



## 'Gangster's Paradise'

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In South Africa, where "Gangster's Paradise" was made, the film was originally called "Jerusalema"—a violent hymn, heavy with irony, to the new Jerusalem that was promised but not delivered by the nation's postapartheid governments. There's nothing heavy, however, about Ralph Ziman's nimble and electrifying chronicle of Lucky Kunene, an ardent, good-hearted kid growing up to be a charismatic community organizer and then a gang boss. Lucky, who's played with huge élan by Rapula Seiphemo, takes inspiration where he can find it, from sages as diverse as Karl Marx, Al Capone and Donald Trump, and from fragrant phrases like affirmative repossession, a local euphemism for carjacking. The movie repossesses, just as affirmatively, a host of Hollywood conventions from such films as "Scarface," "The Godfather" and "Heat." Yet the results are startlingly original, if occasionally overambitious. This is "Tsotsi" without the feel-good glow, a tale of entrepreneurship's perils and boundless pleasures.

-- Joe Morgenstern

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