

FILM REVIEW: Curious Adoptee Tracks Down Birth-Mom in 'Lion'

By Kam Williams
For The Skanner News

Saroo (Dev Patel) had the misfortune of being born into poverty in India's Khandwa district. He lived there with his single-mom, Kamla (Priyanka Bose), along with his big brother, Guddu (Abhishek Bharate), and younger sister, Shekila (Khushi Solanki).

His illiterate mother was reduced to carrying rocks for a living, and she could barely afford to keep a roof over their heads. So, when Guddu found a night job hauling bales of hay, Saroo leapt at the chance to contribute, too, even though he was obviously a little small.

And he promptly fell asleep after the long ride to the worksite sitting on his brother's bike's handlebars. "It's my fault," Guddu lamented, before leaving Saroo alone to spend the night on a train station bench.

Trouble is, when Guddu failed to return by daybreak, the frantic 5 year-old inadvertently stowed away aboard a freight train headed to Bengal, a port-of-call 1,600 miles east. Upon arriving, Saroo couldn't get any help from strangers, between his not speaking the language and his mispronouncing the name of his hometown, "Ganestalay."

Consequently, he ended up struggling to survive on the streets until he landed in a local orphanage. Since Saroo didn't know his own



Dev Patel plays Saroo who finds his birth mother in India.

last name or where he was from, he was ultimately shipped off to Melbourne to meet Sue (Nicole Kidman) and John Brierley (David Wenham), an Australian couple eager to adopt him.

For the next quarter-century, he enjoyed an idyllic life, whether playing cricket, swimming in a cove off the ocean, or dating Lucy (Rooney Mara), a lovely Aussie lassie. All was well until the fateful evening a childhood memory was triggered during a dinner of Indian food.

Suddenly curious about his roots, Saroo was subsequently encouraged by Lucy to use Google Earth to find the spot on the planet that he hailed from. Once he recognized a few familiar places from his formative years, all that was left to do was to hop back on a plane and reunite with his

long-lost family.

Adapted from Saroo Brierley's autobiography, "A Long Way Home," "Lion" is a heartbreaking biopic that definitely packs an emotional punch, thanks to powerful performances by Sunny Pawar and Dev Patel as the young and adult Saroo, respectively. The supporting cast features equally-evocative turns by Rooney Mara and Nicole Kidman as the women who played pivotal roles in the protagonist's life Down Under.

A bittersweet variation on the "I was lost, but now I'm found" theme of the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Excellent ★★★★★

Rated PG-13 for mature themes

and some sensuality

FILM REVIEW: '20th Century Women' a Vivid Triptych of Personal Portraits



'20th Century Women' is set in 70's Santa Barbara.

By Kam Williams
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Written and directed by Mike Mills (Beginners), "20th Century Women" is an inter-generational coming-of-age tale set in Santa Barbara, California in 1979. The nostalgic ensemble drama revolves around the efforts of a neurotic single-mom (Annette Bening) to parent a naive 15 year-old (Lucas Jade Zumann) in dire need of a role model.

The picture's protagonist is Dorothea Fields, a middle-aged chain-smoker who owns the dilapidated rooming house where the bulk of the story is set. Paradoxically, she recruits a couple of considerably-younger women, Abbie (Greta Gerwig)

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The Salesman (PG-13 for mature themes and a brief bloody image) Crime thriller, set in Tehran, about an Iranian couple (Taraneh Alidoosti and Shahab Hosseini), appearing in a local production of Death of a Salesman, whose relationship is tested when the wife is raped right after they move into a new apartment. With Babak Karimi, Mina Sadati and Emad Emami. (In Persian with subtitles)

Un Padre No Tan Padre (PG-13 for profanity, drug use and partial nudity) Dysfunctional family comedy about a cranky 85 year-old (Hector Bonilla) forced to move into his long-estranged son's (Benny Ibarra) hippie commune after getting kicked out of his retirement home. Support cast includes Zamia Fandino, Camila Selser and Eduardo Tanus. (In Spanish with subtitles)

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FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM (PG-13) Fri-Thur: 11:40, 2:25, 4:00, 6:45	THEM! (1954) (NR) Fri-Thur: 5:10, 9:40 \$4.00 adults, \$3.00 senior citizens (65+), \$3.00 for kids (12 & under)

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