

BYRON  
BAY  
FILM  
FESTIVAL 10

## Boat People by Gail Knight

In *Boat People*, the conundrum of just how much they should assist a fleeing refugee is put squarely at the feet of a wealthy couple on their luxurious catamaran.

Our protagonist, Moussa, is a Somali man who has left his family behind to seek safety and paid work in Europe. Our first true glimpse of him is as he floats aimlessly in the Mediterranean, clasping a puffed out orange garbage bag containing a few possessions.

Importantly, it's what's inside the bag that keeps him afloat in this new world of suspicion – a photo of his wife and daughters, Amalia and Sophia, which he produces to the couple, Hannes and Gerlinde, to prove he is genuine.

The couple's initial concern spirals into doubt and fear as Moussa makes it clear he can't be turned over to the authorities to spend years in a refugee camp: his family needs him now.

Paul Meschùh, the writer and director of this dramatic short film seems keen to see two disparate worlds smash into each other. From the garbage bag serving as a life buoy to the bedraggled asylum seeker recovering on a plush catamaran bed, but only after Gerlinde has placed towels down to protect the linen.

The ending threatens to steal your breath away for a number of reasons, causing some to wonder who the boat people are that need saving.

