

# Lumumba

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opening clips tie in perfectly, leaving viewers with a clear picture of how the web came together. The audience leaves with the bitter image of a triumphant Mobutu. Given the film's strong acting

appearances, unique organization and potent political message, it comes as no surprise that since its debut in October 2001, *Lumumba* has won numerous awards, including the Lincoln Filmmakers Trophy at the Acapulco Black Film Festival for best film. It also won the Paul Robeson Award for Best Feature Length Film at the Ouagadougou Pan-African Film and Television Festival and was runner-up for Best Film

at the 2001 Milan African Film Festival. Peck does an excellent job of painting the bleak political scene and telling of the atrocities committed in the Congo against both the Belgians and the Congolese during the time Lumumba was in office. However, viewers who watch the film without at least a basic prior understanding of the events may find themselves confused by the oft alluded-to-but not

always explained political dealings leading to Lumumba's assassination. The striking similarities between Haiti and the Congo are not mere coincidences, according to Peck, who spent part of his childhood in both countries. "We are struggling with the same kinds of demons," he said. Both nations, like other undeveloped countries, fight internal

conflicts. One cannot develop a democracy by relying solely upon an institution, Peck said; one must fill it with food, health-care, education – which are all too scarce for many countries. *Lumumba* tells the story of human struggle, triumph and betrayal – themes not unique to the Congo or the sixties. While it may not be a cheery Friday night flick, it is definitely an enlightening 90 minutes.

# Wooten

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As is always the case, there was the opening band. Much to my dismay, there was no trash band to be had. I was also quite surprised to find that this show was smoke-free. Ziggy's and no smoking! Novel concept for a bar in RJR-ville. The opening act was Divinity, a female bass player from Atlanta who also rapped. I immediately was drawn to her music, before she even played a note. Any artist from my hometown deserves props. Divinity was one of the most vibrant and original rap artists that I have heard in a long time.

I had seen her in Atlanta a few years back and was taken with her rhyme style. Laying down a raw funk rhythm and layering a smooth groove of beats and rhymes over it, Divinity played two songs before the main event took the stage. There was no obligatory 30-minute interlude to switch out equipment; Wooten joined Divinity onstage, continuing with not only the same band, but also segueing into his own songs from hers.

Wooten, backed by secondary bassist Anthony Wellington and J.D. Blair on the drums took the stage with a vengeance with his song "Sho Do Love Good People." This was ensemble musicality at its best. Each musician got a solo with the song culminating in a bass duel between Wellington and the master Wooten.

The song moved immediately into the next. Wooten proved that he was warmed up and the band was ready to go. Popping the G-String on his Fodera Monarch did not even faze him; he continued through his solo with mad passion, only to seamlessly switch basses and guide the song into a melodic jazz bridge section.

The concert continued in this manner for two and a half hours. The band never took a break. After four songs, the band was grooving so hard that the sweat running off their brows made for little distraction. Moving through his timeless staples "What Did He Say?" and a soul-wrenching "Amazing Grace" (this song is beautiful – listen to it), Wooten led the band to obscene heights.

