

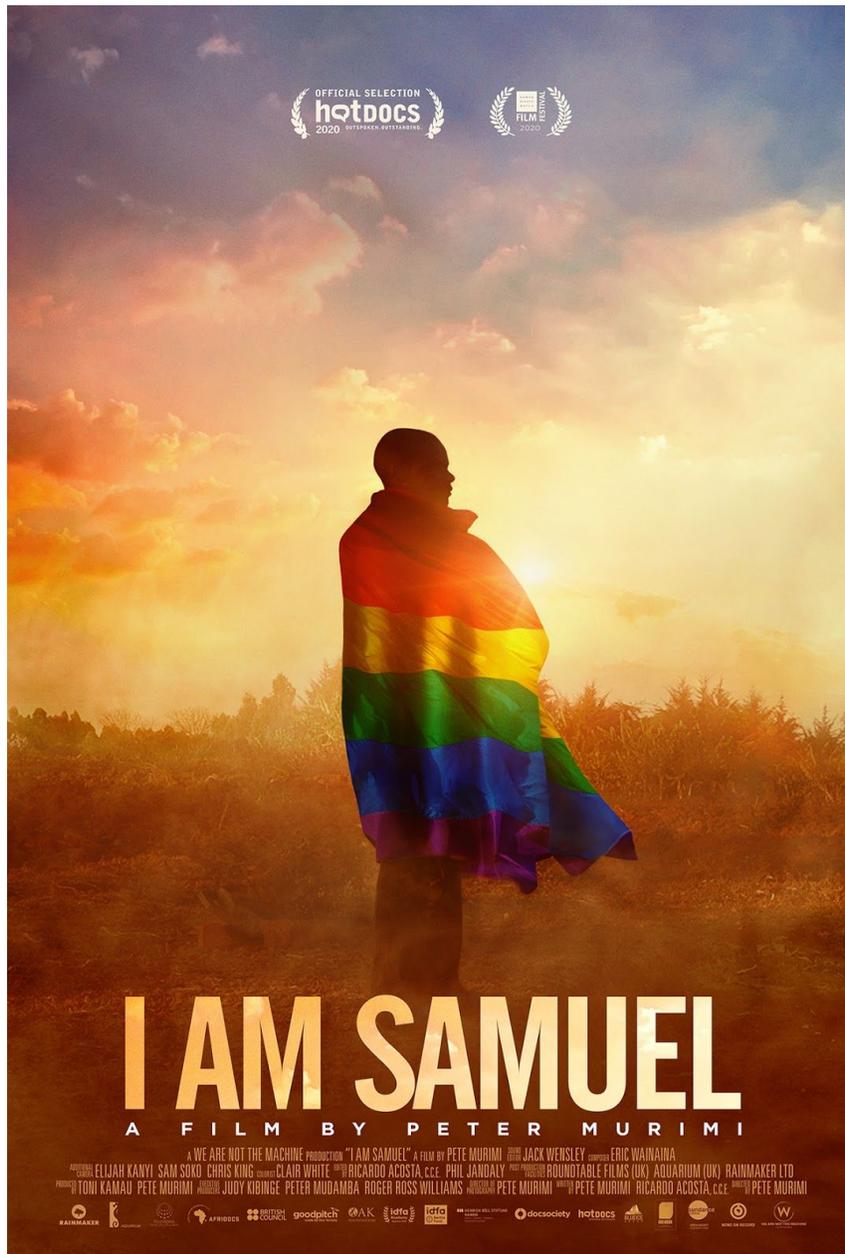
I AM SAMUEL

A film by Pete Murimi. 69 MIN 43 SEC. KENYA. 2020. HD

World premiere: Hot Docs 2020

US Premiere: HRWFF New York 2020

European Premiere: BFI London Film festival 2020



Main Film Contact: Producer - Toni Kamau - toni@wearenottthemachine.com

Additional film contacts: Director/Producer - petemurimi@gmail.com

Film website: www.watchiamsamuel.org **Twitter:** @IamSamuelFilm

LOGLINE:

Filmed vérité style over five years, "I am Samuel" is an intimate portrait of a queer Kenyan man torn between balancing duty to his family with his dreams for his future, in a country where his love is criminalised.

