

## Yaaba ★★★

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**Year of Release:** 1989

Review by Randy Parker

**Country:** Africa

**Verdict:** See It

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Set and filmed in Africa, *Yaaba* is an enchanting slice of life which doesn't cater in any way to American audiences. The movie, which won the International Critics Award at the 1989 Cannes Film Festival, takes us into the world of Bila, a rambunctious boy living in a small village. You could think of Bila as an African Huck Finn. He is the village rascal—good natured but always getting into trouble, usually with his stern father. Bila gets in especially hot water when he befriends Sana, an old woman whom the villagers have shunned as a witch. Sana lives by herself away from the village, but Bila brings her food and

keeps her company; he affectionately calls her Yaaba, or grandmother. When he's not visiting Sana, Bila either plays with his flirtatious friend Nopoko or fights with the other boys in the village.

The movie's charm lies not in its plot, which is virtually nonexistent, but in its wonderful characters. *Yaaba* is set in an exotic culture, but the personalities within the culture are universal. There's the town drunk, the kind mother, the bitchy wife, and various other human archetypes. *Yaaba* is a unique opportunity to visit Africa without having to spend your life savings on air-fare.

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