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INSIGHT

On the making of a classic

A documentary now in the making will take a fresh look at the shooting of a classic film made in KwaZulu-Natal in the sixties. And the producers are appealing for help

STEPHEN COAN

PLANS are afoot for the shooting of a feature-length documentary *Zulu and the Zulus* in KwaZulu-Natal next year.

The documentary is a long nurtured project by film-maker Henry Coleman, a South African now based in London. The film focuses on the making of the classic film *Zulu*, shot in 1963 against the spectacular backdrop of the Drakensberg Amphitheatre in the Royal Natal National Park. The film spectacularly recreated the defence of Rorke's Drift that took place during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, when a small number of British troops held out against a superior Zulu force following the overwhelming Zulu victory at Isandlwana.

On its release in 1964, *Zulu* was a huge hit, while repeated screenings on British television over the years have spurred ongoing generations of tourists to visit KwaZulu-Natal. "It is a regular favourite on British television and hardly off the screen," said Coleman. "A couple of years ago, it was screened 22 times in a month on one channel."

Directed by Cy Endfield, the action-filled epic stars Stanley Baker, Michael Caine, Jack Hawkins and Ulla Jacobsson as well as Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi as Zulu King Cetshwayo kaMpande and the late Simon Sabela, who went on to become a well-known actor and director in South Africa.

Coleman's fascination with *Zulu* began as a boy back in 1979 when his father took him and his brothers to visit the Anglo-Zulu War battlefields. "After returning home I started hiring *Zulu* on 16 mm regularly," said Coleman.

"I probably screened it four times a year on my 16 mm projector sometimes to friends and family, sometimes just for myself."

Coleman finessed his interest into an exhibition on *Zulu* in 2010 at the London Film Museum which featured many rare items, including the original storyboards, script, unpublished photographs taken on set, as well as props, costume, production notes and posters from all over the world.

In 2014, to mark the 50th anniversary of *Zulu's* release in 1964, Coleman organised a charity gala screening of the film at the Odeon, Leicester Square, attended by Prince Harry and Buthelezi. Now comes the documentary *Zulu and the Zulus*.

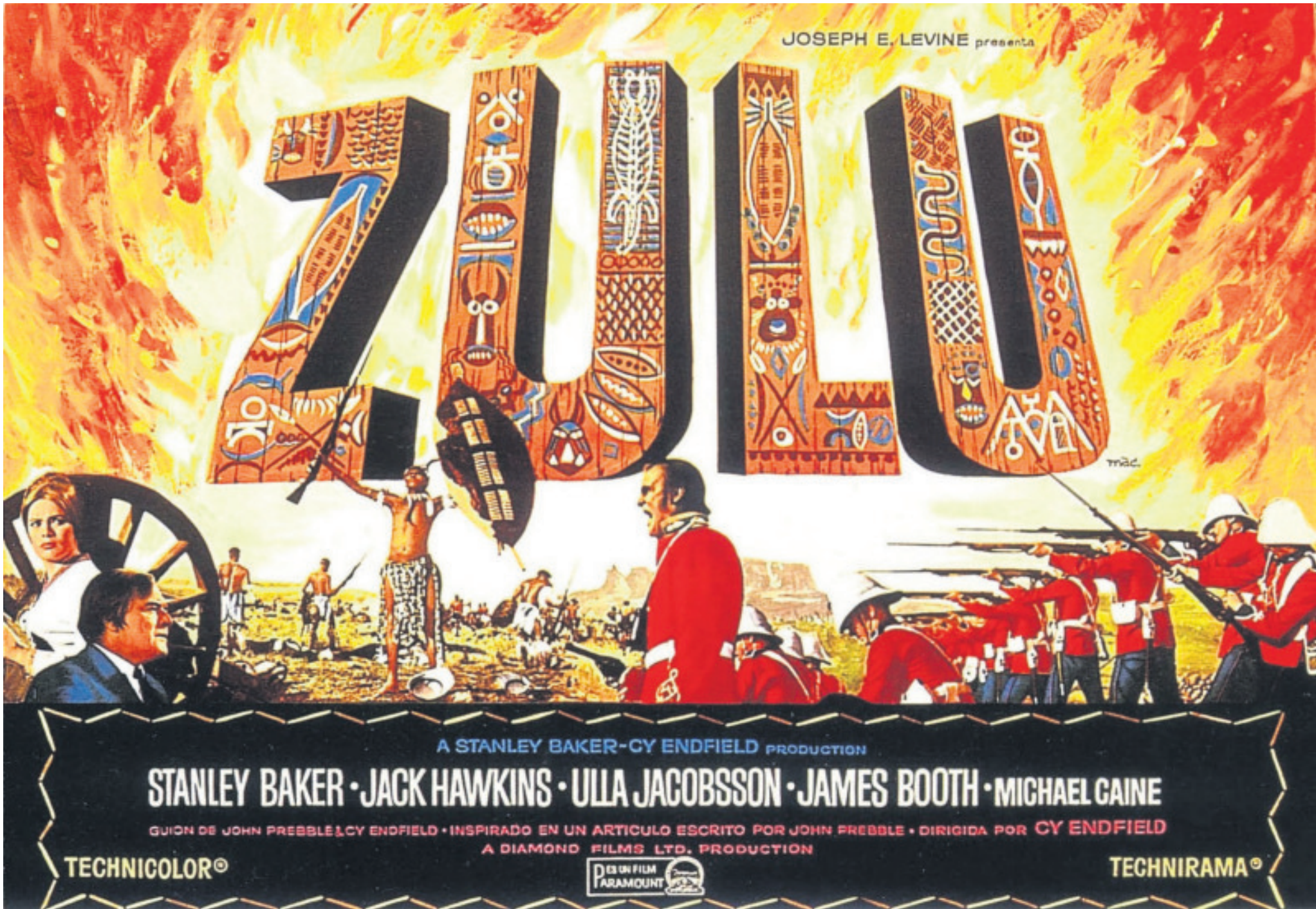
Coleman has managed to assemble some fascinating content, including 26 minutes of never seen before footage shot during the making of *Zulu* which has been restored by a top post-production house in London. This footage not only features the film's cast and crew on set but also includes the building of key sets on location as well as stunt work and battle scenes.

