

A movie poster for the film 'MARCO'. The background is a photograph of two men in a bedroom. In the foreground, a man with a beard and short dark hair (Zed Josef) is shown from the chest up, looking off to the left. In the background, another man with dark hair (Marwan Kaabour) is lying on a bed, looking towards the camera. The lighting is soft and intimate. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

ZED JOSEF

MARWAN KAABOUR

MARCO

A FILM BY SALEEM HADDAD

PRESS KIT

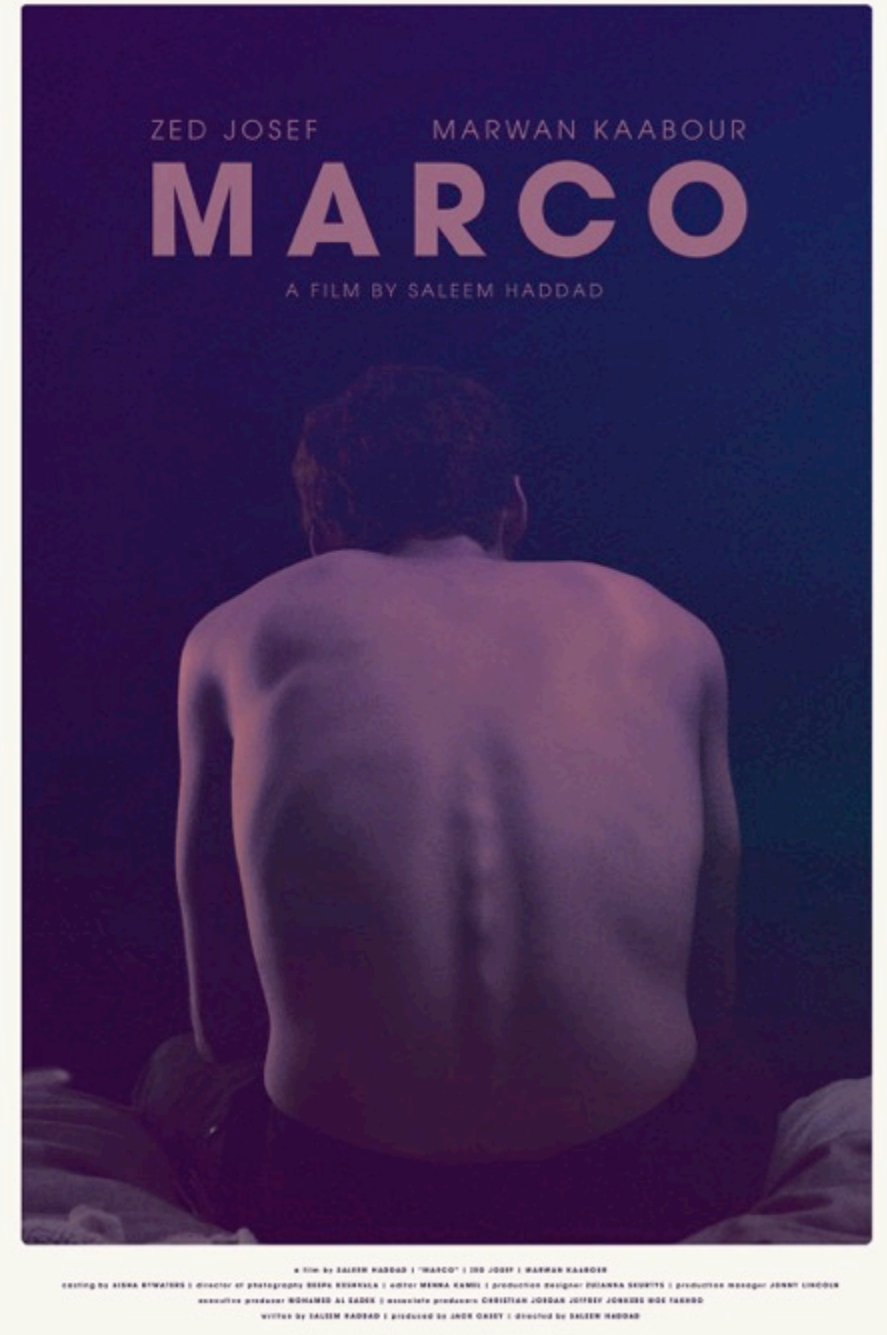
Written & directed by SALEEM HADDAD
Produced JACK CASEY
Cinematography by DEEPA KESHVALA
Casting by AISHA BYWATERS
Editing by MENNA KAMEL

