

Little Zizou

By Nandini Ramnath | *Timeout* | March 06 - 19, 2009

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★★★★

Dir: Sooni Taraporevala. Cast: Boman Irani, Zenobia Shroff, Sohrab Ardeshir, Jahan Batlivala, Shemaz Patel, Imaad Shah, Iyanah Batlivala, Dilshad Patel.
1 hour 41 mins. @

Screenplay writer Sooni Taraporevala rummages in her backyard for her directorial debut in time-honoured fashion. What a good thing it is too. *Little Zizou* is a delicious slice-of-life comedy that benefits greatly from its maker's intimacy with her subject. In *Little Zizou*, Taraporevala, who is a Parsi, shines a light on her community's past, present and future. The warm and witty first feature attempts to define the essence of Parsiness and argues that this Parsiness is under attack from fundamentalists. Taraporevala's plea for liberal values may be universal, but it is *Little Zizou's* specificity that makes it distinctive.

In a movie bursting with characters and incidents, the field



belongs to knee-high Xerxes (Jahan Batlivala), the son of Cyrus II Khodaiji, a rabble-raising priest who urges a return to conservatism. Standing up to Khodaiji is Boman Pressvala (Boman Irani), the publisher of a community newspaper. Xerxes's elder brother, Art (Imaad Shah), is old enough to ignore his father and move on to other pursuits, such as cartooning, eying Pressvala's daughter Zenobia (Dilshad Patel) and hanging out with his buddy Tito (Tknow Francorsi). As Khodaiji's campaign gains

ground, Art's heart gets broken and Xerxes gets grief from Pressvala's daughter Liana (Iyanah Batlivala), who resents his closeness to her mother Roxanne (Zenobia Shroff). Each member of the cast performs superbly, with top honours going to Jahan Batlivala, Irani and Shroff.

Little Zizou appears to be the result of years spent observing the habits and quirks of ordinary people. Taraporevala brings to the movie a wealth of observation, and cinematographer Himman Dhamija captures rich details and colours. Under the good-natured humour is a quiet lament about the loss of a certain way of life, but Taraporevala reminds us ever so often about a crucial aspect of Parsiness: joie de vivre. Through her everyday characters, she emphasises how special her community is, and what will be lost if it is allowed to shrink into nothingness. *NR*

Little Zizou opens on Fri Mar 13. Also see Feature on page 18.