

■ Movie review

'Illuminated' offers a poignantly humorous view of life's changes

Elijah Wood stars as a young man searching for the woman who saved his grandfather during the Holocaust

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PULSE REPORTER

It is said the journey is more important than the destination.

This maxim is artfully displayed in the new movie "Everything Is Illuminated," based on Jonathan Safran Foer's first novel, published in 2001.

Jonathan Safran Foer (the character), a young Jewish American man played by Elijah Wood, sets out for Ukraine in search of the woman who saved his grandfather from the Nazis during the Holocaust. He only has an old photograph and the name of a few cities to guide him. Expecting to meet up with a professional guide service, he meets a dysfunctional family that runs a company taking Jewish Americans on quests to find where their ancestors lived.

The founder of the company is Grandfather, played by Boris Leskin. Alongside him is Alex, an American culture junkie played by Eugene Hutz. He imitates American rappers by wearing baggy clothing and gold chains, and he idolizes Michael Jackson and Shaquille O'Neal.

The family that gives "tours of dead Jews" also includes Sammy Davis Jr. Jr., Grandfather's "seeing-eye bitch" — even though Grandfather can see

just fine. The dog's redundant name and the fact the family has convinced Grandfather he is blind gives the audience a taste of how peculiar the family is.

The family clashes with the nerdy Jonathan. However, he isn't exactly normal himself — he puts objects that represent people or experiences in his life into a bag for fear he'll forget the moment.

At first Alex thinks Jonathan is a writer. "I'm more of a collector, really," says Jonathan, who wears eyeglasses and sports a black suit. During the journey, the collector gathers something he can't possibly fit into a plastic baggy: connections and relationships with people he won't forget.

Together, the family and Jonathan set out to find the person who saved Jonathan's grandfather. The first half of the movie is full of wisecracks showing the interaction between the reserved personality of Jonathan, the grumpiness of Grandfather and the joking antics of Alex.

Alex serves as the translator for Jonathan, often giving a choppy translation. However, the audience gets the pleasure of what was actually said

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