Starring ZED JOSEF & MARWAN KAABOUR



2018
Drama
22 minutes
Arabic, English (with English subtitles)

For all queries, and to request high-res stills, please contact shortfilmmarco@gmail.com





Long Synopsis:

Omar has been living in London for a decade. He spends his days working in the City, and his nights ignoring phone calls from his family back in Lebanon. One evening, restless after another pleading voicemail from his mother, he reaches for his phone and invites over Marco, a Spanish student newly-arrived in London, who's doing sex work to earn some extra cash. But when Marco arrives, Omar can't shake the feeling that something's not right about the young man. As their night together progresses truths are revealed, defences are lowered, and Omar discovers the lengths that Marco has gone to in reaching London...

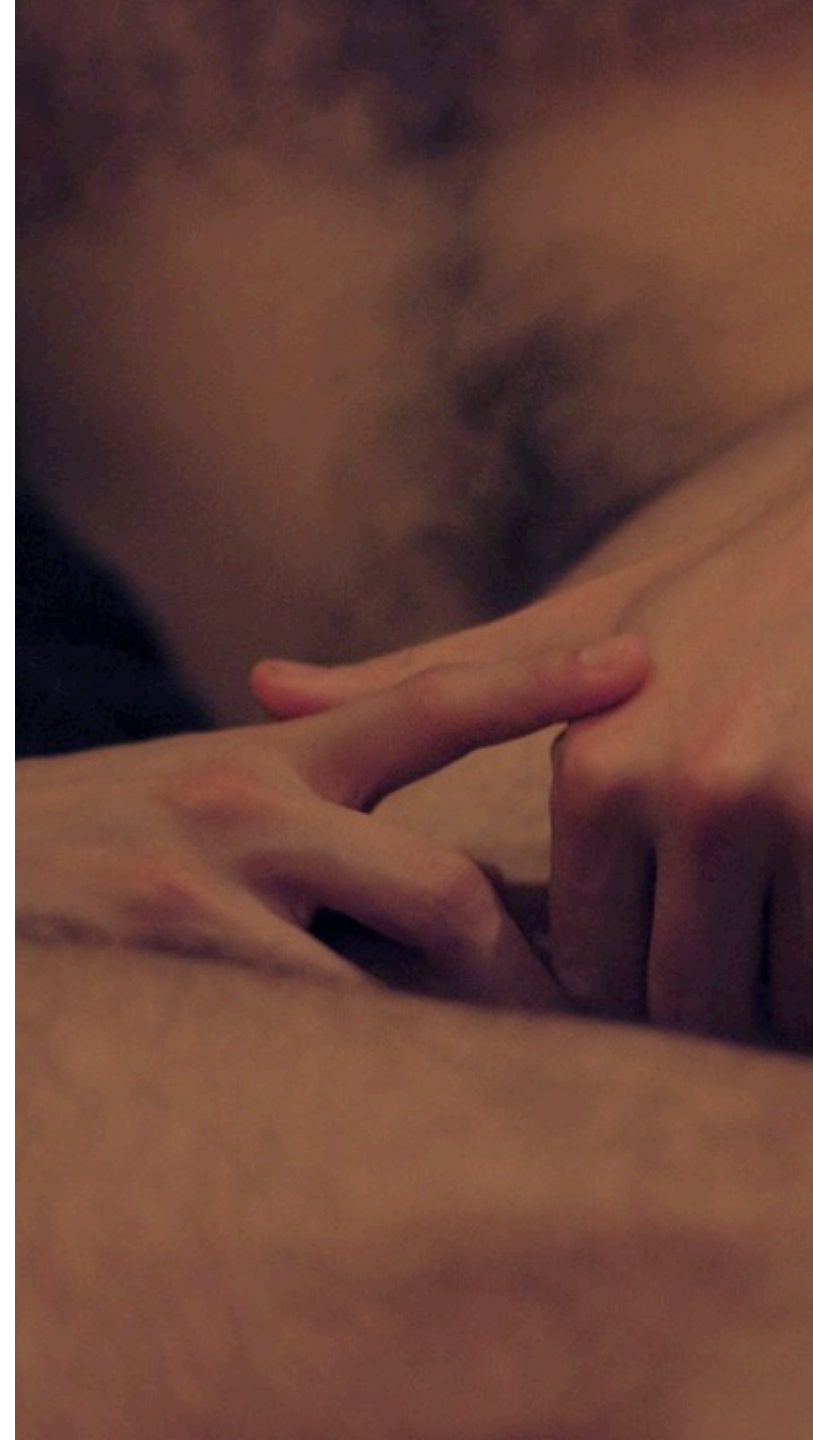
Short Synopsis:

Omar lives a lonely life in London. One evening he meets Marco, a Spanish student newly-arrived in town. As their night together progresses, the truth of Marco's journey to London will change Omar forever.

