

NAVIGATING NEW BEGINNINGS

"You add value, whatever room you are in. Bet on yourself and be patient with yourself."

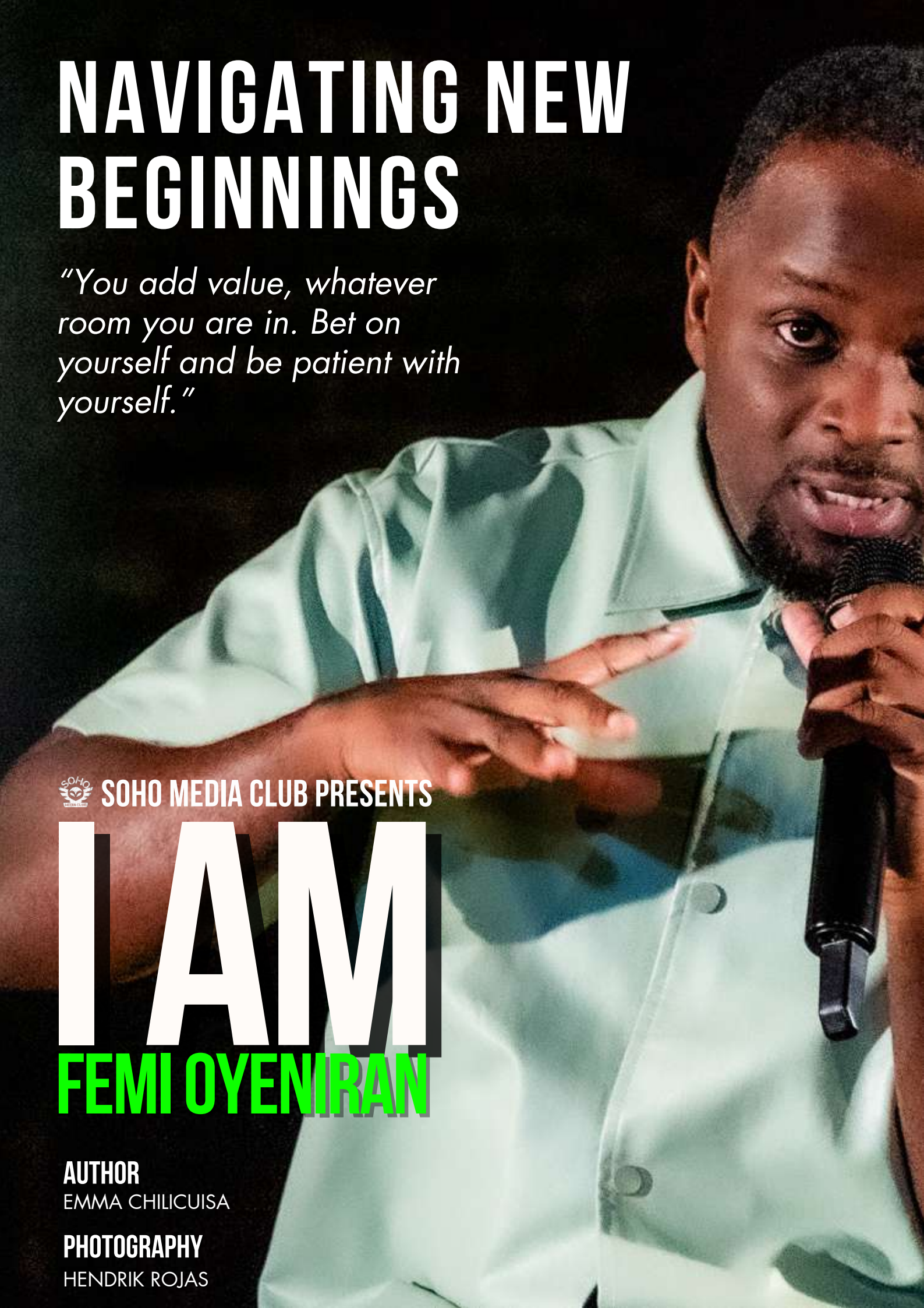
 SOHO MEDIA CLUB PRESENTS

I AM

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INTRO

Starting his career by playing “Moony” in the cult classic *Kidulthood* in 2006, acclaimed Nigerian-British actor and director, Femi Oyeniran has catapulted his career by being self-made and constantly working on projects. He is known for starring in and directing his own films such as 2016's *The Intent*, which was sold to Netflix and more recently, produced feature film, *The Trapping*, alongside his Fan Studios business partner Nicky ‘Slimting’ Walker.

