



BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

THE BLUE CAFTAN (15)

Starring: Lubna Azabal, Saleh Bakri, Ayoub Massioui

Distributor: New Wave Films

France/Morocco/Belgium, 2022, 1 hour 58 minutes SUBTITLES

Maryam Touzani's second film, *The Blue Caftan*, addresses a taboo subject which was inspired by a chance encounter with a man when she was casting for her first feature film, *Adam*. Meeting this man, she realized, 'There was something I thought was very violent in the way that I imagined he had to live his life...To be someone that he wasn't entirely, and be forced to maintain this facade in order to survive in this society.'

Interview with Caitlin Quinlan, *Variety*

'Homosexuality in Morocco is a taboo subject, and shooting a film that talks about it would've been a big, big risk. Every day when we went to shoot, I didn't know if the next day we would be shooting. In our society, there are a lot of things that are OK as long as they're not spoken. —**IV with Nick Vivarelli, *Variety***

She was keen to cast Palestinian actor, Saleh Bakri but she knew that the fact that he would be portraying a gay man was not something to be taken lightly when she approached Bakri about the role. 'This is an extremely sensitive subject in the Arab world where playing a character like *Halim* is really making a statement,' says Touzani. 'You have to be really sure of your convictions in order to do it. It was an act of courage.' —**IV with Steve Pond, *The Wrap***

Touzani's background as a journalist has motivated her choice of theme in her two features (*Adam* is about a single, unmarried mother), and combines with her love of painting, strong visual sense and attention to detail to give *The Blue Caftan* its rich visual texture: 'I think life is about detail. Sometimes we are waiting for the huge things and big events, whereas we don't see the little things that are essential to our everyday existence...And that's where I wanted to put my focus: on all these little details that constitute the life of this couple. But what I wanted above all is to delve into the intimacy of their beings in order to understand them more.' — **IV with Steve Pond, *The Wrap***

She worked closely with her Director of Photography, Virginia Surdej: 'My writing is always very visual. When I write I have the textures and I have the colors. When I write those it's almost like photos or in images. I spend a lot of time before filming preparing the set design. The colors and textures, for me, are not just there; they have to be able to tell the universe of these particular characters and to help us delve further into their universe and really wanted to prepare all the shots as I had visualized them, and Virginia is incredible because she is truly sensitive. She knows exactly what I want to tell through each shot. She helped me really go in the direction of where I want to go. Working with her is beautiful. The way I wanted to illuminate the characters, for me, the light is obviously extremely, extremely important. And the Virginia is extremely talented and sensitive to all of this. —**IV with Mariam E Gates in *rogerebert.com***

Notes compiled by Anne Cottringer