

38th SEASON**ENGLISH FILM CLUB 2017/18****Locarno, Cinema Kursaal****18.15****Friday, 24 November 2017****LION 2016**

118 minutes

Directed by **Garth Davies**

Starring: Dev Patel, Nicole Kidman, Rooney Mara and David Brierley

The film, based on a true story, opens with five-year-old Saroo standing on a hilltop, looking at a swarm of butterflies. His older brother, Guddu, encourages him to come along. Guddu sneaks on top of a coal train and steals coal. Saroo joins him. An officer yells at them and Saroo jumps off after the train goes through a tunnel.

Saroo and Guddu go into the village to sell the coal. We are told it is Kahandwa Village (central India) in the year 1986. Saroo sees hot peppers for sale and notes that he wants some; Guddu tells him he will have some one day. At the moment, they are only able to get some milk and some money. They return to their village and find their little sister, Shekila and their mother Kamla. Kamla asks where they got the milk. They don't give her an answer. The next day, Kamla leaves to collect rocks, which she does for a living. Guddu is going to leave for a week to help lift bales of hay and Saroo asks to be taken along, to which Guddu agrees. They walk amongst the train tracks to the next city. They get to the nearby train station late at night, which becomes empty after the last train of the night arrives.

Saroo says he's tired and wants to sleep so he lies down on a bench. Guddu comments that Saroo is too young to be able to endure night work and he shouldn't have brought him. He tells Saroo he's going to check on the worksite and says he'll be back for him. Guddu steps down into the now empty train tracks, with a giant water tower in the distance, while Saroo goes back to sleep. But when he wakes up, his brother isn't there.

Saroo walks the train yard calling out for his brother. He looks around a train. The next morning, we see Saroo has crawled onto the train and fallen asleep. The next day he calls out for Guddu, assuming he must be on the train, but no one is there with him. Saroo quickly learns there are bars on the window and no way to exit the compartment he's in. The train passes through a city and he screams at someone to help him get out; an Indian child just stares at him, unmoving. An announcement is made at train stations that the train is out of operation and not carrying passengers so the train will not stop. When the train finally does stop, it's in Calcutta, 1,000 miles away from Saroo's home.

Saroo does not speak Bengali, only Hindi, and lives on the street of the big city. One day, a young man takes Saroo to the police station and he is sent to an institution for children. In 1987, Saroo is adopted by an Australian family and moves to ...

Critics' comments:

- This big-hearted film does full justice to the horror, the pathos and the drama of this postmodern odyssey. (from *The Guardian*)

- The film puts us up close to Saroo's fear and sense of dislocation as he encounters various threats in the big city, from dangerous traffic to sexual predators. And it's impossible not to melt in the presence of Sunny Pawar, who plays little Saroo. It's this section of the film that's the most powerful as director Garth Davis plunges us into the reality of the vast unfriendly metropolis, and cinematographer Greig Fraser creates some memorable shots of the huge, unwelcoming city at night. (from *TimeOut*)

- Patel's performance carries the weight of the second half of the film so well, you may overlook how badly the two parts of the film are married. Now everyone talks — a lot — and as they do, the eloquence of the story is imperilled. Where Davis and Davies were able to achieve sweep and dimension in Saroo's initial separation from his mother and brother, now they rely on series of quick, underdeveloped scenes that may momentarily capture our curiosity but are so fleeting we can't really invest in anything except Saroo's determination to find out how he became lost all those years before. (from *San Francisco Chronicle*)

