

## Movie Review: Little Zizou

By Shubhra Gupta | *The Indian Express* | March 13 2009

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**Cast:** Boman Irani, Sohrab Ardeshir, Jahan Batlivala, Imaad Shah, Shernaz Patel, Xenobia Shroff

**Director:** Sooni Taraporevala

There are a few things Little Zizou, ardent football fan and motherless boy, wants. He wants Big Zizou, aka Zinedane Zidane, to come to Mumbai. He wants his older brother Art to tell him if his mother 'really really' saw him, before she passed on. He wants attention from his father Cyrus the Second, who makes a healthy if hysterical living propagating that Parsis should never be 'polluted' by mixing and mingling with other blood-streams. Above all, he wants to be loved.

Sooni Taraporevala, long-time associate of Mira Nair, and experienced script-writer, has come up with a marvellous first feature. She focuses on the Parsi community in Mumbai, because that's what she knows best. Being an insider, she makes smart use of all the Bawa jokes that we're familiar with (one Gujarati trader puts a finger to his head, moves it around in a cyclical motion, and says, 'all Bawas are mad') Taraporevala, a certified Bawi herself, wins that one hands down, as she lines up all the eccentric Bawas and Bawis that she knows, or can think of, and makes of them characters who are alive and warm and supremely engaging.

The only non-Parsi in this gang is Imaad Shah, who does a great job of playing Art, owner of a Bawa blog, and writer of vitriolic stuff about his tyrannical father (Sohrab).

The latter has time for everyone else, including an assistant (Shernaz) who spends all her energies in pleasing him, but can spare no affection for his offspring. Then there's Boman Presswala (Boman) who stands for liberalism and inclusion. The clash between the two men and their opposing values creates the tensions in the film, and they are resolved in surprising if satisfactory ways.

Meanwhile, Sooni has fun with her cast. The kids, played by her own son (Jahan) and daughter (Iyanah), are beautifully natural. Boman, as the singing-dancing 'presswala' does one of his best turns; his wife, played by the pitch-perfect Xenobia Shroff, fits right in. Catch Cyrus Broacha in a fun cameo, and John Abraham flexing his dishy muscles.

The flavours are acute, and the director does both sweet and sharp with equal dexterity. 'Little Zizou' is a film to be savoured. What's next, Sooni?