



fish

The Crow's Egg
(India 2014)

DIRECTOR : M. Manikandan
RUNNING TIME : 99mins
RATING : PG

Synopsis:

Two mischievous and resourceful brothers live in poverty in a Chennai slum but find joy in each other and their family and friends. When the brothers see an ad for pizza, which coincides with the opening of a nearby pizza shop, they are determined to taste this magical food for the very first time. So begins a great adventure, with triumphs and setbacks, as the industrious brothers try to raise the cash to fund their wish.

Review: Louise Keller

Deceptively simple, this charming film about dreams evolves in the most unexpected way, endearing us its two young slum boy protagonists in the process. In his writing and directing debut, M. Manikandan, who also did the cinematography, has created a wonderful film that gets up a head of steam in the slums of Chennai in South India. Beyond its central story, Manikandan has artfully incorporated potent and topical themes of food globalization and the disparity between the rich and the poor. While it may not have the slick appeal of Danny Boyle's Oscar-winning *Slumdog Millionaire*, the film enjoys similar rewards.

The film begins slowly, firmly establishing the reality and environment in which the two pre-teen brothers (Ramesh, Ramesh Thilaganathan) live. Their father is in jail; their mother can't afford to send them to school; the boys collect coal from the passing goods train to earn 3 meagre rupees per kilo. Swallowing the yolk of the crow's egg, stolen from the bird's nest is a welcome supplement to their daily diet; they decide to call themselves Little Crow's Egg and Big Crow's Egg, inspired by the man who calls himself Fruit Juice. The boys' broad white smiles are a tonic, indicative of their mischief-filled life.

Things suddenly change when the crow's nest is gone as the tree is cut down. A pizza restaurant is built; the slum kids have their noses pressed against the window watching a celebrity eat a piece of this mysterious and glamorous food that costs 300 rupees - a month's wages for the two boys. The first time they see a pizza close up, their eyes are filled with wonder. Ah yes! Now it is a pizza about which they dream day and night. How can they earn and save enough money to buy one? Cont.

FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

10.00 am Sunday 18th September 2016
8.15 pm Tuesday 20th September 2016

Review: (cont.)

Thus begins the rollercoaster ride in which the boys find innovative ways to make money. But everything is harder than they think and other issues need to resolve. All the characters have a part to play - the father in jail, the grandmother who eats and sleeps, the little puppy dog, the kids with a mobile phone, the new television and the con artists with entrepreneurial spirit looking to make a quick fortune.

Music is cleverly used as illustration to portray thoughts and ideas and just when we think the dream of pizza is floating away above the clouds, Manikandan lassoes the exposition and takes it in a different direction. The resolution is wonderful; the payoff complete.

Source: www.urbancinefile.com.au Accessed 19/11/15

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Review: Paul Byrnes

The Crow's Egg had its world premiere at the Toronto Film Festival in 2014. It's the first Tamil Nadu feature to be so honoured. It also won an Indian national award for best children's feature for first-time director M. Manikandan, although he says it's a film with children, rather than a children's film.

It's easy to see why the judges would make that mistake. The film's great quality is its innocence, carried largely by the naturalistic performances of the two boys - J Vignesh as Periya Kaaka Muttai and V Ramesh as Chinna Kaaka Muttai.

The older brother knows something of the world - that you have to go out and get what you want. He uses a stick to knock a mobile phone from the hands of a careless passenger hanging out of a train. The smaller one just beams happily at every adventure. His only misfortune is that he still wets the bed, further trying his mother's patience.

The innocence carries over into the direction as well. Manikandan stops the story regularly for songs, which sentimentalise the action over slow-motion images of the boys at play. These are familiar devices of Indian commercial cinema, although this script is much more savvy than it seems.

The critique of globalisation comes with a satirical depiction of the powerful – grasping and scheming politicians, corrupt and vicious businessmen, cruel and small-minded petty bureaucrats. The children learn quickly that it's a cold world out there; they adapt just as quickly, refusing to be kept down.

The vast Indian film industry produces many films like this – relatively unsophisticated in technique, but rich in observation and character detail. It's rare to see one with so much satirical edge, or such warm characterisation. The boys were recruited from a slum like the one we see. The style is not quite neo-realism, but that is the main ingredient, with large amounts of Tamil flavour.

It is no surprise that Manikandan's two favourite directors are the Iranians Majid Majidi (*Children of Heaven*) and Asghar Farhadi (*A Separation*). The film has the imprint of both. It is a feel-good movie with a wide streak of social conscience.

Source: www.smh.com.au : Paul Byrnes 18/11/2015 Edited extracts accessed 24/8/16

Some Thoughts On: *A Family Affair*

What a beautifully gentle and uplifting documentary this proved to be. It was a very special treat to be able to be 'inside' that incredibly talented and connected family. Apart from the wonderful scenery and fantastic music, the real strength of this film was the celebration of culture, tradition and family ~ indeed, life. To see the joy derived from the simple things was a privilege to witness and share. The sense of warmth, inclusion and belonging at the weddings and special occasions where the family played was palpable. This film made me realise how much of this communal joy is lost or lacking in so many of our modern, busy, overly materialistic 'driven' lives, occupations and societies in our insatiable push for economic growth.

The music was the glue that held the traditions in place and brought so much happiness to the lives of the people it touched. The life and passion in those wonderful melodies, rhythms and patterns were a pure joy.

I loved the family members, particularly the way in which the daughter handled the pressure of the sole vocalist duties and the barely smiling Grandfather ~ the legendary rock on which the family skills were built. Indeed, he could have been Zeus himself!

I came away from this film with massive culture envy, where that important human need for acceptance, belonging and love were taken to a whole new level.....and oh, to be part of that outdoor lamb feast!!!

This was not major cinema, but it was a beautiful and insightful treatment of some pretty major themes on life that was crafted very simply and effectively. **Ross Armfield.**

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COMING UP:

October	<i>Tanna</i> (Australia)	Sunday 23 rd & Tuesday 25 th
November	<i>Tehran Taxi</i> (Iran)	Sunday 20 th & Tuesday 22 nd
December	<i>Alex & Eve</i> (Australia)	Sunday 11 th & Tuesday 13 th
February '17	<i>The Nightingale</i> (China)	Sunday 12 th & Tuesday 14 th

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Message from the President

The first two films of our season set in Iceland and Crete/Australia were completely different in style and subject matter to each other, but so strongly linked by the themes of family, culture and tradition. A terrific start. It really is a case of join FISH and see the world!

With our membership waiting list stabilised, we are now in the process of monitoring our numbers attending each screening. This information will be vital in determining when we can commence reducing that list.

A reminder that our AGM will take place at 9.30 on Sunday morning 18th September. Please be at the cinema by 9.25 at the latest if you intend attending. The doors will be closed once the meeting commences to be reopened just before our usual screening time of 10.00am.

Thank you to the Empire for the generous offer of complimentary tickets for FISH members to see their 20th anniversary screening of the hugely successful Australian film, *Shine*, on Sunday 28th August, with an introduction by the film's producer, Jane Scott. This came up at the last moment with tickets only able to be made available to those members who attended the two screenings of *A Family Affair*. Just one more example of how generous the Empire Cinema is and how well they look out for, and support, FISH.

So now it's off to India for *The Crow's Egg*. I look forward to seeing it and you at the Empire soon.

Yours in film

Ross Armfield.



FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

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