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Representing the 'black' male gangster: a comparative analysis of stereotypes in three South African films - Mapantsula (1988), Jerusalema (2008) and KZN ruins (2011)

Lutge, Lance R.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the representations of the ‘black’ South African male in the gangster genre and to focus on the representation of the 'black' male gangster role in the following case studies: *Mapantsula* (1988), *Jerusalema* (2008), and *KZN Ruins* (2011). In a South African context, the genre is embedded in social reform and ‘re-generation’, ‘dynamic anti-heroes’ or rebels pitted against the establishment, and transferred identities dependent on ‘gritty urban locales’, where the ‘black’ male characters escape social confines. A comparative analysis between three South African films: *Mapantsula* (1988), *Jerusalema* (2008) and my research film *KZN Ruins* (2011) evaluates the representation of the ‘black’ male gangster in terms of the stereotypical nature from which these cinematic representations derive their foci. This research report studies the representations evident in stereotyping the 'black' male gangster and examines how the terms ‘black’ gangster is contextualized within the medium of film. The representation of the 'black' male gangster in South Africa as subject matter constructs discourse around representations of ‘blackness’ spurred on by concretely identifiable contexts evident in the South African gangster genre. I have sectionalized the information surrounding this debate into three main categories that I felt would be most relevant and useful in the deconstruction: whether there has been a repositioning of the genre, whether this shift is evident in the representation of the 'black' male gangster and whether this representation of the ‘black’ male gangster in the medium of screen presentation in the South African case studies under scrutiny is contextually informed. Through genre, stereotyping, and South African film history I argue that there has been a shift in the representation of the 'black' male gangster within *Mapantsula* (1988), *Jerusalema* (2008), and my research film *KZN Ruins* (2011).