Logline:

When a banker invites a male sex worker to his London apartment, he finds himself coming face to face with both his own past, and one of the world's largest humanitarian crises.

SYNOPSIS



Saleem and Jack began developing *Marco* in the summer of 2017. Inspired by an article Saleem had published the previous year entitled *The Myth of a Queer Arab Life*, the origin of the script finds its inspiration in real-life events, transplanting them from Beirut to London. It is a story about modern-day London, identity, alienation and the search for intimacy.

In November 2017, the Kickstarter campaign for *Marco* was launched. The team reached their funding goal in an astonishing eight days, with 100 people backing the campaign by its conclusion.

Saleem and Jack worked with casting director Aisha Bywaters (*Black Mirror*, *Robot & Scarecrow*, *Postcards From London*) on an open call to find the film's leads. They auditioned professional and non-professional actors around the UK and beyond, before casting Bristol Old Vic graduate Zed Josef as Omar, and graphic designer Marwan Kaabour in his first film role as Marco.

Marco was shot by cinematographer Deepa Keshvala, who trained under the award-winning cinematographer Robbie Ryan. Deepa brings her trademark intimate, emotionally-charged handheld style to the film, which shot over three days in London in the summer of 2018.

Having completed post-production on the film in October 2018, the team are thrilled to have secured a live version of Lebanese band Mashrou' Leila's song 'Marrikh' for the film's closing credits.

The film had its World Premiere at Mawjoudin Queer Film Festival in Tunis Tunisia, and its European Premiere at BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival, both in March 2019.

THE STORY

EN, NIGHT
ing his pajama bottoms with a d
der, is cooking scrambled eggs
n the counter next to a bottle
t is in an ashtray. Omar plate
front of Ahmed.

OMAR
صحتين

Sal

tches as Ahmed eats, a sli
n't speak for a while. Ahr
en looks up and sees that
with gratitude.

AHMED
كثير طيب... و مع السماق عليها، زي ما
بيبتنا... شكرا... عن جد.

OMAR

...ن

ar smiles knowing!
is also slar



Saleem Haddad's first novel, *Guapa*, was published in 2016. A political and personal coming-of-age story of a young gay man living through the Arab Spring, the novel received critical acclaim from the Guardian ("explosive... as compelling as it is insightful"), the New Yorker ("a vibrant, wrenching debut"), and others. Described as the 'Arab Tennessee Williams', in 2017 Haddad was awarded a Stonewall Honour and won the Polari First Book Prize. He was also selected as one of the top 100 Global Thinkers of 2016 by Foreign Policy Magazine, and as one of 'five young Arab writers to watch' by the New York Times. *Marco* is his directorial debut.



