

The Lunchbox

Cert PG India 2013 104 mins

Crew

Director/
Screenplay Ritesh Batra
Cinematography Michael Simmonds
Film Editing John F. Lyons
Original music Max Richter

Cast

Irrfan Khan Saajan Fernandez
Nimrat Kaur Ila
Nawazuddin Siddiqui Shaikh
Denzil Smith Mr. Shroff
Bharati Achrekar Mrs. Deshpande
Lillete Dubey Ila's mother

Synopsis

Mumbai, the present. Ila, a lonely housewife, prepares a delectable lunch for her disinterested husband, and sends it to him via one of India's horde of usually reliable lunchbox deliverymen.

But there's a glitch in the system, and the lunchbox lands on the desk of Saajan, a dour widower on the brink of retirement from his drab accounting job.

Saajan, who usually gets his meals from a cheap restaurant, is delighted with the wonderful food, but realises the mistake, and sends a note explanation to Ila - and so begins a correspondence, and an unexpected friendship....



Booking Information

Distributor: Artificial Eye

DVD bookings: via BFI Bookings Unit
0207 957 8935

bookings.films@bfi.org.uk
www.bfi.org.uk/distribution

Available: July 2014



Reviews

The Lunchbox, Indian director Ritesh Batra's debut, is a witty and perceptive film that reveals the hopes, sorrows and regrets of ordinary people. Batra, also the film's screenwriter, has created a touching and credible story that easily draws the viewer into the lives of its characters.

All the usual flash and color of India is absent here. In its place are the simple actions of everyday life. Saajan's days become about waiting for the lunchbox; the evenings are spent with a book and a packaged dinner in his dimly lit apartment. Ila gets her daughter ready for school, washes clothes by hand and begins to suspect her husband is having an affair. Their epistolary friendship helps Ila and Saajan see other possibilities in life.

Batra uses this quietly lovely film as a showcase for his actors. Khan (*Life of Pi*), an actor who has an easy, graceful way in front of the camera, gives one of his best and most understated performances. The lovely Kaur gets every nuance right in her portrayal of an isolated wife and mother trying to figure out the next chapter of her life. And Nawazuddin Siddiqui, as the apprentice who takes over Saajan's job, is the perfect comic foil.

Mary Houlihan, Chicago Sun-Times, March 2014

Batra isn't ambitious with the visuals, but he creates an effective, unfussy sense of urban space, both indoor (cramped apartments, crowded buses) and outdoor (even leafy residential streets seem to be swarming with playing children). He also gently pushes his story beyond its cutesy gustatory-epistolary gimmick to ponder how much — or little — room individuals have to pursue personal desires in deeply tradition-bound Indian society.

The Lunchbox proceeds modestly and with minimal pandering (there are few mouthwatering food shots and even fewer jokey one-liners) to a satisfyingly bittersweet conclusion. It also comes up with a terrific supporting character in Shaikh (Nawazuddin Siddiqui), Saajan's sweet-tempered chatterbox of a protégé at work. Theirs is the relationship worth rooting for.

Jon Frosch, Village Voice, March 2014

Awards, commendations, accolades

2013 Cannes Film Festival: **Critics Week Viewers Choice**
Dubai Film Festival : **Best Actor (Irrfan Khan); Best Feature Film.**
Asia-Pacific Film Festival 2013: **Best Screenplay; Best Supporting Actor; Outstanding Achievement Award - Irrfan Khan**