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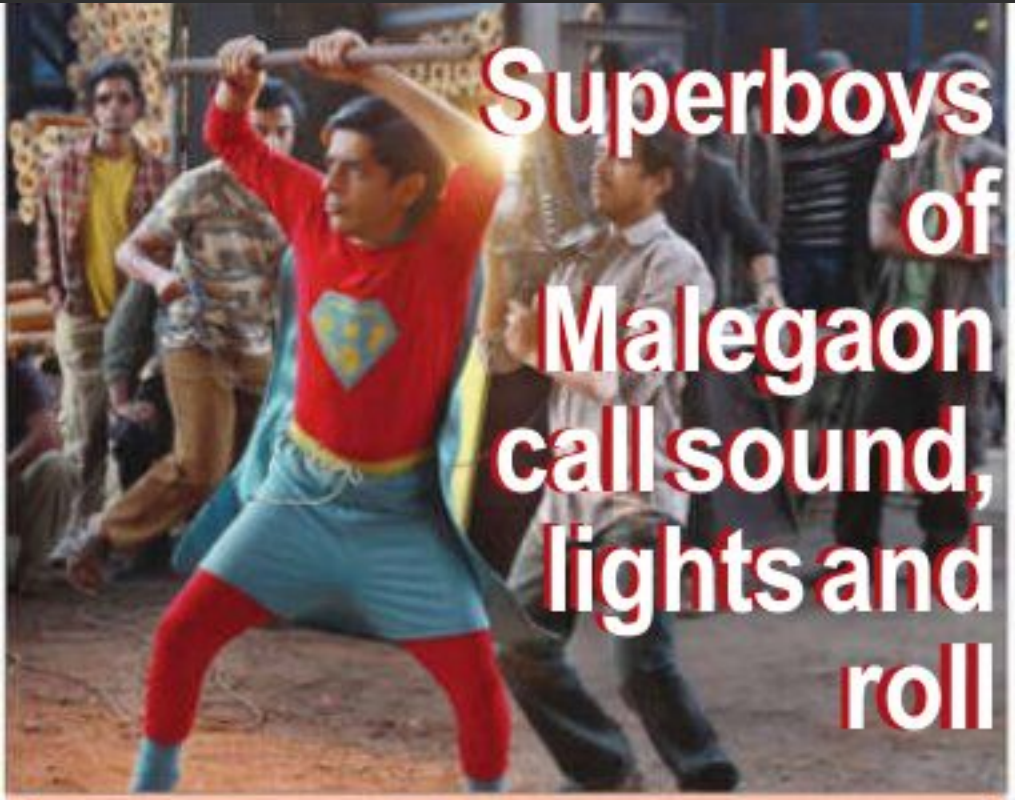
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About



**GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN**

Director Reema Kagti's basket has an interesting mix of movies. From *Honeymoon Travels Pvt Ltd* in 2006 to *Talaash* (2012) to *Gold* (2018)—they talk about a comic medley of couples, mystery and sports, respectively. In her latest outing, *Superboys of Malegaon*, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and was last screened at Red Sea (where I watched it), she carts us to a small city in Maharashtra and throws us in the midst of a group of boisterous boys. It is another matter that some look older. But never mind. Kagti's is a feel-good work, which I wished had opened the Red Sea Film Festival. For it always makes sense to start a festival with something that is light, and Kagti's is also a lot of fun.

The subject, desire to make a movie and win fame and fortune, has lit the stars in many eyes, and so too in those of Malegaon boys. Based on actual incidents and a kick-off from the helmer's earlier documentary, *Supermen of Malegaon*, which was all about a bunch of boisterous youngsters taking a shot at filmmaking, her latest is a full-length feature.

Penned by Varun Grover, the movie plays like a spoof and is a subtle criticism of how unoriginal Bollywood cinema is. It certainly took guts for Kagti to make a film of this sort. And what is it all about?

Adarsh Gourav (whom we saw in Ramin Bahrani's *The White Tiger* in 2012) is Nasir, a photographer in 1990s Malegaon who videographs weddings and also takes still pictures using his brother's studio. He is also a keen movie buff and screens classic English works. But who in his town understands legends like Chaplin and his ilk? However, when he shows pirated versions of Bollywood features, the crowd swells. He is also innovative when he mixes films from Hollywood and Bollywood. As we know, good times do not last, and piracy is an offence. Gourav gets caught, and his copyright-infringement days end.

The rest of the movie is how Gourav ropes in Farogh (Vineet Singh) to write screenplays and other friends, including a local journalist, in an attempt to make his own film. There is also a romance brewing away from the screen: one of the boys, Shafique (Shashank Arora), falls hopelessly in love with the movie's leading lady.

What is even more interesting is Farogh walking out of Nasir's group lamenting that writers are not given enough respect. How very true in India, where the man who wields the pen or pushes the button is often shunned to the sidelines; it is the actor who is invariably in the centre of the ring.

The writer is a senior film critic and author

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