Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Jesse Eisenberg

Elisa Leonelli · Thursday, February 6th, 2025



Jesse Eisenberg © HFPA

As a journalist I met and interviewed Jesse Eisenberg in person several times during the past 20 years, and last October via Zoom at a press conference exclusive for Golden Globe international voters about *A Real Pain*, a movie that he wrote and directed, co-starring with Kieran Culkin.



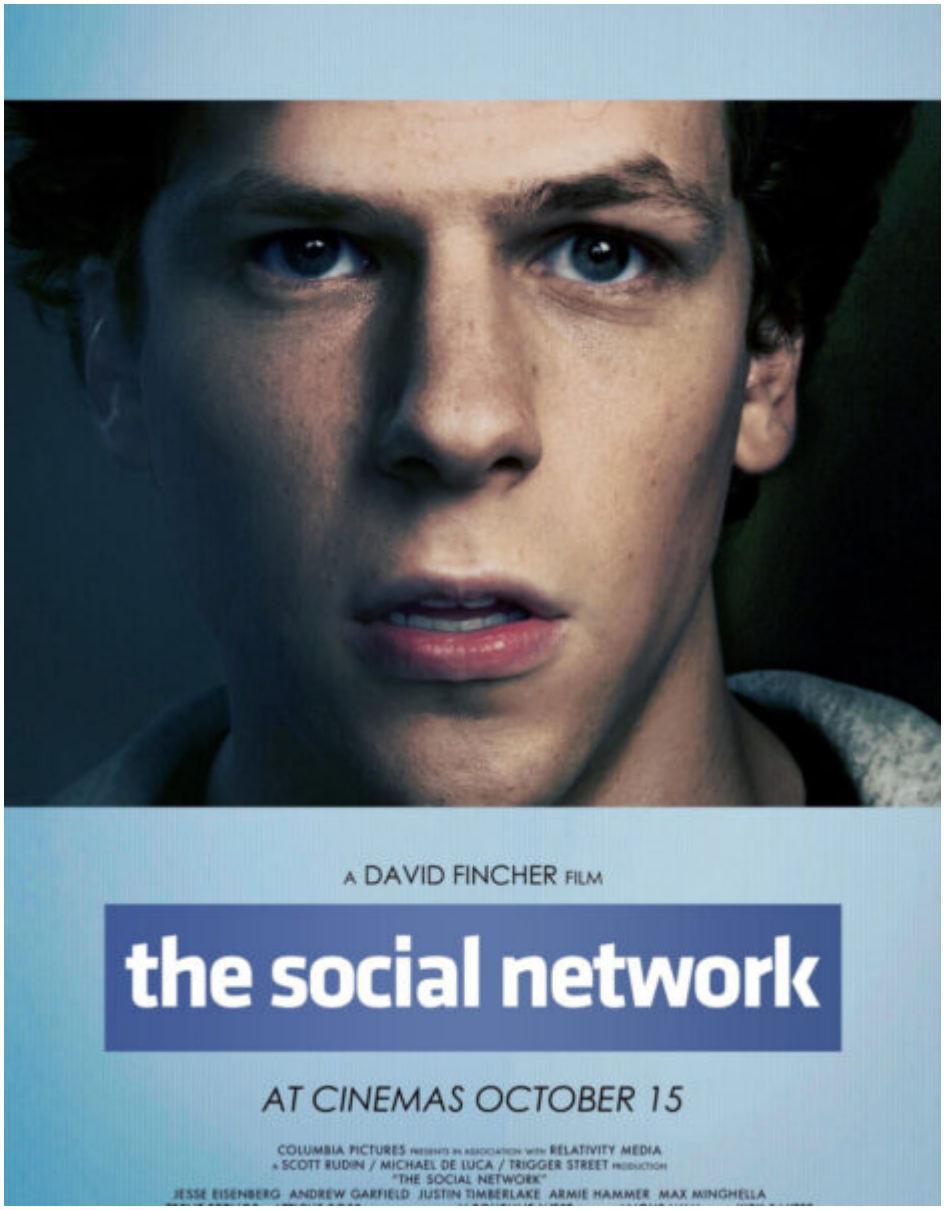
The film tells the story of two Jewish cousins who travel from New York to Poland on a Holocaust tour to visit the childhood home of their late grandmother in Krasnystaw, near Lublin, and other landmarks of Nazi Germany's genocide during World War II, including the Majdanek concentration camp.



Eisenberg said that the script was based on his family's history, and the grandma was actually his great aunt Doris, who left Poland in 1939 to escape the Nazi invasion. She was his closest friend and mentor, and died at the age of 107, so he was interested in learning more about her early life. He was trying to compare the pain of his own emotional struggle with mental health, against the much more horrible pain endured by his ancestors. For him it was like therapy, not a commentary on third generation Jewish-Americans.

I remember seeing a play about a similar subject, *The Revisionist*, that Jesse Eisenberg wrote and performed in 2013 with Vanessa Redgrave, about a young American writer who visits his elderly Jewish cousin Maria, a Holocaust survivor, still living in Poland.

Eisenberg wrote the screenplay for *A Real Pain* in 2022, so before the brutal Hamas attack of October 7, 2023, that caused a violent military reaction on the part of the Israeli government lead by Netanyahu, with horrifying consequences for the Palestinian population of Gaza.



Eisenberg had received Golden Globe and Academy Award nominations as an actor, for playing Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg in *The Social Network* (2010) directed by David Fincher from a screenplay by Aaron Sorkin. For *A Real Pain* he was recognized as an actor with a Golden Globe nomination and also as a screenwriter, with both Golden Globe and Academy Award nominations.

Eisenberg wondered January 24 on “Real Time with Bill Maher,” when asked about Zuckerberg and the other tech billionaires supporting Trump, Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk, why don’t these rich and powerful men spend their days helping rather than hurting people, doing good things for the world.

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