

RELEASED: Thursday 10 March 2016

ABC Arts on iview web series – Fashpack: Freetown

Exclusive digital-first content available March 15 on ABC Arts on iview

Fashpack: Freetown | *Civil war battleground, poverty-stricken community, Ebola epicentre, fashion hot spot. Welcome to Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone.*

ABC Arts on iview presents a unique six-part short-form documentary series **Fashpack: Freetown**, which peels back the colourful layers of an unlikely fashion hot spot, looking at how personal style has become a force that can rise above hardships.

After arriving in Freetown to work for UNICEF in 2011, Australian aid worker Jo Dunlop was struck by the spirit and style of its residents and soon started documenting their bold fashions through a blog.

“I started a blog to try to understand how fashion has become a force of creativity in the face of catastrophe. It opened up a world of conversations to me, introduced me to a community of wonderful people and reconfirmed that style has zero to do with your bank balance.” – Jo Dunlop

In **Fashpack: Freetown** Dunlop turns presenter to chronicle the bold outfits of the city’s brightest personalities as they live amid the mayhem of urban West Africa.

From a self-elected motorcycle taxi union leader to a street preacher and a single mum who proves you don’t need money to have style, these Freetown locals daringly create the characters they want to be through their clothes.

The series also explores how fashion became a symbol of resilience amidst the devastation of the 2014 Ebola outbreak. Dunlop worked at a hospital and documented the human stories of Ebola while photographing health care workers in Africana print scrubs, a popular trend across treatment centres.

Fashpack: Freetown has fashion at its centre, but is equally about exploring what’s under the surface of people in a place that is largely misinterpreted or ignored by western media. It’s a journey to the source of Sierra Leone’s trademark energy and unwavering self-expression in the face of adversity.

Mandy Chang, Head of ABC Arts said: “ABC Arts is proud to bring this series to Australian audiences, giving a new perspective to a part of the world that we know primarily as being troubled by war, disease and poverty. **Fashpack: Freetown** reveals a unique side of a vibrant, chaotic and surprisingly stylish community who use fashion as a way to rise above the hardships of living in Sierra Leone.”

Quotes from series;

“The best way we can show that we are strong is with what we wear. You have to feel good every single day when you go out because every day is a struggle.” Mary-Ann, creator of Madam Wokie brand

“The moment I put on good clothes I have more money.” Mariama, bar tender and single mother

“I starve my stomach to buy this... To maintain that question of status.” Street preacher, Great Hero

Fashpack: Freetown is six-part short, factual series commissioned by ABC Arts for ABC Arts on iview to publish on Tuesday March 15 2016.

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