

1999 Jamaican Film-maker For

By William Doyle-Marshall
Contributing Editor

Two young African Canadian film makers, Jennifer Holness and David Sutherland, will have their first feature film screened at the 24th annual Toronto International Film Festival in September.

It is a 30-minute film titled "My Fathers Hands." The story is about a father and son who are at loggerheads with each other.



Jennifer Holness and David Sutherland

It was produced by Hungry Eye Production, founded by Holness and Sutherland.

"My Fathers Hands" was shot in March over a five and a half day period in five locations — Kensington Market, Wallace Studios, Scarborough, on the Riverdale set and George Brown College's meat locker.

It is Hungry Eye's biggest production to date. "This is the first project that I have had to bring in all the money and bring in all the elements from the crew, even dealing with

David in terms of casting and all those things, so it's really important. I think that this film will take us one step closer to where we want to go and that's to making feature films in Canada and having a presence," Ms Holness said proudly.

"It's the first time we get to really show our stuff and people will see the colours of emotions that we can bring, the humour, the cinematic style," Sutherland explained.

"We deal a lot with music and dance in this film and a lot of people understand Black people through music and dance and we are looking at that in terms of the writing, in terms of the struggles of the young artist versus just coming here in the country as an immigrant: generational struggles," he continued.

The father, a butcher, an old school Jamaican who came here in the 1960s is played by Ardon Bess, an experienced Canadian actor who appeared in "Soul Survivor" which was also screened at

the festival a few years ago. Sutherland wrote this role especially for Bess after seeing "Soul Survivor."

The son, a vegetarian and dancer, is a new school Canadian who was born here in the seventies. The role is being played by Mark Taylor (Fox Student Bodies and CBC Straight Up). He is going away to New York to study with Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation and American Ballet Theatre.

Award winning actor Alison Sealy Smith

plays the mother. She brings to the film a long list of credits including Coups and Calypsoes by M. Nourbese Philip and Harlem Duet by Djanet Sears.

Cameras drop in on the father's butcher shop, the Saturday prior to the son's departure the following Monday. They capture a robbery at the shop and both men are injured. The robbers throw them in a meat locker and leave them to die.

The mother's character is the glue that keeps the family together. She is their only hope of surviving.

"Through flash backs we find out about the whole history of their (father-son) relationship and how they have to come together and realize that their relationship is about love. There are flash backs to very specific incidents in their history, each having to deal with the uses of the father's hands," says Sutherland.

This year the festival's Planet Africa Programme promises great things according to June Givanni, programmer.

It will be showcasing, as in the past, good movies for everyone. There's romantic comedy, historical, dramatical epic; really strong documentaries about what's taking place on the African continent at the moment which includes poetical, lyrical films.

"Films are coming from Jamaica, all over Africa and the United States of America. Of particular interest will be short films and documentaries from South Africa that deal with contemporary Black culture and historical events which are expected to make quite stir," she said.

Talking about the Jamaican film "Third World Cop" by Chris Browne, Ms Givanni stressed,

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"I am very glad that each year we are able to get at least one film from that tiny region of the world: the Caribbean."

The festival runs from September 9 through September 18.

This year's opening film is Atom Egoyan's "Felicia's Journey." That will be the North American premier for this production which centres around an intense look at two lost souls, both afraid to face the world.

"The film shows one of Canada's most accomplished filmmakers working at the peak of his powers," according to an announcement from the festival's press office.

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