On Wednesday 7 February 2024 at Dockside Vaults, London, Femi kicked off Soho Media Club’s first event of the year.

Interviewed by Roses Okhipo, Femi spoke about his upbringing, what influenced his directing and acting career, industry tips and how he approaches balancing home life with the unpredictable and round-the-clock nature of the film and television industry.



I AM by Soho Media Club
Intimate. Compelling. Inspiring. I AM is a series of interviews with inspiring names in the world of media and entertainment - all of them with extraordinary stories to share.

Each guest opens up to talk about some of the biggest changes and challenges they have had to overcome, how this has punctuated their lives and what drives them.





STARTING OUT

Femi explained that his career was not a straight road to success. Coming from a background of growing up on a council estate in Croydon, which he says, “makes you dream big”, he was enamoured by people on the TV who seemed untouchable, like they were living on a different planet. “Everyone has a starting point, but everyone’s point is different” he stated.

“BE PATIENT, BUT I DID HAVE BEGINNER’S LUCK. I WANTED EVERYTHING TO HAPPEN”

Reflecting on his beginnings and his parents' wish for him to take a more traditional route in life, before he entered the world of TV and film, he studied law at the London School of Economics. “If I can be one of these lot, I can do anything.” Being surrounded by ambitious people, not necessarily in the industry he was striving for, pushed Femi to become more confident, to be bold, and to realise that he deserves to take up space.

When giving advice on how he start out, Femi said, “Be patient, but I did have beginner’s luck. I wanted everything to happen.”

OVERCOMING STRUGGLES

Soon after finishing his degree, Femi decided to return to film and television. Struggling to find his footing, he understood the importance of having a job that supports his creative goals; “You make bad decisions when you do not have money”, he says, reflecting on his time when he was offered a less-than-desirable deal to distribute his film.

“YOU MAKE BAD DECISIONS WHEN YOU DO NOT HAVE MONEY”

Having an income allowed him time to wait for a better opportunity, a deal, he felt, respected his project. His journey involved a constant back and forth between acting, writing, directing and producing. He admits he is a bit of a perfectionist and his way towards reaching that was to immerse himself in each role. Confessing that acting is his favourite, he emphasised how much he has learned from putting himself in roles he might not have been privy to before.



GETTING INTO THE INDUSTRY

How do you get into and survive this industry? And how do you hold your value?

Femi answers these difficult questions with a smile, explaining that it takes time, luck and hard work to get to where you want to be.

“BE BOLD, ASK FOR HELP.”

Diversity has become something that is important in both intention and direct action. He points out that he has never lived in a community that is not diverse, so anything other becomes strange to him.

The role of collaboration is key, “Be bold, ask for help.”

“All feedback is good feedback, it’s like a free focus group.”, he says and goes on to happily take questions on his upcoming projects, offering advice on how to stand up for yourself in meetings and how to respond to notes.

ADVICE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Femi speaks highly of the next generation’s attitude towards the space they want to take up in film and television, and understands that it is difficult to feel like you belong in the same room as the people you admire.

It’s a feeling that is difficult to shake when you are only just starting out, and you feel as if there is no other way forward other than by jumping into the deep end on your own.



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ADVICE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION CONTINUED...

Throughout the night, Femi has proven that the industry does have people who are open and willing to help and that it does not have to be done alone.

“You add value no matter what.”, he concluded leaving everyone in the room with a new sense of hopefulness.

The film and television industry is a famously creative, amazing and simultaneously daunting industry. It is no surprise that so many people who want to try to build their careers in this industry do not know where to start or feel as if they are alone in their fear and confusion. That’s exactly why it’s important to keep reminding ourselves that it does not have to stay this way and that there is a community out there willing to offer guidance in how to navigate these unpredictable but fulfilling careers.

The night ended with a rapturous audience applause and positive energy. There was a sense of excitement for future prospects, and the excitement of being in the same room as people who all want the same things. If you take anything from Femi Oyeniran is that your beginnings do not have to dictate your present, but they do shape you as a person and as a creative.

With thanks to:

