

EIFF – The Last Photograph

(2017) 85 mins ***



Danny Huston directs and stars in this powerful story which goes back and forth between 2003 and 1988 as the plot unfolds.

Tom Hammond (Huston) is a widower with a son Luke (Jonah Hauer-King) who has fallen deeply in love with New Yorker, Bird (Stacy Martin), agreeing to spend Christmas 1988 with her and her family. A city wheeler and dealer, Tom promises Luke that he will think about giving up the job he hates and open the small book shop he has always talked about. They have a pre-Christmas supper together with friends and take Polaroid photos as they play bingo. The next day Tom takes his son to the airport to catch PanAm Flight 102. We watch in growing horror as Tom sees the news reports of the downing of the aircraft and sets off to Lockerbie with the sweater he bought for his son, poignantly demanding of the police and rescue services there that he give it to him as he will be feeling the cold. Tom collapses when eventually one of the men starkly tells him that there are no survivors.

2003 sees an unhappy, isolated Tom with a dilapidated book shop, ostracised from his shopkeeper neighbours and his friends. His briefcase is stolen from the shop by two customers: in it is £500, a book and also the Polaroid photo of Tom and Luke at that last Christmas supper. This almost robs Tom of what is left of his sanity. He is comforted by his cafe-owning neighbour Hannah (the wonderful Sarita Choudhory) and finds solace in telling her his story.

While the tale is a compelling one, it is not enhanced by the constant forwarding and rewinding or by the more abstract scenes, sometimes rather inexplicably out of focus. The final sequences set once more in Lockerbie are rather unconvincing

and trite. The fact remains however that this is an interesting drama, a fictional representation of one of the most shocking events in modern history.

