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CANNES 2024 Un Certain Regard Review: *The Village Next to Paradise*

by [FABIEN LEMERCIER](#)

21/05/2024 - CANNES 2024: Mo Harawe imposes his remarkable sense of framing on a touching and laconic tale illustrating the misfortunes and resilience of the Somali people



Ahmed Ali Farah and Ahmed Mohamud Saleban in *The Village Next to Paradise*

“We don't know the dead man, he was killed yesterday by a drone. We're just helping - I'm working for you and you're only giving me 50% of the money you promised. Why? Don't call me again.” *The Village Next to Paradise*, the masterful first feature film by Somalian director **Mo Harawe** (who has lived in Austria for 15 years), presented in the Un Certain Regard programme at the 77th [Cannes Film Festival](#), begins with this dry argument over a grave that has just been dug in the middle of nowhere. A film that takes its time, in a high-quality visual setting, to paint a portrait, through a small family, of a Somalia where the present is very harsh, the past is heavy with those who disappeared and the future is uncertain, apart from the sacrifices and faith needed to move forward, all while the gorgeous beaches are just a stone's throw away.

Gravedigger, mechanic, driver: Marmagade (**Ahmed Ali Farah**) accepts all kinds of jobs, some of them illegal, to support his young son, the schoolboy Cigaal (**Ahmed Mohamud Saleban**), whom he is bringing up alone. Araweelo (**Anab Ahmed Ibrahim**), Marmagade's sister, has come to live with them after divorcing (she was unable to have children and refused to cohabit with a second wife) and is saving up to buy a small shop. But to do this, she absolutely must get back the money she has lent or obtain a bank loan, which is no easy task. As for Marmagade, he has a decision to make: Cigaal's school is closing due to a lack of funds, and the headmistress suggests that, in order not to spoil the child's potential, he should be placed in an (expensive) boarding school in town. It's a separation that won't be easy for either the son or his father.

Parents killed in boat capsizes caused by international ships illegally fishing in Somali waters and mistaking them for pirates, or as a result of the chemicals that polluted the Somali coast in the 90s, suicide bombings, drones and arms trafficking, extreme poverty and scarce jobs: a fatalistic leaden blanket reigns ("there's no point in having children, they die young") under the sun, but "there will be better days, we'll get through this as a family." It's a picture that Mo Harawe details with simplicity and precision at the slowed-down emotional pace of a country where exchanges are very restrained, which the filmmaker makes the most of thanks to the charisma of his three main performers (all non-professionals) and to frames beautifully composed by **Mostafa El Kashef**.

The Village Next to Paradise was produced by [FreibeuterFilm](#) (Austria) with [Kazak Productions](#) (France), [NiKo Film](#) (Germany) and [Maanmaal](#) (Samalia). The film is internationally sold by [Totem Films](#).

(Translated from French by Margaux Comte)

more about: [The Village Next to Paradise](#)



Review: *The Village Next to Paradise*

CANNES 2024: Mo Harawe imposes his remarkable sense of framing on a touching and laconic tale illustrating the misfortunes and resilience of the Somali people ▶

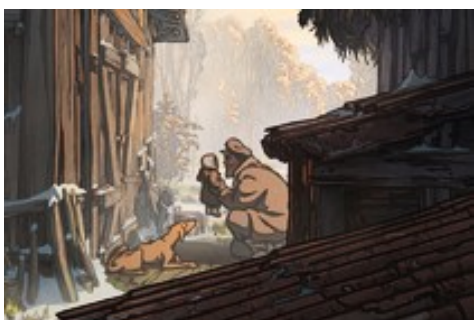
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Totem bets on *The Village Next to Paradise* in Cannes

The French company is selling the first feature by Somalian filmmaker Mo Harawe and is launching the sales of a film bringing together three short films by Juho Kuosmanen ▶

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Cannes' Official Selection welcomes 13 new titles

Michel Hazanavicius, Mohammad Rasoulof and Emanuel Pârvu join the competition; Runar Rusnarsson, Giants Zilbalodis and Céline Sallette are in Un Certain Regard ▶

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Cannes' Un Certain Regard seeks out young talent

Standing out on the line-up are films helmed by Roberto Minervini, Ariane Labe, Laetitia Dosch, Boris Lojkine, Konstantin Bojanov, Halfdan Ullmann Tøndel, Julien Colonna and Louise Courvoisier ▶

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Seven days ahead of its press conference, Cannes prepares to unveil its selected titles

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Motherhood is among the winners of the Atlas Workshop in Marrakech

Meryam Joobeur triumphed, alongside Mo Harawe and Mia Bendrimia in the post-production category; Halima Ouairi, Rokhaya Marieme Balde, Fradique and Sammy Baloji, in the development strand ▶

01/12/2023 | Marrakech 2023



The 15th TFL Meeting Event has kicked off in Turin, with 30 feature film projects in the showcase

Between 24 and 26 November, TorinoFilmLab is presenting the new edition of the international co-production market and its projects developed in 2022 ▶

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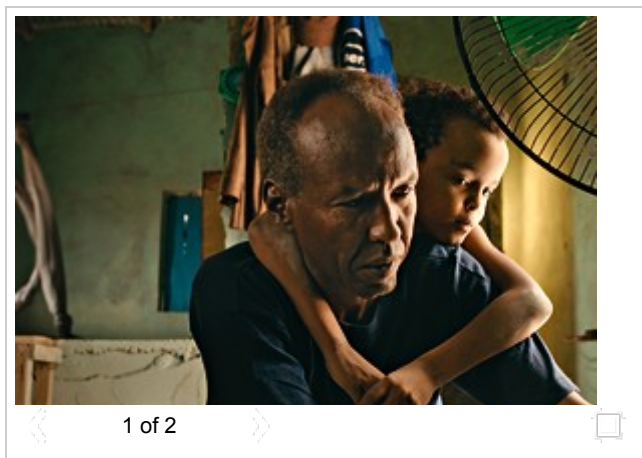
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international title: The Village Next to Paradise

original title: The Village Next to Paradise

country: Austria, France, Germany, Somalia

sales agent: Totem Films

year: 2024

directed by: Mo Harawe

screenplay: Mo Harawe

cast: Canab Axmed Ibraahin, Ahmed Mohamoud Salleban, Axmen Cali Faarax

main awards/selection

Cannes 2024 Un Certain Regard

full film profile

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