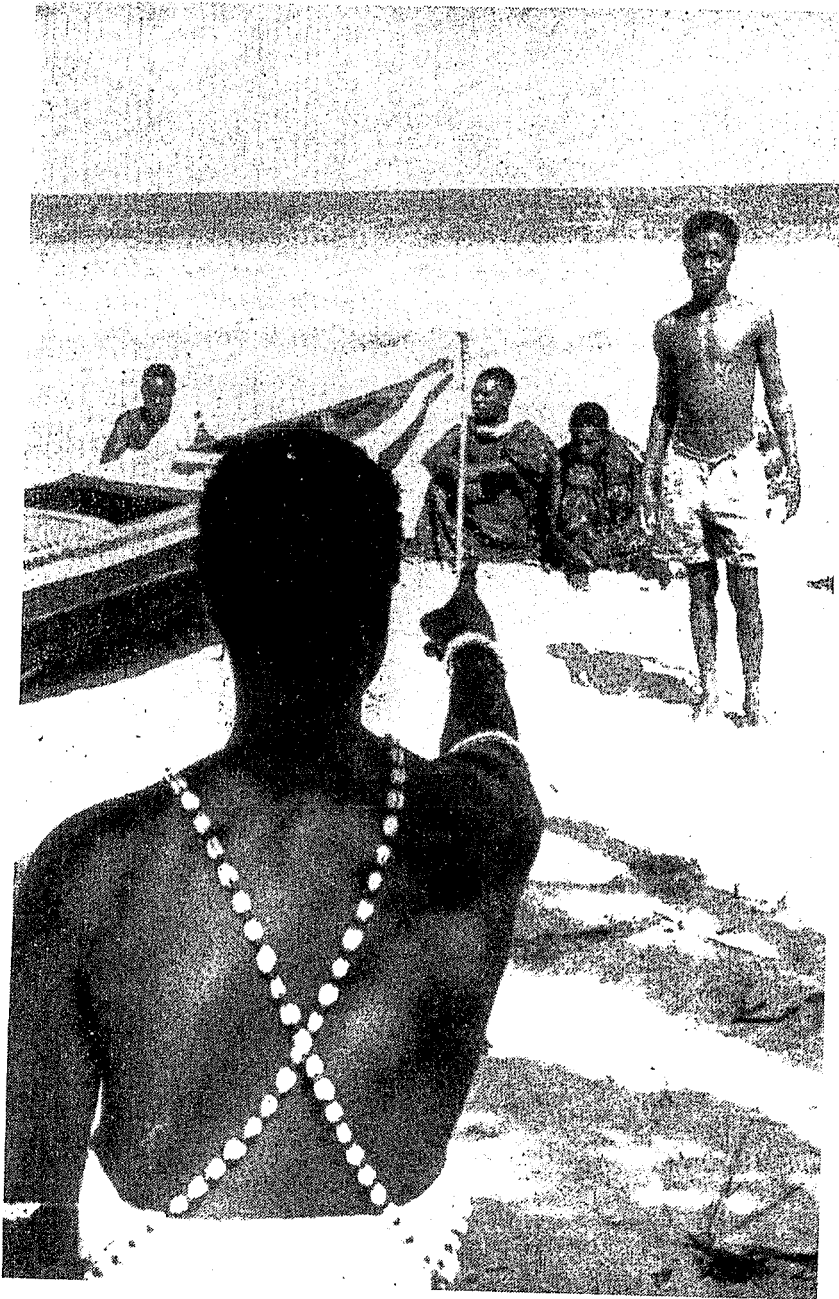


# THE BOY KUMASENU

Gold Coast Film Unit Breaks New Ground



Kumasenu (Norley Engmann) is vanished from the fishing crew by the Fetish priest (Robert Ankrah) (Robert Ankrah)

Chosen by the Edinburgh Festival Selection Committee for special showing during the Festival which ends on September 7th, "The Boy Kumasenu", a 1½ hour feature film directed by Sean Graham for the Gold Coast Film Unit, sets a new fashion in the Documentary field. The first full-length feature film to be made in West Africa with an all-African cast, it dramatises one of Africa's most urgent problems

