

THE BLUE CAFTAN

Morocco (2022) 122 minutes

Director: Maryam Touzani

Cast: Lubna Azabal (Mina)
Saleh Bakri (Halim)
Ayoub Massioui (Youssef)



Screening 25th October 2023 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

The Blue Caftan is built around an emotional triangle between a middle-aged couple and a younger man. Set in the medina of the Moroccan town Salé, Mina and her husband Halim run a small shop selling traditional caftans, but the arrival of a handsome new apprentice, Youssef, stirs problems when Halim realises his attraction to him.

Reviews



The Blue Caftan sets up what seems like a love triangle primed to boil over, but the movie remains at a simmer throughout, eschewing confrontations for gentler, more complicated forms of connection. Mina can be stern and jealous, but she is empathetic to the closeted Halim, telling him in a crucial moment that he's the "purest man" she knows. Halim, for his part, cannot reciprocate her desire but showers her with care. As her illness changes the couple's companionship and their craft — and draws Youssef into both — Touzani's film becomes an ode to the many kinds of love that persist, even in an unforgiving world.

Devika Girish, New York Times

Hand-stitched with loving care, this mature, resonant drama is the latest from Touzani, writer-director of 2019's *Adam*. It's set in the Moroccan town Salé, where Mina (Azabal) runs a small shop selling traditional caftans created by her husband, master tailor Halim (Saleh Bakri). Such an artisanal enterprise is bound to struggle in the modern world, and further complications arise when Halim, secretly gay, finds himself attracted to the shop's new apprentice Youssef (Ayoub Missioui). *The Blue Caftan* is an emotionally complex, richly empathetic depiction of a partnership sustained through storms and challenges, with Azabal and Bakri exuding a warm, gently crackling chemistry. Superb performances, sly humour, Virginie Surdej's glowing photography and a strong throughline of social defiance make this a profoundly satisfying pleasure.

Jonathan Romney, BFI

Film Facts

- *The Blue Caftan* won the FIPRESCI Critics' prize for the *Un Certain Regard* section in Cannes 2022.
- It was Morocco's entry for the 2023 Oscars.
- It is Maryam Touzani's second film.

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