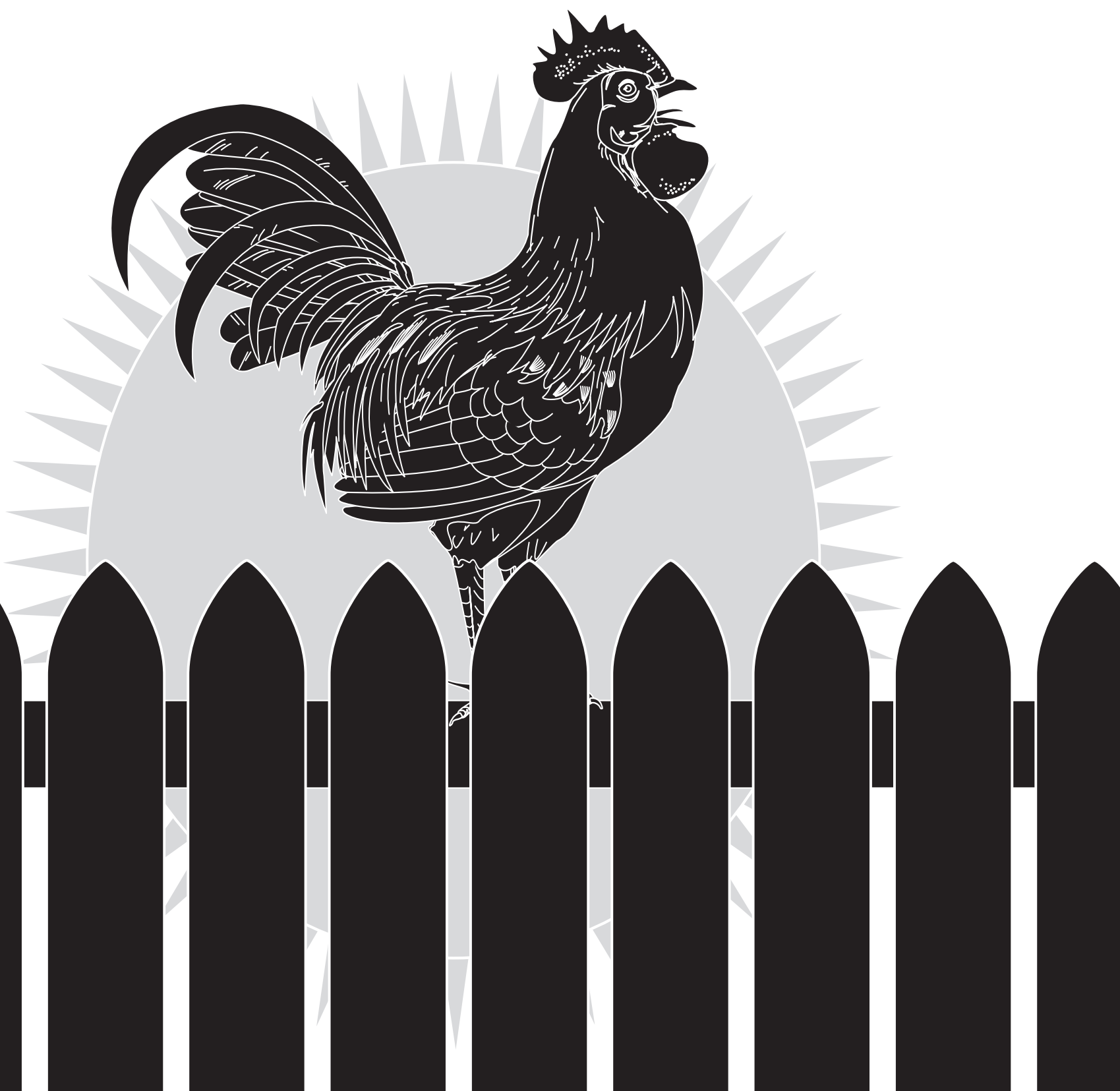
One of the highlights of the show was the 10-minute solo endeavor by the guitar player, Wooten's brother and mentor, Regi Wooten. The eldest of five musical brothers, Regi showed his prowess on guitar, melding sounds from all ranges of the tonal spectrum. Taking nods from *Living Colour's* Vernon Reid, Eddie van Halen, Peter Dinklage and Jimi Hendrix, Regi's unbelievable technique and tapping fluidity produced sounds that seasoned musicians had never heard before. With bell-like tone and unbelievable concentration, Regi treated the audience to a 10-minute rollicking solo.

Soon after, another Wooten brother, Joe, took the keyboards solo for another brief interlude. This gave him time to present some of his own music to the audience. His prowess with the difficult Talk-Box effect shone through in his second song, a Sly Stone cover.

Never has a concert worn me out or made me cheer as much as this one. Through covers of "Purple Haze" and Sly Stone's "Higher," the band kept topping itself, taking off into different directions, all of them culminating in a 15-minute jam at the end which included "The Alphabet Song", "Everybody Wants my Baby" and Wooten's "Me and My Bass Guitar."

After playing with Bela Fleck and the Flecktones for a little over 10 years, Wooten has risen in the ranks to be acknowledged by most as the best living bass player around. Backed by a stellar band of five musicians and a guest female rapper/bass player, he has pulled together an ensemble of some of the greatest musicians around. Not only are they good, but the music also promotes a message of peace, understanding and optimism that is rarely emphasized in pop music today.

Most importantly, the band has fun! It is obvious that they all love what they are doing. They should; fun is what separates great music from quintessential music, the kind that everyone should be listening to and digging. Music like I saw Jan. 25 at Ziggy's emphasizes change, expression and fun.



It used to be the end of a great night.  
It could soon be the start of a great day.

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