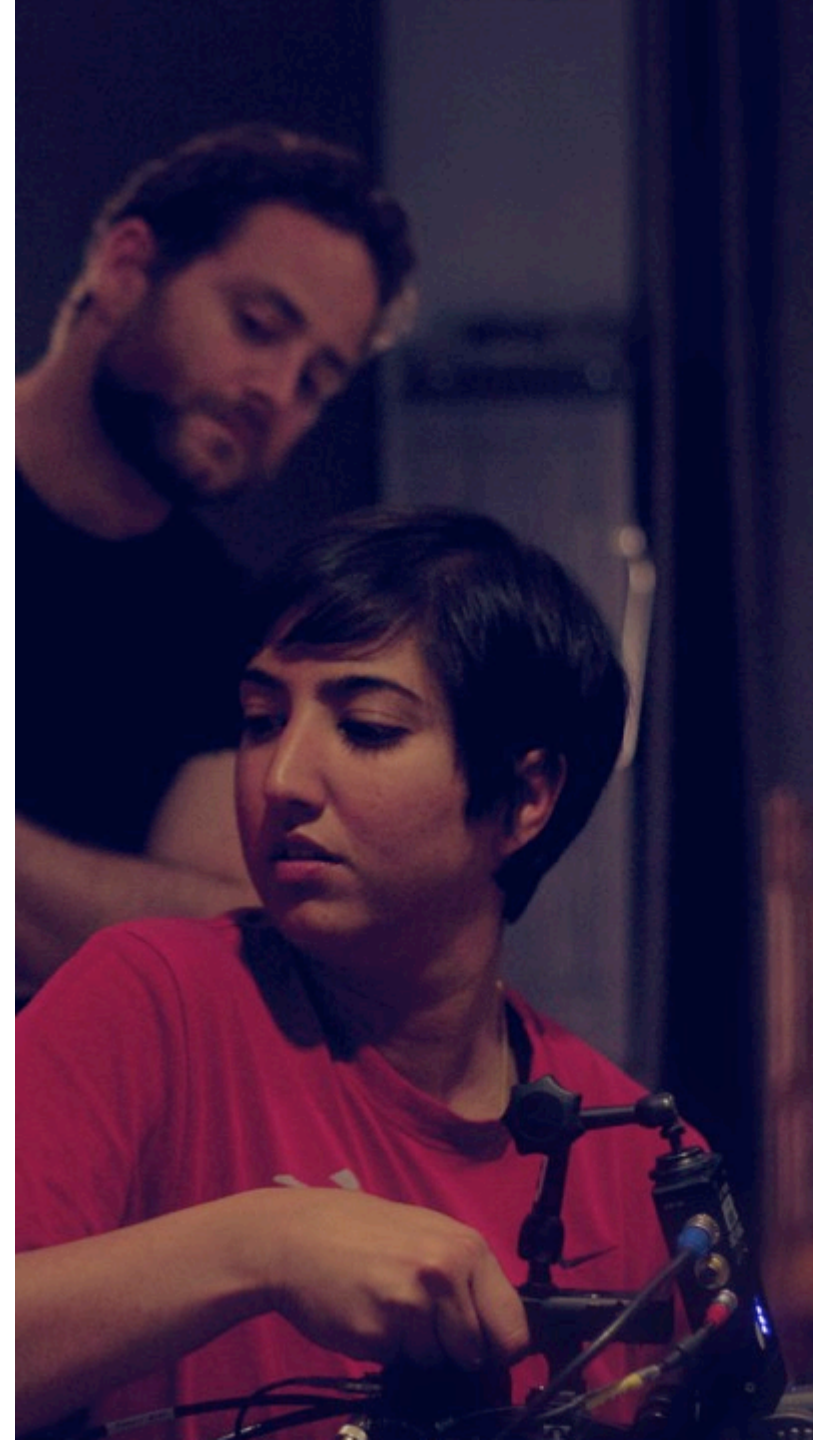
DIRECTOR



Jack Casey is a script editor and development producer, working with new and emerging filmmakers in the UK, Ireland and the US. Recent projects include Harry Lighton's BAFTA-nominated *Wren Boys*. He has worked in talent development for BFI NETWORK, BAFTA, the BBC, the UK Film Council and the Virgin Media Shorts Competition. Jack also has a decade of experience in exhibition, working for festivals including the BFI London Film Festival, BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival, Sheffield Doc/Fest and Sundance London. *Marco* is his first film as producer.

Deepa Keshvala trained under the award-winning cinematographer Robbie Ryan and on productions including *Catch Me Daddy*, *Pride*, and *The Riot Club*. She has shot commercials for brands such as Burberry, Nike, Stella McCartney and Selfridges, and shorts including Bafic's *808 Ink Portrait*, Dear Mr Quistgaard's *Slender Bodies*, and Nadia Latif's *White Girl*.

TEAM



Zed Josef – Omar

Zed is a graduate of the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. His credits include Fox TV drama *Tyrant*; Sarah Joyce's *Scar Test* at Soho Theatre, Lindsay Posner's *Dinner with Saddam* at Menier Chocolate Factory; short films including Sandeep A. Varma's *The Disguise*, Gabriel Calderwood's *Memories of the Seagulls*; and features including Robert M. Cluesman's *Flasher* and Matt Gambell's *Milk & Honey*. He also plays a central role in artist Shezad Dawood's *Leviathan*, an ongoing series of films exploring marine ecology and migration.

Marwan Kaabour – Marco

Marwan is a London-based graphic designer. Following an open-call for the role, Marwan was cast as Marco in his acting debut.

CAST



