



THE LUNCHBOX

(Dabba)

Autumn
Season
2014

Release: 2013

Cert (UK): PG

Language: Hindi and English

Runtime: 104 mins

Director & writer: Ritesh Batra

Cinematographer: Michael Simmonds

Cast: Irrfan Khan, Nimrat Kaur, Nawazuddin Siddiqui



The story of *The Lunchbox* is charmingly simple – a mistake in the delivery of a carefully cooked lunch for her husband marks the beginning of a relationship with a curmudgeonly accountant on the cusp of his retirement – yet it opens up the complexities of life in Mumbai and how easy it is to be lonely in a city of millions. As the story gently unfolds it showcases the famous Mumbai Dabbahwallahs and their phenomenal

achievement of delivering thousands of tiffins across the city each day.

Ila (Nimrat Kaur) is trying to use the old adage that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach as she struggles to get her workaholic husband (Nakul Vaid) to notice her. She's ably assisted in her endeavours by her upstairs neighbour, Mrs Despande (Bharati Achrekar) who supplies spices and recipes along with useful homely advice. We never see Mrs Despande, but only hear her voice, although there is the added bonus of hearing her music – a selection of evergreen Bollywood tunes.

Meanwhile, Saajan Fernandez (Irrfan Khan) is just biding his time until retirement. However in the lead-up to his departure, he's been saddled with the younger Shaikh (Nawazuddin Siddiqui), a tiresomely happy replacement for his own efficient and silent procedures. As the story unfolds Saajan's loneliness and Ila's relative isolation become apparent; Saajan's nightly smokes on his balcony while he watches a family enjoy their communal dinner is the perfect example of his solitude, while Ila's constant round of household chores perfectly show the constraints of her life.

It's the small touches that make the film so enthralling. Ritesh Batra captures some extraordinary moments on film. The claustrophobia of Mumbai's crowded trains echoes the self-imposed limitations of Ila's small kitchen while Saajan's neatly organised desk speaks volumes about his personality. As their lives open up to more possibilities, so too their physical surroundings become less constrained and both start to interact more with the world around them.