

Catch a Fire burns up the screen



Tim Robbins' new movie shows a different side of terrorism

By Jathan Fink
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Director Phillip Noyce's new film, *Catch a Fire*, is a must-see political thriller about terrorism in apartheid-era South Africa that keeps the audience on the edge of their seats. But it also offers up a vivid portrait of how destructive racism is and simultaneously teaches an uplifting lesson about the power of forgiveness.

Set in the early 1980s, the film tells the true story of Patrick Chamusso, and his path to freedom. Chamusso, portrayed by Derek Luke, was a South African hero who fought for something he believed in: that every man has the right to be free.

However, he wasn't always a member of the revolutionary African National Congress.

At the beginning of the film, Chamusso is a charming husband to his wife Precious, portrayed by Bonnie Henna. He strives to keep his family away from the trouble that threatens to destroy South Africa, even making sure his mother-in-law does not play news broadcasts about the African National Congress too loudly in their small home.

In addition to being a loving husband, Chamusso coaches soccer to the young boys in his community. Completely apolitical, he strives valiantly to keep his nose

Photo courtesy of Focus Features
Derek Luke plays Patrick Chamusso, a man wrongfully accused of a terrorist attack in South Africa.



Photo courtesy of Focus Features

Tim Robbins trying to find the truth in his latest film *Catch a Fire*, which opened everywhere last Friday.

clean as the foreman at the Secunda oil refinery.

But try as he might, Chamusso can not escape the dangers that apartheid presents to the South African people. When Chamusso takes his team out of town for a soccer tournament, terrorists detonate a bomb inside the refinery where he works.

Nic Vos, played by Academy Award-winning actor Tim Robbins, is a colonel in the country's Police Security Branch who attempts to find methods to keep the peace in explosive situations.

When Vos suspects Chamusso of being involved in the attack, he takes Chamusso into custody and attempts to

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beat a confession out of him. But Chamusso maintains his innocence until Vos drops Precious, beaten and bloodied, at his feet. This is the last straw for Chamusso.

He begs Vos to let his wife go and confesses to a crime that he did not commit.

It is at this time that we begin to see the change occur within peaceful Chamusso. Even as the charges are dropped and he and Precious are set free, he realizes that he can no longer remain silent and neutral. He must take a stand.

Tim Robbins reaffirms his talents as an actor in the role of the malevolent Nic Vos.

Robbins handles Vos's wide range of emotions with the agility audiences have come to expect.

Derek Luke's performance as Chamusso is riveting.

Although born in New Jersey, Luke, who has appeared in *Antwone Fisher*, *Glory Road* and *Friday Night Lights*, is convincing as the South African hero, and handles the accent and the language deftly throughout the film.

However, it is neither Luke nor Robbins who steals the show.

In her third appearance on the big screen, the quiet and lovely South African-born Bonnie Henna plays Precious Chamusso.

Her performance is heart-breaking as she tries to assimilate what is happening to her family and to the country around her.

Despite her efforts to be supportive, there is a simmering anger that boils to the surface later in the film, and Henna carries off this transformation effortlessly.

While the scenes of violence were enough to garner the film a PG-13 rating, none of it is gratuitous.

This is an insightful film because it clearly teaches us what can happen when one group of people is given too much power over another.

Catch a Fire opened last Friday and is currently in theaters everywhere.