

A SEASON IN FRANCE

(Une Saison en France)

France (2017) 100 minutes

Director: Mahamat-Saleh Haroun

Cast: Eriq Ebouaney (Abbas), Sandrine Bonnaire (Carole),
Aalayna Lys (Asma)



Screening 06 October 2021 at Swindon Arts Centre

Abbas, a high school teacher in the Central African Republic, has fled his war-torn country with his two children. They now live in France, where Abbas works at a food market, while applying for political asylum. A French woman, Carole, falls in love with him and offers a roof for him and his family. When Abbas' application is rejected, they face a crucial decision.

Reviews



Abbas is a migrant from the war-torn Central African Republic. A schoolteacher back home, in Paris he works on a market stall and looks after his two young children (his wife died during their escape). He's dating a co-worker, Carole, and has applied for asylum, but he's lacking documentation and as the film progresses his plight becomes more desperate. A parallel story tracks the fate of Abbas's brother, Etienne, a philosophy teacher now reduced to working as a security guard at a pharmacy and sleeping in a bare wooden hut beside the Seine.

Mahamat-Saleh Haroun treads carefully and keeps melodrama at arm's length. If there are villains in this story, they're off-screen. We don't see the bureaucrats any more than we see the racists who burn down Etienne's shack. This compassionate film speaks with a simple eloquence about a humanity that we seem on the verge of losing. The last, stark images – superbly played by Bonnaire, one of the most soulful and appreciated French actresses – will surely prick the conscience of anyone who sees them.

Tom Charity, British Film Institute

Held in gentle elegance throughout, *A Season in France* rages beneath its polished exterior. Mahamat Saleh Haroun, former jury member of the Cannes Film Festival, has crafted a searing political drama that avoids an 'Us Versus Them' plot, leaving enemies offscreen to probe questions of migration, patriotism and masculinity through intimate and unflinching depictions of beautiful family milestones, interspersed with deafeningly devastating jolts of pure destruction.

... A true coup, Bonnaire's lone performance in a windswept wasteland in northern France gives you an insight into the lives of refugees in Europe hard to find elsewhere in the media. The credits roll just as you begin to understand the true horror of the plot, and viewers will suddenly understand Abbas' picturing of his wife: for days after watching, questions of what happens to the characters – and those whom these characters are based on – will haunt you.

Beay Waycott, Plymouth Arts Cinema

Film Facts

- The film was screened in the Special Presentations section at the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival and opened the Afrika Film Festival in Louvain, Belgium in April 2018.
- Mahamat Saleh Haroun is a film director from Chad where most of his films have been made. In 2010, he directed *A Screaming Man* which won the Jury Prize at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival.
- Eriq Ebouaney is best known in France for his portrayal of the Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba in the 2000 film *Lumumba*.