SYNOPSIS:

Samuel grew up in the Kenyan countryside, where tradition is valued above all else. He is close to his mother but his father, a local pastor, doesn't understand why he isn't married yet. After moving to Kenya's capital in search of work and a new life, Samuel falls in love with Alex and finds community and belonging. Their love thrives despite the fact that Kenyan laws criminalize anyone who identifies as LGBTQ+. Despite threats of violence and rejection, Samuel and Alex move between their co-existing worlds, hoping to win acceptance in both.

FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT:

My name is Pete Murimi and I am a documentary director and cameraman. Since the beginning of my career in 2003, I have been drawn to shine a light on the unseen, marginalised and vulnerable in our society. Through my storytelling I want to empower the people who allow me into their lives to document their stories, so that their voices can be heard. It is very rare for a poor, uneducated gay man to be given a platform to tell his story from his point of view, particularly in Kenya where such love is not accepted by society. Although it is not illegal to be queer and to fall in love, homosexual intimacy is criminalised under colonial-era laws. People who identify as queer aren't able to love or live openly, and face the threat of assault, abuse and discrimination.

This is a love story of two men, Samuel and Alex, who are deeply committed to each other. It is also a film about the resilience of love between father and son. Samuel's relationship with his father is very similar to my relationship with my father. Both our fathers had expectations of us that we could not fulfil. In my case, my dad wanted me to have children of my own and go into business, rather than filmmaking. Samuel's father, Redon, was desperate for him to marry a woman and live the same kind of life as him - as a farmer, pastor, husband and father.

Redon is a retired painter who has been married to his wife Rebecca for 50 years. He is also a pastor at the local church, and a small-scale farmer in rural Kenya. Every season, the couple plough their two-acre farm and plant maize and beans to eat at home. They also keep two cows for milk. Redon, being deeply

religious, struggled to cope with the discovery that his son was gay and the film follows the family as they adjust to this difficult new reality.

Kenya is a country with extreme wealth inequality. Money and privilege can buy some privacy and security if you are gay. But most Kenyans are poor and live in rural areas or informal urban settlements where they cannot afford to hide dangerous secrets like their sexuality. Their voices are unheard, and their issues are rarely discussed in the media or by mainstream policymakers. It was very important for this film to capture the reality of being poor and gay in Kenya – an experience shared by millions of LGBTQ+ people around the world. "

– Pete Murimi, May 2020



SELECTED PRESS QUOTES:

I Am Samuel is a work of true bravery.

- **Pat Mullen, POV**

it presents love with such raw honesty that you can't look away.

- **Lapacazo Sandoval, AMSTERDAM NEWS**

I Am Samuel is a film that depicts the individual acts of bravery that can result in incredibly important change... it is a film of conflicting identities, hope, determination and first and foremost: love.

- **Lucy Lillystone, THE INDEPENDENT**

I Am Samuel is a poignant and authentic portrayal of queer love, a heartfelt depiction of how a genuine connection can provide the strength to endure even the most severe adversities.

- **Katya Spiers, SCREEN QUEENS**

There are moments that will warm your heart, and others that will break it...To put simply, I Am Samuel is a courageous feat.

- **Theo Smith, THE EDGE SUSU**

SOME OF OUR RECENT FESTIVAL SELECTIONS:



ABOUT WE ARE NOT THE MACHINE:

We are not the machine is an independent Kenyan factual and fiction production company that tells stories of outsiders, rebels and change-makers. We provide creative production, fundraising and service production support and regularly collaborate on shorts, features and series. We had two feature releases in 2020 - "Softie" dir. Sam Soko and a co-production with LBx Africa and Eyesteelfilm premiered at Sundance 2020. I am Samuel dir. Pete Murimi premiered at Hot Docs 2020.

KEY CREATIVE PERSONNEL BIOS:



Director/Producer: Pete Murimi

Peter Murimi is a multiple award-winning Kenyan TV documentary director focusing on hard-hitting social issues, from extra-judicial killings to prostitution. He recently won the 2019 Rory Peck award for a news feature about suicide. His first major win was the CNN Africa Journalist of the Year Award for his intimate documentary about Female Genital Mutilation among his Kuria community, "Walk to Womanhood" (2004). Another ground-breaking project was the film "Slum Survivors" (2007), filmed in the Kenyan capital, which won an award at the Czech Tur Ostrava film festival. Peter was a producer/ director for Al Jazeera's Africa Investigates strand, which exposes crime and corruption, with credits including "Spell of the Albino" (2011) and "Zimbabwe's Child Exodus" (2011). Another Al Jazeera film, "Kenya's Enemy Within" (2015), revealed the terror threat posed by homegrown al Shabaab Somali militants to Kenya. "I am Samuel" is his feature directorial debut, filmed verite style for five years in his home country.



