

## **'Lion' is a powerful true story**

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun  
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**Rating: ««« out of 4 stars**

**Running Time: 118 min.**

Every once in a while, a movie comes along that you can't help but embrace. It may feature a by-the-numbers plot and be completely obvious in its manipulations, but somehow it all still works. Such is the case with *Lion*, a family drama/tearjerker that really got to me. This is remarkable, considering that as events were progressing I knew exactly what it was trying to do.

This story (based on real events) begins with young Saroo (Sunny Pawar) a five-year old boy living in a remote village with his family in India. While looking for work with his brother on the rail yard, he accidentally boards a train and ends up traveling a distance of over 1600 kilometers. As an adult (played by Dev Patel) living in Australia, he begins using online maps and his own memories in an attempt to reconnect to his long lost family.

The child playing the young version of Saroo is incredibly endearing and charismatic as he struggles to survive the slums of Calcutta and the many strangers out to manipulate and abuse him. And Patel is exceptional as the adult version in the second half of the feature, perfectly communicating the complicated emotions one would possess from both losing your entire family and a significant part of your personal history.

Patel gives an exceptional performance that plays off of the many sensations of being incomplete. They're balanced with pangs of guilt that Saroo feels about how his caring, adopted family will react to his desire to reconnect with his birth mother. It's a difficult part to pull off, but the actor is extremely sympathetic and relatable. One particular scene, which involves an

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outburst of tears on several different levels as information is relayed to him over a period of a few minutes, is exemplary.

Equally impressive is the photography. Whether it's the beautiful locations, the lead character surrounded by butterflies near his remote village, or running through the street-light corners of Calcutta, it all looks gorgeous. The score includes a simple but memorable piano melody that builds to help make the final act even bigger and more gut-wrenching. All the elements work together beautifully, building to a moving finale.

Very little of this story is surprising. Yes, this is one of the weepy movies that has its characters in tears on several occasions. However, the performances, cinematography, score and editing all work together so effectively that the result is a completely engrossing experience. As much as I knew exactly what was coming (and cursing myself for feeling so involved), I couldn't help but fight back a few tears during the finale. In fact, I was actually grateful when a goofy end-credits pop song came on to return me to a more sharp-eyed state.

What can I say? It just worked for me. This may not be the most original tale ever told, but when it is told this well, it doesn't matter. *Lion* is a really special film that should engage all but the most cynical of viewers.

***By Glenn Kay  
For the Sun***