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## Mahamat-Saleh Haroun At BFI Southbank in May 2011



To mark the release of the 2010 Cannes Jury Prize winning **A Screaming Man** (2010), **BFI Southbank** presents a retrospective of African director **Mahamat-Saleh Haroun's** work and welcomes the master of quietly political, local fables to the stage for a discussion with season curator and journalist **Dave Calhoun**, along with an audience Q&A.

**Mahamat-Saleh Haroun** turns 50 this year. In little over a decade, this writer/director from Chad in central Africa has become one of the continent's leading storytellers. From his first feature, the self-examining **Bye Bye Africa** (1999), in which he played a version of himself returning to Chad from France, to his latest, **A Screaming Man** (2010), which won the Jury Prize at Cannes last year, Haroun's films reflect a life lived between two continents. Having studied filmmaking in Paris in the 1980s, he has lived in France for the last three decades although Chad has remained the location and inspiration for all four of his cinema films. Difficult relationships between fathers and sons are a recurring theme in Haroun's films, perhaps reflecting his own conflicted relationship with his homeland and African cinema – or, in the latter's case, the lack of it. Haroun's own father appears in *Bye Bye Africa*, while his second feature **Abouna** (2002), portrays two young boys whose father disappears into the desert, never to return. His third feature, **Daratt** (2006), tells of a baker's young apprentice who is burning with a desire to avenge his father's death.

Like *Daratt*, Haroun's latest film, *A Screaming Man*, has the look and feel of a parable telling of a former swimming champion in his 60s in the Chadian capital of N'Djamena who makes a terrible choice when war and economic difficulties threaten his livelihood and sense of self-worth. Again, a troubled relationship between a father and his son is at the core of the film. The politics of Haroun's films are quiet – but his films are political nonetheless: he distils ideas about migration, poverty, fractured families and war into calm, intimate stories. His films are simple and eloquent, told with careful framing and economic storytelling and with barely a word wasted or image used without meaning.

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

The **Mahamat-Saleh Haroun** season takes place at **BFI Southbank** on **May 13 – 30 2011**

**PROGRAMME**

**Bye Bye Africa**

*France-Chad* 1999. With Mahamat-Saleh Haroun, Garba Issa, Aïda Yelena. 86min. EST

Haroun plays a version of himself in this lively, documentary-style first feature, as he returns to Chad after the death of his mother. Once there, Haroun's alter ego tries to finance a film, Bye, Bye Africa, while reconnecting with friends, family and a distressed ex-girlfriend who claims that playing a woman with AIDS in one of his short films has ruined her life. The film is alive with ideas about the ethics of filmmaking and living between two worlds.

**Sat 14 May 18:20 NFT2**

**Tue 17 May 20:40 NFT3**

**Abouna** Our Father

*France-Chad-Netherlands* 2002. With Ahidjo Mahamat Moussa, Hamza Moctar Aguid, Zara Haroun, Koulsy Lamko. 84min. EST. **PG**

A man looks at the camera, turns and disappears over the sandy horizon. This touching portrait of childhood follows this mysterious figure's two sons, Tahir (Moussa) and Amine (Aguid), as they struggle to make sense of their father's sudden disappearance. Haroun adopts vivid, controlled colours and a restrained tone that recall Jim Jarmusch or Aki Kaurismäki, while always lending the film an empathy and wisdom of his own.

**Mon 16 May 20:40 NFT2**

**Fri 20 May 18:20 NFT2**

**Kalala** Chad

2005. 52min. EST

Haroun lost his close friend and collaborator Hissein Djibrine (nicknamed 'Kalala' after the Congolese footballer) to AIDS in 2003.

He returned to Chad to make this personal, cathartic documentary as an expression of his grief, to unravel the facts about Kalala's death and to honour his memory. The film is preceded by two of Haroun's shorter works: the first, B400 (1997; 3min) shot in Paris, where Haroun studied film, the second, Expectations (2008; 29min), made more recently in Chad, and a study in the lure of emigration.

**Wed 18 May 20:45 NFT3**

**Sat 21 May 18:40 Studio**

**Daratt** Dry Season

*Chad-France-Belgium-Austria* 2006. With Ali Barkai, Youssouf Djaoro, Aziza Housseine. 96min. EST. **PG**

Haroun filters the madness and pain of conflict into this powerful story of Atim (Barkai), a young man sent by his grandfather to the Chad capital to avenge his father's death in the country's civil war. He takes an apprenticeship with Nassara (Djaoro), an ageing baker, and must face the hard moral choice of whether to greet violence with violence or find the strength to forgive.

**Sun 22 May 20:45 NFT2**

**Fri 27 May 21:00 NFT3**

**Sun 29 May 18:20 NFT2**

**Mon 30 May 18:30 NFT3**

**Sex, Okra and Unsalted Butter** Sexe, gombo et bierre salé

France 2008. With Marius Yelolo, Mata Gabin, Aïssa Maïga. 81min. EST

Set and shot in Bordeaux, this energetic comic drama, made for French television, is lighter in tone than most of Haroun's work but no less concerned with social realities. Malik is a 70-year-old man from Ivory Coast whose life is unravelling: his wife leaves him for a younger French man, he can't cope with his two youngest sons and he's shocked by the lifestyle of his eldest, Dani. The storytelling style is different – but the interest in changing identities is the same.

**Sun 22 May 16:10 NFT2**

**Tue 24 May 20:40 NFT2**

**A Screaming Man** Un Homme qui crie

France-Belgium-Chad 2010. Dir Mahamat-Saleh Haroun. With

Youssef Djaoro, Diouc Koma, Emile Abossolo M'bo, Hadja Fatima N'Goua. 92min. Digital. Courtesy of Soda Pictures

Haroun's latest film is a warm and wise parable on male pride and status, inspired by and reflecting the ongoing civil war in Chad. Adam is a pool attendant at a well-heeled hotel in N'Djamena, the country's capital, where everyone still calls him 'champ', after his days as a competitive swimmer. His son, Abdel, works under him at the pool, but the old order is changing as economic pressures force the hotel's Chinese management to promote his son and move Adam to demeaning duty on the front gate. War, too, is upsetting the natural state of things, and Adam enters into a terrible bargain when a local chief piles the pressure on him to make a contribution to the war effort, financial or otherwise. Haroun turns the personal and emotional turmoil of his story into still, meditative filmmaking. The film's final scenes have a wise, almost Biblical quality to them as Haroun brings his moral fable to a powerful conclusion.

**Fri 13 – Thu 26 May**

**Q&A with Mahamat-Saleh Haroun follows the 18:10 screening on Fri 13 May**

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**African Odysseys screening** (with intro & Discussion; tickets £5)

**Sat 21 May 14:00 NFT3**

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