



REFUGEE WEEK

Io Capitano

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Director: Matteo Garrone

©: Archimede Srl, Tarantula

Production Companies: Archimede, Rai Cinema, Pathé, Tarantula, Canal+, Ciné+

Executive Producer: Alessio Lazzareschi

Producers: Matteo Garrone, Paolo Del Brocco

Location Manager: Gennaro Aquino

Post-production Supervisor: Mirko Giambartolomei

CASTING: Francesco Vedovati, Iman Dionne,

Constance Demontoy, Amine Louadni

Screenplay: Matteo Garrone, Massimo Ceccherini,

Massimo Gaudioso, Andrea Tagliaferri

Script Collaborators: Fofana Amara,

Mamadou Kouassi Pli Adama, Arnaud Zohin,

Bhane Tareka, Siaka Dombia, Chiara Leonardi,

Nicola di Robilant

Director of Photography: Paolo Carnera

Camera Operator: Matteo Carlesimo

Steadicam Operator: Matteo Carlesimo

Visual Effects Supervisor: Laurent Creusot

Visual Effects: MPC

Editor: Marco Spoletini

Set Designer: Dimitri Capuani

Set Decorator: Hafid Amily

Graphic Designer: Eleanora Uras

Costume Designer: Stefano Giammitti

Hair Make-up Artist: Mohamed Bouali

Creative Titles: Digimax

Titles: Giovanna Rucci

Colourist: Angelo Francavilla

Music: Andrea Farri

Sound Design: Mirko Perri

Sound Recording: Maricetta Lombardo

Cast:

Seydou Sarr (*Seydou*)

Moustapha Fall (*Moussa*)

Issaka Sawagodo (*Martin*)

Hichem Yacoubi (*Ahmed*)

Doudou Sagna (*Charlatan*)

Khady Sy (*Seydou's mother*)

Venus Gueye (*Seydou's little sister*)

Cheick Oumar Diaw (*Sisko*)

Joe Lassana (*passport man*)

Mamadou Sani (*Niger border police*)

Bamar Kane (*Bouba*)

Italy-Belgium-France 2023

121 mins

Digital

In association with African Odysseys

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SIGHT AND SOUND

+ intro and discussion

Senegalese youngsters Seydou and Moussa, keen to pursue a music career, leave Dakar for Europe. Their journey takes them across a vast expanse of desert, where they encounter vicious bandits and brutal authorities, then face the perils of a dangerous Mediterranean crossing.

Matteo Garrone's powerful drama was thoroughly researched, using first-hand accounts of the journey to map out the youngsters' plight. The heart of the film is Seydou Sarr's extraordinary performance, aided in no small part by breathtaking cinematography, moments of magical realism and a compassion that gives voice to the voiceless.

[bfi.org.uk](https://www.bfi.org.uk)

Along with the many unscrupulous people *Io Capitano's* young hero Seydou (Seydou Sarr) and his friend Moussa (Moustapha Fall) meet during their travels from their hometown in Senegal to an uncertain fate on the edge of Europe, there are more surreal figures as well – such as, in one of the film's signature images, a woman who floats in mid-air. Elements of dream, myth and fantasy continually intrude on what might otherwise seem like a hard-nosed portrayal of the ordeals faced by migrants on their journeys across Africa and into the treacherous waters beyond the continent's northern coast.

In part, this slippage is indicative of its protagonist's youthful perspective. Part of a lively, happy household, Seydou is presented as an upbeat but naïve teenager, who's all too susceptible to his buddy's big talk about the more exciting life that awaits the duo in Europe, a mirage promoted by the media images they consume on their phones. They're motivated not by deprivation, but by a lust for adventure, a distinction that the film emphasises with its references to the questing heroes of Homer.