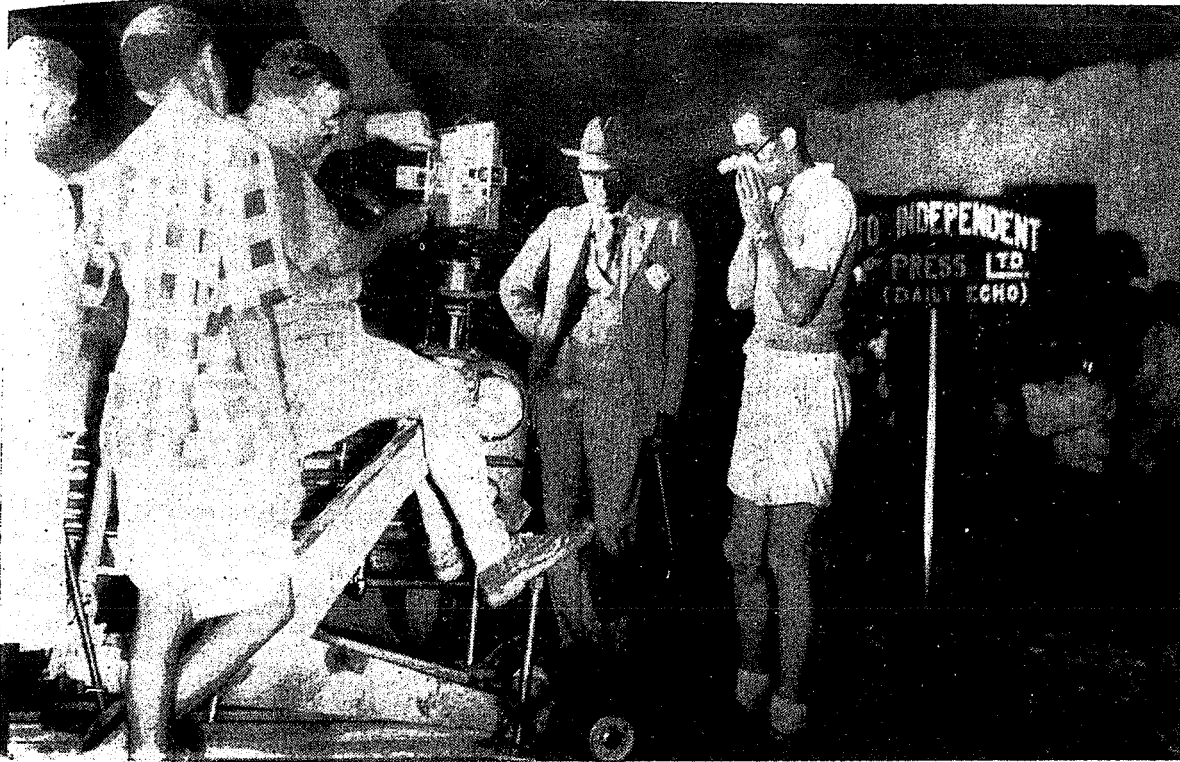
"THE Boy Kumasenu" is a story of transition . . . of the growing pains and triumph of a boy trying to make his way from the age-old tribal life of Africa into the Twentieth Century.

There is nothing new about this transition, for it has been and is taking place on all five continents, wherever a rural society has come face to face with the machine. In the Gold Coast, the novelty is the pace at which this change is taking place, and the enormous gap in culture and civilisation the modern African has to bridge.

The difficulty is especially great for those youngsters who, lured by the Twentieth Century, attempt this crossing without preparation or help. Unlike the village—with its known and prescribed horizon—the Town is hostile to the stranger who brings to it no equipment other than his youth. The great majority go under: live on their wits as best they can: claw for survival in the concrete jungle in which they live.

