

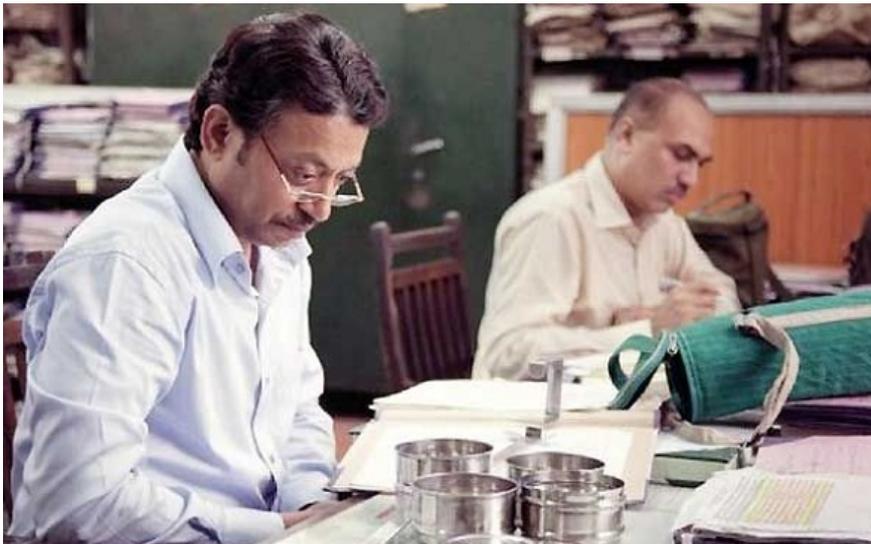


TIFF 2013 Film Review: The Lunchbox

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Film Review by Preeti Thandi

Ritesh Batra's **The Lunchbox** is the kind of film that makes you hungry and leaves you craving for more.



In this delish offering at TIFF 2013, Batra tosses in a few simple ingredients but just like the four-tier lunchbox, the film has varied layers and that pleasure, which comes from discovering what's under the lid. A minor mistaken lunchbox delivery leads to what forms the inner crust of the film. But who would think that a mistaken delivery would lead to a romance?

More than **200,000 lunchboxes or Dabbas are delivered to people at work in Mumbai** by a network of 5,000 Dabbawallahs or deliverymen. A case study by the Harvard Business School on the Dabbawallahs noted that **only one in a million lunchboxes is misdelivered**. The film is a story about that one in a million and features **Irrfan Khan, Nimrat Kaur** and **Nawazuddin Siddiqui**. As it happens, the delivery error connects two complete strangers **Sajan Fernandes** (Irrfan Khan) and **Ila** (Nimrat Kaur). They begin exchanging notes in the lunchbox.



Just like the journey of the lunchbox, the film also follows the commute of the everyday common man packed in Mumbai's crowded trains. Yet somehow as the two lead characters Sajan Fernandes (Irrfan Khan) and Ila (Nimrat Kaur) spell it out, "Sometimes the wrong train gets you to the right station."

Batra depicts the nuances of mundane life with a sweet and tangy twist, which is at the same time endearing and humorous. As Sajan savours Ila's home cooked meals, the audience can partake the ensuing aroma and even the spice level in every dish! As the lunchbox letters continue, the lid also comes off their inner thoughts. Saajan aptly sums it up, "We forget things if we have no one to tell them to."



Irrfan Khan, as always is truly remarkable in his portrayal of the character of Saajan, an accountant nearing retirement. Nimrat Kaur has done an impeccable job in depicting the middle class housewife and it is hard to know that she has just appeared in a few films including **Peddlers** at TIFF last year. **Nawazuddin Siddiqui** plays a trainee named **Shaikh** in Saajan's office and has just the right amount of flattery juniors use to please their superiors in the workplace. Quite a shift from Siddiqui's role in **Gangs of Wasseypur II** featured at TIFF last year, it just speaks volumes about the actor's range.

It's hard to imagine that *The Lunchbox* is Batra's feature debut. Right from the characterization to the screenplay and the use of music and songs, which actually have a meaning and connection with the storyline, Batra is truly commendable. He also effectively uses nostalgic elements from the 80s in the film. But it is Khan who enhances the beauty and flavor of this unlikely romance.

The Lunchbox has been receiving rave reviews and **won the popular Cannes Critics' Week Viewer's Choice Award**, it was part of **Telluride Film Festival's** line-up this year and is a high buzz Gala Presentation at TIFF 2013.