But the film's slides between naturalistic and fantastical modes are emblematic of the conflicting predilections of *Io Capitano's* director, too. Compared to the more reliably flamboyant ways of his Italian compatriots and fellow festival mainstays Luca Guadagnino and Paolo Sorrentino, Matteo Garrone has often demonstrated a steelier sensibility and a keen interest in the brute mechanics of the systems that entrap his characters, like the crime syndicate portrayed in his Cannes prizewinner *Gomorrah* (2008). He revisited that milieu with the brutal demi-monde of *Dogman* (2018), and here finds another analogue in the shadow world into which his two innocents descend, a perilous realm filled with counterfeit-passport suppliers, utterly indifferent desert guides, bribe-seeking policemen and vicious gangsters. It all constitutes a wider apparatus that operates with the same well-honed efficiency and according to the same merciless code deployed by the Camorra in *Gomorrah*; that's especially true of the torture rooms awaiting the least fortunate travellers in a makeshift prison in Libya.

But as Garrone revealed in *Tale of Tales* (2015), his alternately fanciful and grisly adaptation of stories by Giambattista Basile, and his 2019 version of *Pinocchio*, the filmmaker is hardly averse to more florid and ostentatious gestures. An early scene in which Seydou drums for an ecstatic dance performance by his mother and sisters foreshadows a series of similarly heightened moments, along with several detours into fairytale-like fantasy and magic realism.

This combination of approaches can sometimes be jarring. But it does allow *Io Capitano* to diverge from the more earnest and predictable tone prevalent among recent films about the migrant experience. Moreover, with its greater focus on the journey rather than the destination (and the difficulties faced there), Garrone's film is more closely akin to predecessors such as Boris Lojkine's *Hope* (2014) than it is to Jonas Carpignano's *Mediterranea* (2015) and Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne's *Tori and Lokita* (2022).

TIGRITUDES: A PAN-AFRICAN FILM CYCLE 1956-2024

Early Archive Shorts

Sat 1 Jun 15:35; Mon 3 Jun 18:00 (+ season introduction discussion with season curators Dyana Gaye and Valérie Osouf, hosted by Desta Haile)

Cabascabo + Rhodesia Countdown

Sat 1 Jun; Fri 14 Jun 18:20

One Way or Another

De cierta manera
Sun 2 Jun 15:40 (+ discussion with season curators Dyana Gaye and Valérie Osouf, hosted by Mosa Mpetha); Fri 21 Jun 18:15

Muna Moto

The Child of Another
Wed 5 Jun 20:45 (+ intro by Arike Oke, Executive Director of Knowledge, Learning and Collections); Sat 15 Jun 17:30

Nahla Thu 6 Jun 20:35; Sat 22 Jun 18:10

Den Muso

The Young Girl
Sat 8 Jun 13:30; Wed 12 Jun 18:00

Bless Their Little Hearts

Sun 9 Jun 18:10; Thu 20 Jun 20:40

Handsworth Songs + intro and discussion

hosted by curator and writer Xavier Pillai

Mon 10 Jun 18:15

EXPERIMENTA Presents:

Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One + intro by researcher and curator Matthew Barrington

Thu 13 Jun 18:15

African Odysseys Presents: Polisario, A People in Arms Polisario, un peuple en armes + intro and discussion on film restoration with chair

Nikolaus Perneckzy (QMUL), Keith Shiri (Film Africa) and Jonathan Ali (Twelve30Collective)

Sat 15 Jun 14:00

Mortu Nega

Those Who Death Refused
Tue 18 Jun 21:00; Sun 30 Jun 18:00

Bezness Mon 1 Jul 18:10 + intro; Sat 13 Jul 20:30

Coming Forth By Day

Al-khoroug lel-nahar
Tue 2 Jul 20:40 (+ intro by producer, curator, writer and translator Elhum Shakerifar); Fri 12 Jul 18:20

