

Best Foreign Films, 2008 - Little Zizou

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Shown to great appreciation as the concluding film of the Mahindra Indo-American Arts Council Film Festival in New York in November, the film marks the auspicious debut of the distinguished scriptwriter Sooni Taraporevala as a director.

The film received the best picture and best screenplay award at the festival. This film could become a sleeper hit not only in India but abroad, too. A parable that shows the futility of moral certitude, it is never dogmatic. Finely performed by a cast of new and old, especially by the director's children -- Iyanah Battivala and Jahan Battivala -- and Boman Irani, it is set in a Parsi community that is seeing a battle between reformers and dogmatic elements.

It could be the story of any conflicted community. There is never a dull moment here, and the message that love is the biggest transformer is delivered gently. The title of the film refers to a young boy, who hopes that his long-dead mother would bring his idol and French soccer star, Zinedine Zidane (Zizou), to Mumbai.

John Abraham turns up in a few key scenes, and offers a delightful performance. The confrontation between his character and that of a Mumbai policeman is utterly charming. Mira Nair, with whom Taraporevala has collaborated in several distinguished films, including *The Namesake* and *Salaam Bombay*, presents the film.