

A Boy and the World

Ten-year-old Sunny Pawar headlines Safdar Rahman's *Chippa* that showcases the story of a spirited boy in search of his father

PARTH KHATAU

THREE YEARS ago when Safdar Rahman started writing the script for *Chippa*, the story of a spirited 10-year-old came naturally to him. "I have always been fascinated by children, their lives, their simplicity, as well as the truth and innocence they bring to any story. *Chippa* presents this truthful image. It's an optimistic film that showcases the lead character's positive outlook towards life," he says.

On Monday evening, *Chippa* premiered at Jio MAMI 20th Mumbai Film Festival. It chronicles the protagonist's journey to find his father after he receives a letter from him on his birthday, and the people he encounters on his journey. "The way *Chippa* perceives the life of different people shows us that even in the darkest hour of our lives, there is hope," said Rahman. The story of *Chippa* unfolds during a winter night in Kolkata. "I started writing the script in early 2016. It was a long process as I kept revising it but it was a story that came naturally to me," says the director. Rahman's previous outings include *Chitrangad* (2012), a Manoj Bajpayee-starrer, of a 14-year-old boy and his journey within British India.

The character of *Chippa* is played by child artiste Sunny Pawar, who is known for his acclaimed performance in the Oscar-nominated movie *Lion*. His performance in *Chippa* too drew praise from the cast and crew. Chandan Roy Sanyal, who plays the



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role of a newspaper vendor in the film, said, "Sunny is such a powerful actor. I was aware of his previous work but on the sets, he surprised me with his spontaneity." Rahman too vouches for that. "There are times, we would go for a sixth or seventh take, Sunny would be a little confused but as soon as the camera would start rolling, he would come into his own and deliver his lines," says the



Chippa presents an optimistic view of life, where even in the darkest hour, there is hope; Safdar Rahman (left)

writer-director.

Chippa is Pawar's first movie as a lead actor. "In the movie, everything hinges on this character. We did have a casting process. However, at the same time I watched *Lion* and I was blown away by Sunny's work in the film. When I met him, I found that he was just right, his age, his height and so on. Of course, we had to work with him a fair bit. In the end, he gave us his very best," says Rahman.

Pawar, who was also present for the premiere, said he really enjoyed being part of the film and shooting in Kolkata where he had previously shot for *Lion*. "Everybody on the set was really helpful. They explained the role to me and helped me understand it," he said. "I really enjoyed working on this film and I really love acting," added Mumbai-based Pawar, who studies in Class V.

The film was shot entirely on the streets of Kolkata in December 2017. "There were

two challenges when it came to shooting at night. One was that since Sunny is there in every frame of the film, the 10-year-old boy had to change his body clock. That was something he is not used to. That being said shooting at night kind of worked in our favour because all our shots are outdoor shots. One has to deal with crowds while shooting on the streets. Since it was shot at night, there were less people around," recalls Rahman.

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