Bye Bye Africa

Thu 4 Jul 18:00 + discussion with film curator

Abiba Coulibaly; Wed 17 Jul 21:00

Bled Number One

Sun 7 Jul 17:45; Tue 23 Jul 20:40

Shirley Adams + Firstborn Eersgeborene

Mon 8 Jul 20:40; Wed 17 Jul 18:00 + discussion

Original Voices

Wed 10 Jul 20:50; Sat 27 Jul 12:10

African Odysseys Presents Night of the Kings

La Nuit des rois + intro & panel discussion on the role of griot with Tony Warner of African

Odysseys and Black History Walks

Sat 13 Jul 14:00

Félicité

Sun 14 Jul 14:40; Thu 18 Jul 18:00 (+ intro with author and presenter Kevin Le Gendre)

Faya Dayi

Fri 26 Jul 18:15; Wed 31 Jul 20:35

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Sadly, the above list illustrates how the global cinema marketplace typically devotes more resources and attention to white European directors who tackle African subjects than it does to equivalents by African or African diasporan filmmakers. It was no surprise to see Garrone's more comfortably middlebrow effort advance much further in the Oscar race in the International Feature category than bolder hopefuls such as C.J. Obasi's *Mami Wata* and Ramata-Toulaye Sy's *Banel & Adama* (both 2023).

But *lo Capitano* still bustles with energy and vivid details drawn from Garrone's research and the real-life experiences of former migrants, many of whom worked on set alongside the director. The episodic, road-movie structure often works in its favour, allowing for continual shifts in tone as nightmares like the boys' desert ordeal give way to gentler passages. In the most beguiling scene, Seydou enjoys a respite from his sufferings alongside a fatherly protector played by the great Burkinabé actor Issaka Sawadogo.

The film is also rescued from its more precious and sentimental excesses by the power and complexity of Sarr's central performance. Demonstrating the young character's resilience in the face of ever-worsening horrors, he ensures Seydou becomes something other than an emblem of a global crisis. Instead, he's utterly compelling as a youngster who must find a means to rebuild himself and persist, all while contending with the awful knowledge of how reckless and foolish his quest turned out to be.

Jason Anderson, *Sight and Sound*, 5 April 2024

Angelo Boccato is a freelance journalist and a Communications-Media Officer. His stories, interviews, and reportages have been published in several publications, from the *Independent* to *Tribune*, from *Open Democracy* to *Byline Times* and the *Columbia Journalism Review*, while in the latter he has worked for advocacy organisations like the 3Million, and the documentary INFLUX on the Italian community in London.

He came to London in 2013, thanks to Freedom of Movement, and as a journalist, since then, he has observed just how much the debate on migrants, including refugees, can be deeply toxic in the British media, drawing sometimes even parallels with Italian media where discriminatory and hateful language is far more rife.

Words and representation are essential in the debate on migration; they can empower or they can vilify. By passing the microphone and highlighting experiences that have been silenced, Angelo aims to contribute to changing the tone and level of the conversation on migration.

AWATE is a Camden-based rapper, and an active member of UK rap's underground scene. AWATE was born in Saudi Arabia and grew up in Eritrea before arriving in the UK as a refugee. Awate Abdalla is also a critically acclaimed writer focused on stories at the intersection of race, class and surrealism – with a dose of humour.

Awate's short film *I Was Told There's Freedom Here* played at the Barbican in 2021 as part of the TAPE Collective's 'But Where Are You Really From? The Good Immigrant' programme. Awate was part of the writers' room for series such as Sid Gentle's *Ragdoll* (season 2) and BroedMachine's *Cutz*. He's been working with *The Americans* producer Joshua Brand and Two Cities Television on a crime series titled *Invisible*, and is writing a semi-autobiographical feature supported by the BFI Development Fund called *The Shed*.

Host: **Ornella Mutoni** is a Producer at Counterpoints Arts. She has a background in researching and producing documentaries for broadcast television and has worked for BBC and Channel 4 on award-winning shows. She is directing two short documentaries, one exploring intergenerational healing in her homeland Rwanda and another exploring reclamation of identity through the lens of Black women who play rugby.