

UZO
CHIJOKE

AMANDA MICHELLE
SMITH

ANDY
PRESCOTT

BEN
OFFICIAL

the Θōgene mān

a short film by Uzo Chijioke

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT
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SMASHED STUDIOS PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH LAMPFEET PRODUCTIONS AND 216 ENTERTAINMENT
THE OGENE MAN STARRING UZO CHIJOKE AMANDA MICHELLE SMITH ANDY PRESCOTT AND BEN OFFICIAL DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ONYINYECHI OGOMAKA
PRODUCTION DESIGNER ANDREA VAN LANDINGHAM MUSICAL SCORE JACOB KATZ EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS AR'DARIUS STEWART ZJARA WILSON AND UZO CHIJOKE
WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY UZO CHIJOKE



LOGLINE

A Nigerian immigrant must expand his traditional beliefs on what it means to connect with people after striking out both at work and in a musical performance for his own community.

SYNOPSIS

The Ogene Man follows Benson, a Nigerian accountant on a work visa who keeps his cultural identity hidden at his American corporate job, believing professionalism means assimilation. Despite excellent technical work, his self-imposed isolation results in an "inadequate" performance review, which threatens his visa status. Outside work, Benson leads a traditional Nigerian Ogene band, clinging rigidly to authenticity while alienating modern Nigerian-American audiences who prefer a fusion of both cultures. When his band loses a crowd to contemporary music at a birthday party, Benson must confront how his resistance to cultural blending has left him disconnected from both his American colleagues and his diaspora community. At a company karaoke night, faced with performing a popular song that represents everything he's been rejecting, Benson stands at a crossroads: continue hiding behind the walls he created, or finally allow himself to bridge both worlds. The film reveals how the fear of losing one's identity can become the very thing that prevents immigrants from truly belonging anywhere.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS



GENRE	SHORT COMEDY
RUNTIME	14:40
COUNTRY	USA
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH, IGBO
SUBTITLES	ENGLISH
ASPECT RATIO	16:9
SHOOTING FORMAT	DIGITAL
LOCATION	CALIFORNIA
YEAR	2024

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The internet and social media can be a tool to amplify voices, but unfortunately, they can also amplify negativity. Disagreements in the Black diaspora are no stranger to that amplification. As a first-generation Igbo American who feels every bit as Nigerian as I do American, I'm often looking at both sides of these arguments and shaking my head. However, with this film, I wanted to center my Nigerian side as the focus point and touch on how we can do our part to overcome prejudices about who can understand us.

With my parents' generation, many of them were instructed by well-meaning seniors to keep their heads down and focus on school and work when they got to America in the '70s and '80s. Like other immigrants, many also adopted English names to fit in with Americans while preferring to keep their actual friends to those of their own cultural group. For Africans in America, this can come across as looking Black, but distancing ourselves from Blackness. In the context of *The Ogene Man*, Ogene music is used to communicate Benson's desire to only speak his truth in his language to his people even though many of them have adapted to enjoying additional forms of music. On the flip side, the people who actually desire to know him, he shuns. He's performing a genre of music that is meant to adapt to the call and response, however, it's him who hasn't been responding to the call.

This story centers on the African vs African-American dynamic. Still, I believe that its themes can speak to anyone who defaults to assuming that they have nothing in common with people who come from a separate place. I didn't want this to be a heavy, melodramatic immigrant story, but instead to have more comedic, and sometimes downright ridiculous, tones. There's even a Louisiana-style dance song that I co-wrote and produced which Benson comes into conflict with. I hope that you'll appreciate how Benson learns to open up on his journey in this film.



UZO CHIJOKE
writer/director

Uzo Chijioke is a Nigerian American writer/director whose artistic voice boldly challenges cultural expectations and societal constraints. His narratives center on the multifaceted experiences of people within subcultures while illuminating their journeys toward self-discovery as they challenge the rules and norms in their lives.

Chijioke's diverse experiences as a first-generation Igbo American and U.S. Army veteran infuse his stories with authentic, nuanced perspectives on what it means to belong to a community. As a Howard University Doctor of Pharmacy graduate who is now pursuing long-neglected creative interests, his storytelling underscores the universal human yearning to forge one's path, free from the limitations of imposed norms.

He is a past mentee in the 2022-2023 WGF Veteran's Writing Project and is also the co-creator and head writer of the Webby Award-winning and NAACP Image Award-nominated podcast series "TwentyOne 21: A Black AF Scripted Audio Comedy."

KEY CREDITS:

WRITER/DIRECTOR	UZO CHIJOKE
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	ONYII OGOMAKA
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS	AR'DARIUS STEWART ZJARA WILSON UZO CHIJOKE
PRODUCER	ALENA DRAKE
MUSICAL SCORE	JACOB KATZ
CAST	UZO CHIJOKE AMANDA MICHELLE SMITH ANDY PRESCOTT BEN OFFICIAL
PRODUCTION SOUND	DANIEL BONILLA
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	ANDREA VAN LANDINGHAM
PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS	GABE LIRON KATIE CHRISTING GESLEY ALEXIS
ADDITIONAL CAMERA	MIHIKA DAS GESLEY ALEXIS
GAFFER	YUNFAN XU
COLORIST	BRANDON DON HEATH
SOUND MIXER	TRAVSONIC STUDIOS