

HYENES
(HYENAS)
(SWISS-FRENCH)

A Thelma Film (Zurich)/ADR Prods. (Paris) co-production in association with Maug Daan (Dakar), George Reinhart Prods., Television Suisse DRS (Zurich), Channel 4 (London), Filmcompany (Amsterdam). Produced by Pierre-Alain Meier, Alain Rozanes. Directed, written by Djibril Diop Mambety, based on Friedrich Durrenmatt's novel. Camera (color), Matthias Kalin; editor, Loredana Cristelli; music, Wasis Diop; costumes, Oumou Sy. Reviewed at Cannes Film Festival (competition), May 13, 1992. Running time: **110 MIN.**
Draman Drameh Mansour Diouf
Linguere Ramatou Ami Diakhate
Mayor Mahouradia Gueye
Professor Issa Ramangelissa Samb
Mrs. Drameh Faly Gueye
Also with: Kaoru Egushi, Djibril Diop Mambety, Mbaba Diop, Omar Ba.

A poor African village is destroyed by greed in Djibril Diop Mambety's second feature, "Hyenas." European coin, which made the \$1.8 million pic possible, also kickstarts TV sales. Film's quality and uniqueness should take it into fests and some specialized playoffs.

Film adapts Friedrich Durrenmatt's famed "The Visit" to the Senegalese countryside with amazing naturalness, making this parable on hypocrisy and avarice seem like a reworked native myth. The strong story line, reinforced by fine ensemble acting, provide a much faster, more easily assimilated rhythm than many African pics.

Mambety intros the village of Colobane via Draman (Mansour Diouf), the chipper old grocer/barkeep, and Linguere Ramatou (superbly played by the proud and crusty Ami Diakhate), who returns and overturns the town's social fabric from inside out.

Abandoned by Draman when she was a pregnant 16-year-old so he could marry a richer girl, Linguere left the village and became a prostitute. Upon her return, the fabulously wealthy old lady promises the starving townsfolk she will donate a fortune to them all — on the condition her former lover is executed.

At first horrified and indignant, villagers soon change their tune and begin buying on credit; first necessities, then luxuries. Mambety playfully jumps back and forth in time, using 19th century costumes and carriages in one shot; sunglasses and electric appliances in the next. Point is, this is a timeless story, ending sometime in the present, with the razing of the village and the construction of a modern city.

Diouf lends Draman the right measure of flawed humanity to make the old grocer a sympathetic hero, even though story's fable-like quality cuts down emotion. His initial self-interest and fear for his life turns to resignation and, finally, a noble disdain for fellow villagers willing to ignore their consciences and kill him for personal riches. The emphasis on consumer goods attacks the superfluity of their gain

and gives the film a wider significance.

As Ramatou, Diakhate stresses the homicidal cynicism of a woman who has gone through the school of hard knocks and came out a cutthroat. Her artificial limbs and her train of bejeweled servants (including a smartly dressed Japanese policewoman/bodyguard) get a laugh.

Mambety lightens the tragic German tale with all kinds of humorous touches, handled as un-self-consciously as the sporadic appearance of hyenas and elephants on the screen.

Matthias Kalin's cinematography is high quality, capturing both village color and the golden African desert in sharp images. Wasis Diop's original score is various and interesting listening. — *Deborah Young*