was widely celebrated during its initial release, *Bushman* has never been released on any home viewing format and has almost never screened theatrically outside the Bay Area over

the past forty years. BAMPFA holds the original camera negative and one of the only extant 35mm prints of the film in its collection, which comprises over eighteen thousand films and videos with particularly strong holdings in West Coast independent cinema. The camera negative was the source of the new 4K restoration, which was overseen by film archivist Ross Lipman at Illuminate in partnership with BAMPFA film archivist Jon Shibata and former film collection supervisor, Antonella Bonfanti.

“It’s an honor to partner with our colleagues at The Film Foundation, Milestone Films, and Kino Lorber to bring *Bushman* to contemporary audiences in a pristine new 4K restoration,” said Susan Oxtoby, BAMPFA’s Director of Film and Senior Film Curator. “The meticulous work done by film archivist Ross Lipman will ensure that this extraordinary example of independent cinema will remain available to scholars and the general public for decades to come.”

“We’re delighted to partner with The Film Foundation on restoring this historically important work of American independent cinema, which has a special resonance for our own community here in the Bay Area as a product of the vibrant social justice currents that have shaped our region’s history,” said BAMPFA’s Executive Director Julie Rodrigues Widholm. “By activating the unique holdings of our internationally distinguished film collection—and partnering with distributors like Kino and Milestone to make these holdings available to a wider audience—BAMPFA continues to shape a more expansive and inclusive film history.”

Sponsorship

Bushman has been restored by BAMPFA and The Film Foundation. Funding provided by the Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation. Additional support provided by Peter Conheim, Cinema Preservation Alliance.

Visitor Information

Hours

Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Film Tickets

\$14 General admission—includes same-day gallery admission

BERKELEY ART MUSEUM AND PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE

2120 Oxford St #2250 Berkeley CA 94720 bampfa.org

\$5 UC Berkeley students

\$8 BAMPFA members

\$10 Discount admission—UC Berkeley faculty & staff, Non-UC Berkeley students, disabled, 65+, 18 & under; and artists in the BAMPFA collection/MATRIX

\$2 to add same-day gallery admission with discount film ticket

\$6 Additional same-day feature

Address

2155 Center Street, Berkeley, CA 94720

bampfa.org

510-642-0808

BERKELEY ART MUSEUM AND PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE

2120 Oxford St #2250 Berkeley CA 94720 bampfa.org