This film tells the story of one such boy during the crucial years of transition. In a narrow sense it is a story of juvenile delinquency . . . of a boy, Kumasenu, who leaves the old life of his people, with their ancient customs and rigid code of behaviour, for a modern town where he is exposed, inexperienced and impressionable, to the raw and ugly side of the town. The film shows how in the end only one of his own people who has already successfully crossed to the new world can guide the boy Kumasenu and others like him to a more hopeful future. An African doctor, played by





The film in the making. Sean Graham, director, blows his nose, while Robert Baffour, who plays the part of Mensah, the "shyster" lawyer, waits for shooting to begin. Behind the camera is George Noble, who was director of photography of "The Boy Kumasenu" and who has been cameraman for the Gold Coast Film Unit for the past three years. Mr. Noble has had wide experience of photography in the film industry. He was in charge of the Canadian Forces Film and Photography Unit during the war

Dr. Oku Ampofo (who is also well-known as a sculptor) now takes the raw boy and sends him out to face the challenge of the Western world.

The part of Kumasenu is played by a schoolboy from Cape Coast, Nortey Engmann, who was chosen from hundreds of boys interviewed for the part. The film was shot over a period of a year in Accra, and in the small fishing village of Kedze, 120 miles along the Coast. The editing of the film was done in London.

## SYNOPSIS OF THE FILM

THE story opens in a small fishing village along the Guinea Coast where Kumasenu and his friend and cousin Agboh (who is a little older and bolder) are talking about the strange and glittering ways of the big city. Next day Agboh leaves for the big town and leaves Kumasenu behind.

Kumasenu takes part in the first cast of the fishing season. But his uncle Fiawoo's net, alone among the other nets working along the beach, has had luck. Their catch is small. Fiawoo, Kumasenu's uncle, is fond of his nephew in preference

to his own two sons. This annoys Mammy Fiawoo, his wife who seizes the opportunity of the crew's bad luck and goes to her aunt, a priestess of the fetish. Together they consult the fetish priest . . .

Asleep on the beach, Kumasenu wakes and sees a strange object: a dead cow with a fetish-mask, battered by the surf on the beach. Scared out of his wits, he runs to the only man who can interpret its significance: the village fetish priest. The door of the hut opens: Kumasenu is swallowed up in the darkness of the hut: the face of his aunt glints evilly.

Next day the fetish priest calls the net-crew together and tells them that Kumasenu is the cause of their bad luck; he has, he says, been usurping the affections of his uncle Fiawoo, which the uncle should have given to his own two sons. The God of the sea is angry. Remove Kumasenu, says the fetish-priest, and their luck will turn.

The uncle does not believe this, but he cannot go against the verdict of the fetish. At home, Mammy Fiawoo drives the boy out with curses: it is repeated by the boys in the village. Miserable, the boy spends a nightmare of a night in the open.

Next morning the uncle takes pity on the boy. He takes him to a store-keeper in the next village. Here Kumasenu meets the lorry-drivers and listens to their wonderful tales of the Big Town. He hears

the music of the town: he sees the lorry-drivers dancing their new dances. Like any other boy, Kumasenu is fascinated by it all.

One night, he observes the store-keeper burying his money in the courtyard.

Some time later Kumasenu is left in charge of the store while the store-keeper is away. Sitting alone playing his beloved gramophone, he sees Agboh, his cousin, come into the Store. Agboh is dressed in the latest city clothes, with a pocketful of money and wonderful tales of the Big Town. Kumasenu, wishing to boast a little in his turn, tells Agboh that he too knows where he can find a lot of money: and shows him where the store-keeper has buried his money.

That night Agboh steals the money . . .

In the morning Agboh sends Kumasenu to the town, and gives him £10 with which to enjoy himself.

But the town is not paved with gold: it is hostile: indifferent; and the evening finds Kumasenu friendless, homeless and hungry.

A pretty girl, Adobia, speaks to him, and takes him home. He is awakened at night by the music which comes from Adobia's room, and sees her dancing with a man. The light goes out as Adobia starts to undress . . .

Next morning Adobia takes Kumasenu to a big house. He waits outside while



ABOVE: Driven from his home by his aunt, Mammy Fiawoo, and taunted by the boys in the village, Kumasenu prepares to settle down for the night in the open. It is a nightmare of terror for the boy

RIGHT: Frank Tamakloe, who plays Agboh, the spiv



she collects some goods: for she works for a lady high in the rank of the upper set who is also a prominent black-marketeer. The lady is having some trouble with Mr. Mensah, a barrister (who, incidentally, was the man who came to visit Adobia in her room the night before).

