

Keep the Dance Alive ★★★1/2

(2007) 75 min. In Otjiherero & English w/English subtitles. DVD or VHS: \$59.95: individuals & high schools; \$225: public libraries, colleges & universities. Documentary Educational Resources. PPR.

Filmmaker Rina Sherman spent seven years living with the Ovahimba people of Angola and Namibia, ultimately shooting some 300 hours of film documenting their social structure. Although *Keep the Dance Alive* clocks in at a mere 75 minutes (the remaining footage will be incorporated into a larger ongoing project), it offers a remarkable anthropological study of how music and dance are interwoven into numerous aspects of Ovahimba daily life, ranging from the quotidian to the more serious religious practices, including spirit possession ceremonies. Some aspects of Ovahimba culture may seem strange to Western viewers, but Sherman wisely avoids a *Mondo Cane*-style exploitation of the subject, instead capturing a complex social world in which movement and music intertwine to open avenues toward the expression of a wide range of emotional experiences. Presenting a remarkable record of an African tribal community, *Keep the Dance Alive* is a vibrant, kinetic, and passionate film that will be ideal for anthropological and African culture collections (the spirit possession sequences provide an invaluable glimpse into a relatively little-noted aspect of African religion studies), as well as general documentary fans. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)