

Film review: Bollywood legend Kajol disappoints as a mollycoddling mother



CHENNAI: Indian star Kajol cannot be faulted. Not easily, at least. Daughter of Tanuja, a fine performer from yesteryear, who did not make the mark largely because she failed to catch the eye of any important director, and niece of Nutan, who became a legend in her lifetime, Kajol has several feathers in her cap, such as “Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge,” “Kabhi Kushi Kabhie Gham” and “My Name is Khan.” But in her latest outing in Pradeep Sarkar’s “Helicopter Eela,” in which she plays a single mother, she disappoints. She is too loud, too shrill and too theatrical to pull off a character such as Eela. Maybe she had no idea what was expected of her, and one can perhaps hold the story (based on a Gujarati play) and the script responsible for Kajol’s slipshod acting.

Having lost her husband at a young age (this part is nonsensical) and struggling to bring up her son, Vivaan, Eela gets so possessive of him that she begins to smother him with her love. She even joins his college. There are hilarious moments in the classroom, and there are ego tussles between the mother and son, but some of them are carried to absurd levels. One minute Eela comes across as a cool and modern mom, but the next she meanders into moroseness, hovering like a helicopter (the movie’s title comes from this) over Vivaan.

Vivaan, played by Riddhi Sen, who won India's National Award for his performance in the Bengali work "Nagarkirtan" earlier this year, is remarkable as a son caught between guilt and exasperation. While he liberally showers his affections on his mom, realizing the kind of sacrifice she has made, he also feels embarrassed and harassed by her unnecessary attention. And he tries to divert her energies away from him. If Sarkar's idea was to highlight the need for women to discover their identity beyond the home, "Helicopter Eela" falters and fails to convince.
