

Document Citation

Title	Teenage nightmare
Author(s)	Michael Atkinson Michael Atkinson
Source	<i>Village Voice</i>
Date	2004 Feb 18
Type	review
Language	English English
Pagination	C64
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Abouna (Our father), Haroun, Mahamat-Saleh, 2002

A lyrical drama and an intimate doc contemplate the placelessness of African teenagers

Two new films, African in their sympathies and traumatized materials if not necessarily in production fact, both glance off the state of life in Chad, and both ruefully contemplate the placelessness of teenage boys. Lyrical and stoic, Mahamat-Saleh Haroun's *Abouna* is the less political film, set on the western frontier of Chad (that much farther way from

the hellfire of Sudan), and focused on the vacuum left by vanishing fathers. Fifteen-year-old Tahir (Ahidjo Mahamat Moussa) and eight-year-old Amine (Hamza Moctar Aguid) are two brothers waking up to find their dad's bed empty and mother (Zara Haroun, no relation) not talking. It's a universalized setup—in Africa as elsewhere, fathers often leave to find work in neighboring countries, find none, and in shame, never return—but director Haroun, a Chad native educated in Paris, goes for a dry mix of Kiarostamian simplicity and the Iranian master's cine-reflexivity. The boys go to the cinema, and from the movie their father greets them, compelling the pair to later steal the print—rolling it back home like a stray bicycle wheel—and scour it for physical proof of the experience.

As any theorist will tell you, it's a doomed mission, and the search for paternal connection eventually leads the brothers to the Cameroon border and other fruitless landscapes in the mist. Throughout, Chad is affectionately visualized as an Eden of tropical colors and sun-dappled glades; this isn't the dusty sub-Saharan west of Sembene or Cisse. By way of a tragic left hook, Haroun's relaxed movie climaxes back where it began, on the devastated home ground. The journey, however pessimistic, is like a gentle handshake.

Village Voice, 2/18-2/24/04, p 64

TEENAGE NIGHTMARE

BY MICHAEL ATKINSON

/ABOUNA

Written and directed by
Mahamat-Saleh Haroun

Leisure Time

Opens February 20, Quad

LOST BOYS OF SUDAN

Directed by Megan Mylan
and Jon Shenk

Shadow

February 18 through March 2
Film Forum