

CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An Independent film society based in Chelmsford

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Capernaum 2018

Lebanon/France/USA 126 Minutes

Director: Nadine Labaki

Writers: Nadine Labaki, Jihad Hojeily, Michelle Keserwany

Cast:

Zain Al Rafeea: *Zain*; Yordanos Shiferaw: *Rahil*; Boluwatife Treasure Bankole: *Yonas*;
Kawsar Al Haddad: *Souad*; Fadi Yousef: *Selim*; Cedra Izzam: *Sahar*

Nadine Labaki's film *Capernaum* (meaning chaos, or confusion, in Arabic) opens with a young convict being taken from prison into court; but not to face trial for some heinous crime (that case has already concluded) – instead he is suing his parents for having giving birth to him. If the court room scenes that open and close the film are contrived and implausible, the story that unfolds in between; a story of poverty and deprivation, of street children and illegal immigrants (both of whom lack official documentation and are, therefore, legally non-existent) is, in turns, breath-taking, harrowing, hilarious, tender and brutal.

Very few of the cast are professional actors, but Labaki worked with them, developing the film over six months by incorporating the cast's own personal experiences into the story, so they are to various extents recreating their own everyday existence. *Zain Al Rafeea*, an undocumented, uneducated, Syrian refugee (12-years old, but so malnourished, he could easily pass as a skinny 8-year-old) was working as a delivery boy when cast as the lead. *Yordanos Shifera*, an Eritrean refugee, who plays illegal immigrant, Rahil, was herself detained during filming (some of the prison scenes were shot when she was genuinely under detention), delaying the shoot by several months. CFC members have in the past commented in the reaction slips, about the exceptional performances of the child stars (take *Shoplifters* and *Custody*, both shown this season, as examples) – tonight, folks, we present a whole troupe of them!

Since making this film, Al Rafeea and his parents have moved to Norway, where he attends drama school, hoping one day to become a professional actor. No longer undocumented – he now has a Norwegian passport. His infant co-star, Treasure, is now living in Kenya with her parents – whilst in Lebanon, she was non-existent – as the daughter of two migrant workers who, legally, did not have the right to bear children.

Our next presentation:

[Foxtrot](#) will be shown on Monday, 02 March, starting at 8:00pm.