The scene shifts to the local dance-hall, where Adobia is having a fine time with the boys . . . particularly with a handsome young man called Yeboah. They dance—the affair becomes more personal, and Adobia and Yeboah drive off leaving Kumasenu to look after himself.

But—Yeboah is Mr. Mensah's chauffeur, and has also taken Mensah's big car. Mr. Mensah, making a surprise visit to Adobia finds the two together . . . there is an ugly scene in which Kumasenu joins, and in which Mr. Mensah comes off second best.

Mr. Mensah now makes a charge of

assault and battery. They are brought in for questioning by the police, but Kumasenu runs away.

Once more Kumasenu is alone in the city. He wanders through the town, following a little girl who is selling bread. At a moment when he thinks nobody is looking he tries to take a loaf: he is arrested.

The boy is taken to the Juvenile Court doctor for routine examination before coming before the Juvenile Court. The doctor—who is a sculptor in his spare time—is interested in the face of this boy. The doctor's wife takes pity on the child—Kumasenu has burst into tears—and talks to her husband: could they not look after the boy?

At the Juvenile Court Kumasenu repeats an old charm his grandmother has taught him, hoping that nothing will happen to him. It works: to his surprise he hears that he has been placed in the care of the doctor and his wife.

This starts a new life for the boy, for in the doctor's house he now finds security and affection. He is now working in a big garage, because it has been decided that he shall work as assistant to the engineer in a new motor fishing-boat which a friend of the doctor is building.

Later he meets Agboh again. Agboh blackmails Kumasenu, threatening to denounce him to the doctor for taking the



LEFT: Kumasenu is put in the care of one of his uncle's friends, who keeps a store in a nearby village. Fascinated, the boy watches the lorry drivers dancing strange dances to the music of the big town

ABOVE: Lured to the town by the tales he has heard in the village store Kumasenu soon discovers that life there has more heartbreak than glamour. Here he is insulted by a drunken stranger in a bar



Guy Warren plays the part of Yeboah, the chauffeur. By profession he is the editor of a Gold Coast weekly paper, but he is also an enthusiastic dance-band drummer. Some years ago he visited America, and in London he has played with the Afro-Cubist dance band. With him in this scene is Angela Nanor, who plays the part of Adobia



Kumasenu is really in hot water now, thanks to Agboh and his other evil companions. The police search for him ends when he tries to steal a loaf. In this scene he watches apprehensively as the policeman comes to take him to the Juvenile Court

store-keeper's money. For the first time Kumasenu realises what has happened, but he does not see what he can do. He dare not tell the doctor for fear he will send him away. Agboh wants Kumasenu to help him rob the doctor's house.

Twice he is taken away by Agboh and his gang and beaten up: but still he refuses to help Agboh in his crooked schemes.

One night when Kumasenu is alone in

the house Agboh and his gang break in, rifle the drug cabinet, and take the unwilling Kumasenu away with them. Once outside, Kumasenu screams for help: the police appear and the gang is arrested. Agboh alone escapes. Kumasenu follows him to his lair in the slums, and waits for him to emerge. Early in the morning there is a bitter fight, and Agboh pulls a knife and stabs the boy. Some by-standers rush up: Agboh is arrested and taken

away. Kumasenu, faint with loss of blood, is happy to see that he has done what he has set out to do.

The film ends with Kumasenu, now well again, going once more out to sea: no longer a canoe-boy, he is now a budding engineer in a brand new motor fishing boat. Here is one boy who has crossed over the bridge from the life of his village to the swirling life of the town.



Befriended in court by the kindly doctor and his wife, Kumasenu sees a new future opening out for him. Hope replaces the despair, but he has other trials to face. The parts of the doctor and his wife were played by Dr. and Mrs. Olu Ampofo, both well-known figures in the Gold Coast



Agboh tries to blackmail Kumasenu into helping him to rob the doctor's house, but Kumasenu, who worships his new guardians, will not cooperate. When blackmail fails Agboh and his gang take the boy out and beat him up