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Hollywood in Uganda: local appropriation of trans-national English-language movies

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Hollywood movies are popular in Uganda. This paper reports a study that investigated access to English-language Hollywood movies in Uganda, by way of an ethnographic audience study carried out in slum areas of the city of Kampala. The researchers visited and participated in the watching and reviewing of English-language movies in makeshift video hall shacks, where interpretation of the films into Luganda, the most common local language, took place simultaneously with the viewing of the films. By way of unstructured conversational interviews, descriptions of events, photographs and reviews of movies, the paper examines the practices of interpreting and localising carried out by the hired interpreters (known as Vee-Jays). In particular, it describes how the interpreters operate as mediators who provide access to these English Hollywood movies and examines how the global gets infused into the local through processes of contextualisation of the films. The paper contributes to our understanding of how new forms of cultural representation are created, consumed and shared through digital and other media, and the effects digital technology has on the local movie entertainment industry.