"We have also found, and gained exclusive access to, another 40 minutes of colour home-movie footage shot on set, giving us a unique insight into the production of *Zulu*."

Coleman will intercut this footage with new and existing interviews with cast and crew members. "I have interviewed two of the cast who have since [died] — Joe Powell who played Sergeant Windridge and Dickie Owen who played Corporal Schiess."

Next year, Coleman and producer Mark Tinkler will bring the behind-the-scenes footage to KwaZulu-Natal and screen it along with the feature film at various locations for people who appeared in *Zulu* as extras.

"We will film the audience watching



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the film, interview them and draw out their stories on the making of the film in 1963," said Coleman.

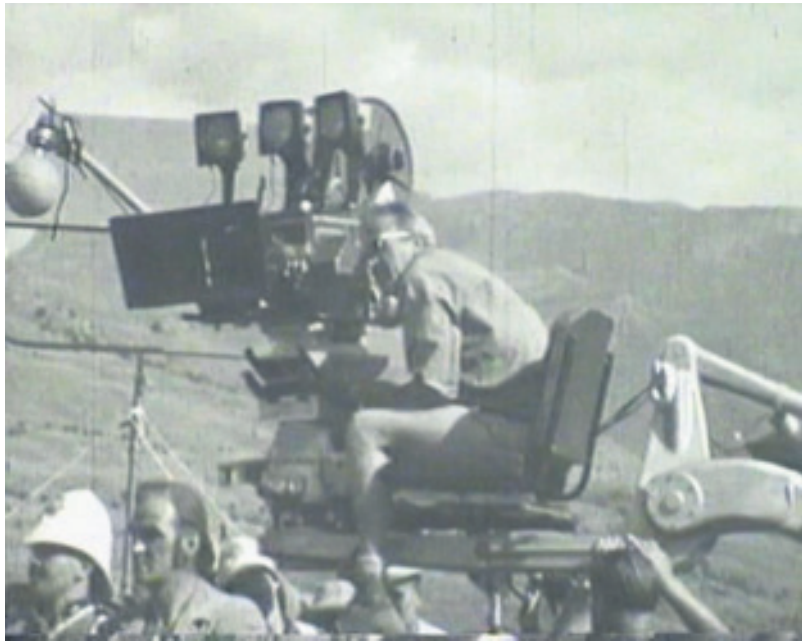
"Some of them saw the film and rushes at special screenings organised by star and producer Stanley Baker but

many of them have not seen it since or indeed ever." Under the apartheid government, the censors barred black South Africans from seeing the film.

"I will be screening the original feature film to as many people as I can

over a two-week period in the hope of hearing their stories, if they or their families were involved in the making of the film in 1963 — what was it like to work on such a big project?"

"How were they treated by the pro-



A frame from behind the scenes footage showing cinematographer Stephen Dade with the camera. Stanley Baker can be seen below.

duction company? Had they seen the film before? And so on?"

When last in South Africa, Coleman screened this footage for Buthelezi who has given the project his blessing.

"He was totally absorbed in the film

and he spoke to me at length afterwards, reminiscing on all aspects of the production. He agreed to help me find surviving *Zulu* cast members so we can interview them for the documentary."

When the annual Simon "Mabunu"

Sabela Film Awards presented by the KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission were inaugurated in 2013, Buthelezi was honoured for the role he played in *Zulu*.

