

BTS with CineMagic, SA's newest streaming service



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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[CineMagic](#), South Africa's newest Video-on-Demand (VOD) streaming service, is now available to millions of cellular users via the [Vodacom Video Play](#) and [MTN Play](#) mobile content platforms.

Joanne Raphael-Katz has been involved in content, strategy, marketing and technical delivery solutions operating in the VOD industry for many years. She decided it was time to provide mobile users with access to award-winning short-form video movies, series and documentaries that are designed for smaller mobile screens.



Joanne Raphael-Katz

We go behind the scenes of [CineMagic](#).

■ ***Can you tell us a bit about CineMagic?***

CineMagic is a mobile-centric video streaming service entirely dedicated to outstanding, award-winning short film content to mobile users through the Vodacom Video Play and MTN Video Play platforms. The genres cover African and South African little movies from action, horror, thriller, comedy, drama, sci-fi and soon faith based short movies are being added. The aim is to provide a comprehensive service catering for all communities and audiences.

■ ***What sparked the idea and when did you get started?***

I have always been in content - I have represented all the major studios from Universal, Paramount etc. and I saw a gap in the market for mobile users.

“ The fact is in South Africa, mobile penetration is well over 100 percent and only roughly 14 million TV households; not many people have the battery life, data or time to watch a full feature movie on their mobile. ”

Other players were also doing a disservice to the telco subscribers by offering them YouTube type content - which did not impress me at all. We refresh content constantly and provide a full service with trailers, posters, synopsis and cast/directors as well as a rating service using the international IMDb content ratings.

The development process took over two years and the idea was to serve high-quality, authentic, award-winning video content that would promote mobile user engagement with short form video.

“ Where else would you rather be? I mean cineMagic has the most amazing, award winning short movies, series and doccies across various genres:

Available on CineMagic! MTN Play<https://t.co/MMSj1utNzz>

[#June #YouthMonth #CineMagic #Shorts #series #Bingewatching pic.twitter.com/LeedzMERJG](#)— CineMagic (@cine_magic) [June 24, 2020](#) ”

■ **What is the main purpose of CineMagic?**

To provide short form curated content with a high production value that is well-suited for streaming over mobile devices as well as promote, generate revenue and give more opportunity to aspiring African/South African film makers who are truly great at their craft but often have no platform to show it or means of generating income from

■ **What services will you be providing?**

Subscription Video-On-Demand streaming across various content categories, which are designed for mobile and are paid for by mobile airtime. We have other services planned but these will be announced as they roll out but I can tell you they will be exciting filled with premium content.

■ **What are some of the challenges you encountered in developing the platform?**

Conceptually, it was difficult explaining the idea to very technical executives with in the telco spaces. We had to develop high end “mock sites” just to illustrate our vision.

Technically, it was a challenge to have all the different parts in the system in place at the right time but fortunately we partnered with an outstanding technical and marketing partner called Upstream.

“ In terms of the content, it was challenging to access the best content as there is no single repository of short form content. ”

One has to approach the different film makers and producers individually and still keep true to only accepting the very best in terms of production value, narrative and execution.

Having to build new relationships with content distributors was also very challenging because most distributors prefer to associate themselves with platforms/channels that have been in existence for a while.

■ **The content creation space is very competitive. What advice do you have for content creators?**

Short form content is set to grow dramatically and can essentially serve as a pilot for future long form versions so it is important to adopt a high-quality approach from the outset.

“ Story lines are important to grab and hold the attention of the viewer, and trailers as well as high quality posters are essential. The poster is the first thing a viewer sees and is a very important stand-out tool for viewer attention. ”

The trailer should be maximum 30-60 seconds and tell the story without giving away the entire plot.

Take the trouble to involve the best actors, polish the production values as far as your budget will allow and the script is the most important tool. These days short films shot on a smartphone are even acceptable to give an edgy user experience, depending on the story line.

■ **Content is king. What are some of the trends that we can see happening in the next year?**

The MNOs (mobile network operators) are already reporting that streaming is up 48% with the current pandemic. VOD services are trending as people seek some escape from harsh realities.

“ Short form is a trend as people’s attention span is smaller and the consumer’s data for long form is costly. ”

Carefully consider your market, the audience size and affordability.

■ **Covid-19 has certainly stirred things up a bit. What message do you have for creatives out there?**

Use the time at home to explore story lines, experiment and connect with people remotely that you may not have reached out to before. Research platforms , online film festivals and get your content out there and seen!

■ **Where would you like to see CineMagic in the next 12 months?**

We hope to host online and offline short film festivals in the near future. We're also looking at expanding beyond SA and adding many more content categories.

“ We aim to be the best short form VOD streaming service for mobile users! ”

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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