Producer –Toni Kamau:

Toni Kamau is the youngest female African documentary producer to be invited as a member of the Academy for Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences - Documentary Branch, class of 2020. As a creative producer, director and founder of "We are not the machine Ltd", a Kenyan based production company, she tells stories of outsiders, rebels and change makers. Her past credits include half hour documentaries for Al Jazeera, MTV Europe and BBC Africa. The Sundance special jury prize winner "Softie", produced by Toni and directed/produced by Sam Soko, premiered at Sundance in 2020 in the World Cinema Documentary Feature Competition. "I am Samuel", directed by Rory Peck 2019 winner Pete Murimi is her second feature as producer, and it recently had its world premiere at the 2020 edition of Hot Docs, to strong reviews. She is currently in production on a documentary feature exploring home and belonging and in development on a series that tackles decolonizing narratives about the global South.



Writer/ Editor – Ricardo Acosta:

Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Member and Internationally renowned Film Editor, Story Editor, Creative/Editorial Consultant, Ricardo Acosta has been working in the film industry for over 25 years. He has been awarded with an Emmy, and has been nominated several times to Genie, Gemini, CCE and CS Awards. Ricardo came to Canada from his native Cuba in 1993, where he studied and worked at the world-renowned Cuban Film Institute in Havana. He's been a fellow of the Sundance Institute (as alumnus, teacher and Adviser). His outstanding work and keen sense of the human condition has contributed to the making of several award-winning and award-nominated films that have premiered in several world film festivals, including *Once Upon a Time in Venezuela (2020)* World premiere at Sundance 2020 Documentary by Anabel Rodriguez and Sepp Brudermann (Story Editor), *The Silence of Others (2018)* Winner of Berlinale Panorama Documentary Audience Award 2018, ALMA winner 2019 and *Sembene! (2015)* directed by Jason Silverman and Samba Gadjigo, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and at the Cannes Film Festival.



Composer - Eric Wainaina:

Eric Wainaina has been a staple in Kenya's music scene since the mid 90's, he stepped into the limelight as part of Five Alive, a male acapella band

His seminal hit, *Daima*, was recorded while still a student at the Berklee College of Music. He has released five studio albums and has written, produced and recorded music for TV, film and global sporting events like the 2010 FIFA World Cup. He has also participated in numerous commissioned projects including 8 Goals for Africa, a 2010 MDG campaign for the UN featuring Hugh Masekela, HHP, Angelique Kidjo, Baaba Maal, Oliver Mtukudzi, and the Soweto Gospel Choir, and has been brand ambassadors for Transparency International, MS Kenya, Nederburg and the Kenya Human Rights Commission. Outside of music, Eric has a long-standing career in musical theatre and has performed at the New York Musical Theatre Festival and at the New Victory Theatre on Broadway. In 2016 he established The Nairobi Musical Theatre Initiative with Sundance dramaturg Roberta Levitow to offer African artists new and alternative models for creating musicals. The initiative has catalyzed the creation of 11 Kenyan musicals.



Executive Producer – Judy Kibinge:

Judy Kibinge is a writer and filmmaker who began her career in advertising. She walks a fine line between fiction and doc. With a background in advertising as Creative Director of one of East Africa’s largest agencies, her career in filmmaking benefited greatly from a hands-on-understanding of both communication strategy and attention-to-detail in post-production. Judy’s filmmaking career has spanned writing and directing commercials, documentaries and films for NGO’s, Governments, and private companies. She has contributed directly and powerfully to the birth of the Kenyan film industry. In 2013, she founded DOCUBOX the regions first homegrown film fund which supports a growing community of talented, independent filmmakers with funding, workshops, screenings, community space and hugs. Judy is also a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science and sits on the Documentary branch committee.



