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## Go watch Little Terrorist!

Raja Sen | February 18, 2005 14:43 IST



The cricket ball is makeshift, as are the wickets, marked roughly with chalk on the bark of a tree. Commonplace enough, and a plausible setting even at the India-Pakistan border. The

countries, for all their hostility and infighting, have made the British sport theirs. The passion for it filters through to every corner, including this arid, seemingly Rajasthani nook. Jamal is 10 years old, Pakistani, and a cricket enthusiast, and the fact that their 'ball' has landed across barbed wire, into a minefield, seems roughly as deterring as a neighbour's surly doberman.

So our lad casually crosses over, *sans* visa and worry. The border has been breached, gunfire erupts, and a panicked Jamal ducks right into India. Here begins his rather surreal day, with authorities combing the area hunting for an intruder, assuming, as always, the worst. There is a terrorist alert, and our hero deals with hunger, friends, awkward pauses in conversation, and quite a bit more. All in 15 minutes, making this short film the first credible chance for India to finally make a stab at Oscar glory.

*Little Terrorist* is a fable with a lot of between-the-frames allegory. Director Ashvin Kumar has crafted a fine,



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sensitive tale that should appeal to viewers indiscriminately. Not surprisingly, it's been the toast of several festivals over the last year, including Montreal, Manhattan and Tehran. And now it's up for the Best Short Film [Oscar](#).



### Can it actually win?

Yes. It's got a pretty good chance. The tale is touching, light, and -- at its exact running time of 15 minutes -- wonderfully succinct. The visual treatment is refreshing, all west-Indian bright colours running through relentless dry sand. The acting in the film is a treat, with young Salim playing Jamal to poignant perfection, and Sushil Sharma playing a finely weathered, very likeable old man. Finally, the most positive factor for the film's chances in front of the staid Academy jury is its decidedly apolitical theme. A fine film, and a must watch.

What actually 'happens' in the film is something I refuse to give away, but for those shying away from a melodramatic mini-feature, relax. Jamal returns home in the end. However, for those expecting the obvious, let me just add that it isn't as if he makes it through the day without harming a hair on his head.

Go watch *Little Terrorist*.

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