

FILM REVIEW

Bolanle Austen-Peters, director. *Collision Course*. 2021. 72 minutes. Nigeria. English, Yoruba and Igbo. Bolanle Austen-Peters Production. No price reported. Available on Netflix.

Bolanle Austen-Peters is a highly acclaimed Nigerian film and theatre director, producer, and cultural entrepreneur. She has directed several films, including *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti* (2023), and *Man of God* (2022), and produced the award-winning film *93 Days* (2021). Austen-Peters is also the founder and managing director of Terra Kulture, an arts and cultural center in Lagos, Nigeria. *Collision Course* was featured as the closing film for the 10th Africa International Film Festival in November 2021 and won the Best Movie (West Africa) at the Africa Magic Viewers' Choice Awards. The film was also nominated for several other awards including Best Overall Movie, Best Soundtrack, and Best Director. Austen-Peters is dedicated to showcasing the culture, experiences, and glamor of Nigerians through her art.

Collision Course is a film that explores the circumstances and pressures that propel two victims of a highly dysfunctional government and insanely corrupt system towards a heart-rending tragedy. The film traces—within 24 hours—the situations and forces that, in a sadistic irony, brought Mide, an aspiring young Nigerian musician trying to survive the vicissitudes of life already exacerbated by an encounter with police brutality, and Magnus, a police officer struggling under abject poverty and pressures from his wife and friends, together on a course that ended in a collision that was extremely shocking and excruciatingly painful. The ending graphically epitomizes the unpredictable tragedy of the masses in Nigeria.

The film effectively captures the graphic representation of the violence and reality of the Nigerian common man's existence, particularly through Mide's traumatic experience with the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (TARZ), alluding to the absurdities in Nigerian reality that brought about the END-SARS protest in 2020. Through the lives of the characters, it showcases the seedy underbelly of rogue law enforcement officers and the atrocious results of their actions.

The themes of corruption, inequality, and the struggle for survival are woven throughout the narrative, creating a sense of urgency and tension. The film's portrayal of illegal activities, such as the formation of illegal roadblocks and the revelation of police corruption, serves as a commentary on the systemic issues

within Nigerian society. Magnus's poverty-ridden environment and the abject poverty-induced abortions of babies shed light on the harsh realities faced by many Nigerians, which force them into making harsh and unethical decisions in the bid for survival.

The plot of *Collision Course* is a race against time, teetering on the brink of imminent combustion. It is craftily woven from the lives of the two apparently unrelated individuals that eventually collided and ended with unexpectedly devastating tragedy. The use of the screen timer motif with its accompanying sound effect in the film serves to heighten the tension and foreshadow the impending danger, adding a layer of suspense to the narrative. The film's soundtrack, comprising diegetic thematic music and expository radio commentaries, heighten the emotional impact of the story, contributing to the rollercoaster of emotions experienced by the audience. The cinematography in *Collision Course* captures the tension and emotional depth of the narrative. Its visually stunning realism, and undisguised Nigerian gritty urban aesthetic, help to convey the challenges faced by the characters. Visual elements and techniques like choppy shots and expressive close-ups help to immerse the audience in the characters' experiences, especially when coupled with such top-notch acting like Magnus's (Kelechi Udegbe).



Figure 1. Magnus, after accidentally shooting Mide.

The sad story of the duo comes to a shocking and unexpected end. There is Mide, an upper-class youth who preferred to stand on his own and eke out an honest living but is constantly frustrated by the unsavory system; and Magnus, a lily-livered policeman immersed in debilitating poverty and under serious pressure from wife and friends to improve on his circumstances but is caged in by the indifferent police structure. Both of them, victims of a heartless and ruthless system orchestrated by the faceless government authorities, still sadly paid the ultimate price in a tragic ending as Magnus accidentally shoots and kills

Mide. The ending leaves the viewer with the unsavory after-taste of deep unfairness and devastating helplessness that accurately captures the hopelessness of ordinary Nigerians.

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