Executive Producer – Peter Mudamba:

Peter’s aim is to help produce high quality films that can fit and shape the new dialogues and new wave of filmmaking in the East African Region and on the International Film Festival space for our films, through funding support and mentorship training of local filmmakers. Peter is keen on propping up the development of the great Screen Content as a Docubox Programs Director and

excited to see their first films premiere at distinguished world Festivals. This is exemplified by The Letter and Softie which recently premiered at IDFA and Sundance respectively. Peter Mudamba is a former Treasurer of Kenya Film & Television Professionals Association, and currently as a member of Kenya's Creative Economy Working Group -CEWG; that work for better legal frameworks to guide the growth of the Creative sector, where he hopes to see greater government support for culture, the arts and specifically the film industry. Docubox remains a great tool for actualization of his aspirations in the development of film in the East African region.

Executive Producer – Roger Ross Williams:

Roger Ross Williams is an award-winning director, producer and writer and the first African American director to win an Academy Award[®]. Raised in Easton, Pennsylvania by a single mother who worked as a maid, Williams defied the odds. After getting a scholarship and graduating from NYU, Williams had a successful career as a TV producer, before becoming a documentary filmmaker. Since 2016, Williams has been on the Board of Governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, serving as chair of the Documentary Branch and the documentary Diversity Committee. Williams serves on the Alumni Advisory Board of the Sundance Institute, the Advisory Board of Full Frame Festival, and the boards of the Tribeca Film Institute, Docubox Kenya, None On Record and the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa. He resides in New York and Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

FULL PRODUCTION CREDITS:

Crew credits:

Director, D.O.P, Writer - PETE MURIMI
Producers - TONI KAMAU, PETE MURIMI
Executive Producer - JUDY KIBINGE
Executive Producer - PETER MUDAMBA
Executive Producer - ROGER ROSS WILLIAMS
Co-Producer - ANDY GLYNE
Development Producer - ANITA NORFOLK
Production Manager - CATHERINE MUEMA
Editor and Writer - RICARDO ACOSTA
Editor - PHIL JANDALY
Additional editing by - SAM SOKO
Additional editing by - SOTIRA KYARIACU
Additional editing by -JUSTIN WACHIRA

Assistant editors -REG CHUHI

Assistant editors - BENJA MURIITHI

Subtitles by - GLORIA NYABANGE

Additional camera by - ELIJAH KANYI

Additional camera by - CHRIS KING

Additional camera by - SAM SOKO

Original Score - ERIC WAINAINA

Color Post by Roundtable Films (UK)

Director of Operations (Post Production) - Ben Coulson

Head of Imaging - Jack Jones

Digital Colourist -Claire Winter

Finishing Artist - Andrés del Caño

DI Editorial -Emma Corbett

Sound Post by Aquarium (UK)

Audio Post Producer - Pam Thompson

Assistant Sound Editor - Jack Hutchings

Sound Editor - Jack Wensley

Re-Recording Mixer -Ben Baird

Audio Post Production - Aquarium Studios

Score by

Eric Wainaina

Score Recorded by

Rushab Nandha, Mbogua Mbugua Mbugua & Eric Wainaina, The Elephant Studios - Nairobi Kenya

Score Mixed by

Rushab Nandha, The Elephant Studios - Nairobi, Kenya

Technical Score Engineers

Rushab Nandha & Mbogua Mbugua Mbugua

Synth Programming

Rushab Nandha & Eric Wainaina

Electric Guitars Performed by

Benjamin Kabaseke & Timothy Arinaitwe

Acoustic Guitar Performed by

Timothy Arinaitwe

Bass Performed by

Eugene Kanyugo

Ishiriri & Litungu Performed by

Jackson Ingosi

THEME SONG CREDITS

“When Darkness Comes”

Performed by

Eric Wainaina

Music and Lyrics by

Eric Wainaina

Produced by

Eric Wainaina & Rushab Nandha

Mixed by

Rushab Nandha, The Elephant Studios - Nairobi, Kenya

Mastered by

Tim Lengfeld, TL Mastering - Stellenbosch, South Africa

Additional Vocals Performed by

Vinny Ngugi & Kevin Waweru

Strings Arranged and Performed by

Alexander Mottok

“Party”

Performed by

Eric Wainaina, Kevin Waweru & Vinny Ngugi

Music and Lyrics by

Vinny Ngugi, Kevin Waweru & Eric Wainaina

Produced by

Eric Wainaina

Mixed by

Rushab Nandha, The Elephant Studios - Nairobi, Kenya

Mastered by

Rushab Nandha, The Elephant Studios - Nairobi, Kenya

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