

Get a First Look at the Gorgeous Animated/Documentary Film *Liyana*

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Exclusive First Look Photos, Poster & Interview

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Five orphans from Swaziland used their own experiences to create a poetic fairytale about a young girl

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***Liyana* looks unlike any documentary you've ever seen before.**

On one hand, Aaron and Amanda Kopp's feature film takes an in-depth look at the real lives of five orphaned children in Swaziland. At the same time, it weaves an inspiring tale of a fictional young girl named Liyana, who sets out on a dangerous journey to rescue her young twin brothers. Here's the twist: Liyana's story comes directly from the imaginations of the five young children and their firsthand experiences. The result is an absolutely gorgeous hybrid film that's part animated fable, part observational documentary — and EW has an exclusive first look.

"These children, like most at that age, are a lively, imaginative bunch," the Koppes tell EW. "But because of the challenges they faced before coming to the children's home, there was an additional layer of complexity — they were mysterious. The difficult experiences in their early years give them a unique perspective on the world. This film was just a way for us as filmmakers

to meaningfully engage and collaborate with them, and hopefully allow others to be as enchanted by them as we are."



The Kopps recruited South African storyteller Gcina Mhlophe to work with the five kids — Zweli, Sibusiso, Phumlani, Mkhuleko, and Nomcebo — and help use their stories as inspiration for Liyana.

"We are conscious of the fact that black Africans have historically not had enough of a voice in the telling of their own story," the Kopps say. "And we're disturbed by documentaries that exploit their characters by seeking pity. We wanted to make a film that respects its subjects. For us it is important that the children take charge of the story as their own. With the power in their hands we had no idea where we would end up, but we were sure it would be a powerful story."