In his acceptance speech, Buthelezi recalled that Baker and Endfield were determined to portray the battle accurately and to do so employed hundreds of Zulus as extras.

"The success of *Zulu* was due in large part to director Cy Endfield's determination to portray the pathos of the battlefield accurately. To do this, he enlisted the help of thousands upon thousands of Zulu men who became extras.

"It was remarkable at the time to engage so many extras. But what was more remarkable was that they were not emotionally removed from the work. Indeed, these men found themselves re-enacting the deeds of their own grandfathers.

"Somehow this drew the audience into what was, in the end, a very human experience.

"The memories evoked by the film were recent in our national consciousness. They were part of the cultural narrative we grew up with and part of what shaped us as a nation."

Coleman and his crew are planning to come to South Africa during the first half of 2019.

"We will be travelling all over KwaZulu-Natal looking for stories about the film from anyone who has them, as well as any objects, props, paperwork, photos, film — anything at all about the production they can share with us.

"If someone has a letter from the *Zulu* production office somewhere in a draw at home, we want to see it.

"We shall be visiting the location in the Royal National Park as well as the battlefields and towns and villages on the way.

"We are looking forward to meeting all the locals and hearing their stories," he said.

ZULU AND THE ZULUS

IF you have some connection with *Zulu* — either via direct involvement or that of a relative; have any artefacts, photographs or film related to *Zulu* — Henry Coleman, the director of *Zulu* and the *Zulus*, would like to hear from you. He can be contacted via e-mail at henry4film@aol.com "Please put *Zulu* and the *Zulus* in the e-mail subject line and describe what you have and attach photos if you can and I will get back to you within 24 hours."

The promotional trailer for *Zulu* and the *Zulus* can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/265374877>

A short film made by Henry Coleman on the 50th Anniversary Royal Premiere in 2014 attended by Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Prince Harry can be viewed at https://youtu.be/x9Fne6k_Xg

Tassies

VILLAGE VET



THERE had been a party in my room the previous evening. I don't remember what we had been celebrating. It could have been someone's birthday, or maybe we had finished an exam, or possibly it

was a bed-wetting for my new bed but more likely it was just one of a multitude of inconsequential reasons that the youth find for getting together and enjoying each other's company.

I do remember waking up that next morning with my room in a mess. I also had a headache and a roaring nose cold. It was late — too late for breakfast if I expected to be at lectures on time. First up was Prof Gernecke and the subject was embryology. He was old school and authoritarian, and he would not tolerate late-comers. Those were still the days when the youth respected authority. So I pulled on some crumpled clothes and found a pair of Grippon capsules for my flu. Remember them? They were the standard decongestant, antihistami-

"Tassies is a red wine of the very cheap variety — a nectar of the gods to generations of students and other discerning people."

ne and painkiller that was the staple diet of students and party animals of those days.

The only problem was that my room in res did not stretch to the extravagance of running water, which was a prerequisite for getting the muthi to slide down a parched throat.

A cursory glance revealed that the closest liquid available was the dregs floating in a bottle of Tassies left

over from the revellers of the previous evening. (I realise that there might be the odd human occupant of this planet who does not know what Tassies is and it is to the handful of you to whom I direct this brief explanation. Tassies is a red wine of the very cheap variety — a nectar of the gods to generations of students and other discerning people.) Under the circumstances, I had no choice but

to wash down the capsules with a hefty slug. This might not be seen as a very wise thing to do but wisdom is not necessarily a common trait of the sub-adult human male.

Anyway, I had no time for contemplation of the consequences of my action before rushing out to join the throng of late-comers attempting to get to lectures on time.

The lecture halls on the veterinary

campus of Onderstepoort are a little way from the residence and I built up a bit of a sweat running down the dirt road past the camps dotted with livestock used in the training of future vets, but I made it just in time.

Now, let it be officially noted that although I did not consider myself to be a model academic, I did try, and, in an attempt at getting my erratic mind to focus, it was my wont to take a stool from the rear to near the front of the class, under the lecturer's eye, and here I would perch.

This day, I had just settled in, it seems, when I woke up under a tap on a grassy patch outside the lecture hall. Observers say it was a graceful faint, an elegant slide off the stool onto the floor. But more

noteworthy to my classmates was that Gernies did not even skip a beat during the commotion. There was nary a falter nor a change in diction between meiosis and mitosis as those closest to me dragged me out of the classroom.

"You were lucky," Pete explained years later as we reminisced, the light twinkling through the bottle of good-quality Cabernet Sauvignon on the table in front of us. "Tassies no doubt saved you from serious injury. Imagine the damage from that hard floor if you were all stiff and tense."

I like his reasoning.

It is why we are still such good friends so many years later.

• The Village Vet is a practising veterinarian. Follow his exploits at www.villagevet.wordpress.com