

KOPPO AND LADY B

A DOCUMENTARY FILM

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Africa, authentic, today.

When I was young, we kids would gather around our elders for stories; an uncle or a cousin would narrate a folktale with us being a very active audience. We sang along as they improvised songs or interpreted popular hits. The old lifestyle was all about community, sharing, and respect. The city held prospects for a brighter future, but life stemmed from the village.

Now people flee the villages for cities. At night, they go to bars or clubs. Gatherings are less spontaneous, more mediated by commerce, sex, and ambition. The conversation has changed.

Our African identity is changing.

That is why I am making this documentary: to explore our fast-changing sense of self. Today, more than any of our politicians or intellectuals, Cameroon's musicians are tapping into the rhythm of the city.

The best way to tell this tale is through the lives of two of Cameroon's most celebrated rap artists: Koppo, the hottest-selling rapper in our short hip-hop history and Lady B, the only woman in an arena dominated by men.

I love the music of my country. My work as a producer and cultural journalist has enabled me to get to know every Cameroonian musician of note, and a whole lot more: aspiring, accomplished, local, and international.

During the past 10 years especially, I've witnessed a new phenomenon: the rise of the first generation of truly urban Cameroonian musicians—they create for the chaos of the city.

Chief among these are Koppo and Lady B. Their audience—youth born and bred in the cities—identify fiercely with them. Part of the attraction is their lyrics. These two hip-hop icons still sing about love and relationships, but they go deeper: into immigration, unemployment, sexual abuse, corruption and more. Themes that have emerged with modernization.

Koppo and Lady B scrutinize the dislocation we all feel and echo the dreams, fears, and struggles of today's urban youth.

Traditionally, our touchstone was our ancestors, our communities—and our stories. Now, just like us, our stories are urbanizing, quickly.

My hope is for *Koppo and Lady B* to chronicle this pivotal transformation in my country.

My Africa, authentic, today.

Aretha Louise Mbango
-- Douala, Cameroon

