

LIFE

AMERICA'S WEEKEND MAGAZINE

BEHIND THE CAMERA

Elijah Wood
goes on
assignment
for LIFE
(See who else did!)



Visit the Coolest Camp on Earth ★ Vacuum Cleaners: A (Truly Strange) Love Story

WEEKEND OF SEPTEMBER

16

2005

VIEW FINDER

"When I take photographs, it's my opportunity to show my own perspective—the way I see things," says Wood. "I find that very satisfying."



SHOOT FIRST, ASK QUESTIONS LATER

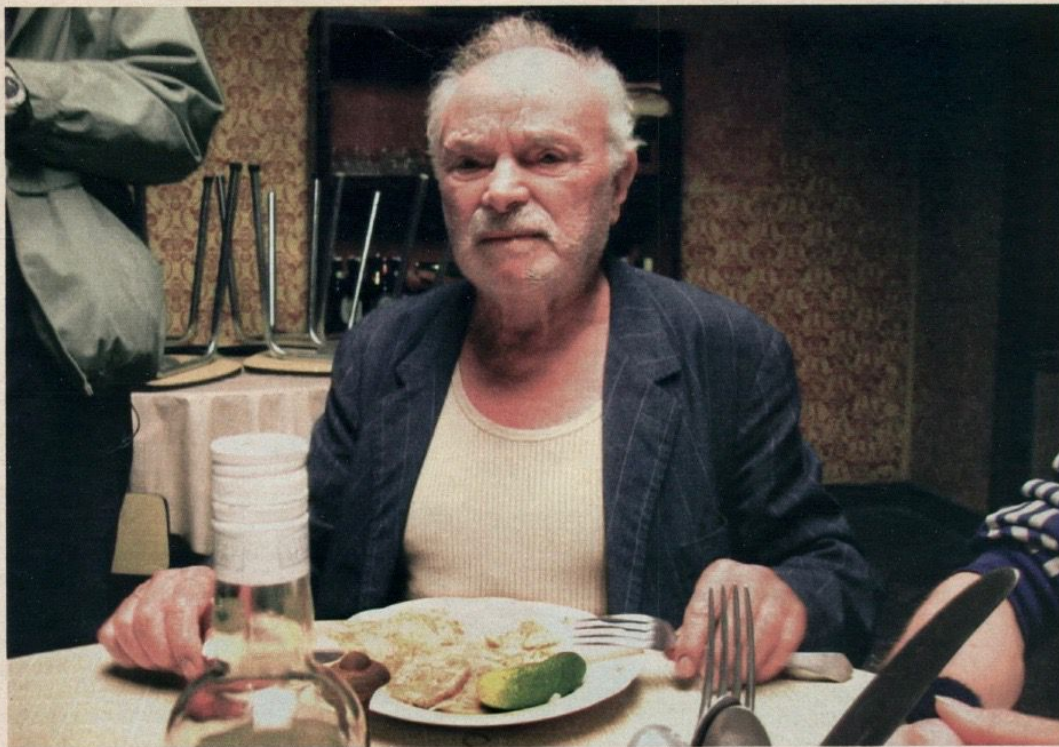
THE PHOTO
ISSUE

Elijah Wood talks about his journey
from *The Lord of the Rings* to
his new indie film, and reveals his secret
passion for being *behind* the camera

BY JAY A. FERNANDEZ

Something surprising happened on the way to Elijah Wood's becoming the most famous hobbit on earth: He turned into a pretty deft photographer as well. Wood, 24, looking less Frodo-like these days with close-cropped dark hair and shades, started honing his shutterbug skills on location in New Zealand for *The Lord of the Rings* in 1999, using a manual Leica M6. For his new movie, *Everything Is Illuminated*, based on Jonathan Safran Foer's best-seller, he packed his digital Canon PowerShot SD400 and captured the quirky characters that populated the Prague set. • Wood gave LIFE an exclusive peek at

PORTRAIT BY GUY AROCH



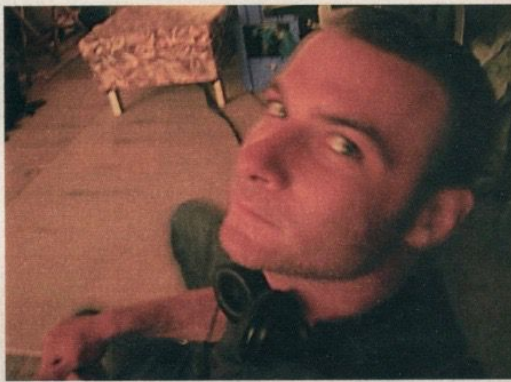
A SEASONED COSTAR

"That's Boris Leskin," says Wood, describing one of the many photos he took of actors on the *Illuminated* set. "He's not super-chipper. He's lived through so much, and I think that reads in every shot."



KIDDING AROUND

"This boy is named Eliáš Bauer. We shot this scene in a field that was really beautiful. There were goats running around. It was a great day."



READY FOR ACTION?

"[Director] Liev Schreiber is probably getting himself mentally prepared for the fact that [filming is] about to start. This was the first time he'd ever directed."

his photos from *Illuminated*'s two-month-long shoot and talked about his latest quest: taking—and safe-keeping—memorable pictures.

What's it like, looking at your photos from the *Lord of the Rings* set?

I have boxes of them. They're sad, in a way. I was 18 years old when we first started shooting [*LOTR*], and it

had such an impact on me as a person—it was massive. So looking back now is somewhat nostalgic.

Do you keep in touch with your fellow hobbits and such?

Oh, yeah. Dom [Monaghan] lives out here [in L.A.], though he lives mainly in Hawaii now because of *Lost*. Billy [Boyd] I see whenever

he's in town. I spoke to Viggo [Mortensen] a couple of weeks ago. Sean [Astin] lives out here. Even if we don't see one another a lot, we keep tabs on one another.

You took a lot of photos on the set of *Illuminated*. Did you approach that photography any differently?

Prague is such a Gothic, picturesque

city. I was constantly taking photos there. I relied more on my digital camera, because it's so portable.

Is it hard to take a candid picture with a bunch of actors around?

I generally don't tell people I'm taking photos of them. I'll just capture moments. If someone starts laughing during a conversation, I'll take a photo, so that it's spontaneous. And the camera is so small, I never make a big deal out of it.

You seem to take a lot of self-portraits.

It's not an obsession with myself. [Laughs] I just like the quality of reflection. It's as much about the surfaces that I'm reflecting off of—water, a mirror—as it is about me.

But it also gets you to look at someone—such as yourself—indirectly.

Yeah, it's also about capturing a moment with myself. I never smile. I don't know why that is, but my expression is always kind of stone-faced. If I were to smile, it would ruin the whole point. It's not supposed to be about how I'm emoting. It's about nothing but the blank expression and the reflection.

What photos have inspired you?

Old black-and-white photography. There's an album that Muddy Waters did in the late '60s called *Electric Mud*. There's a photo on the back of him standing in a white robe with a small guitar and his hair kind of in a pompadour. For the inside shots, the same photographer followed him to the local barbershop and photographed him getting a haircut. I do love rock photography: Annie Leibovitz, Mick Rock. He shot T. Rex, Bowie, Blondie, a lot of classic Lou Reed. That [Michel Linssen] shot of Kurt Cobain in the recording studio over an acoustic guitar, lost in thought—just beautiful.

In *Illuminated*, your character, inspired by a photograph, travels



A FAVORITE PHOTO

Wood says he's inspired by pictures like this one of Kurt Cobain, photographed by Michel Linssen on November 25, 1991, in a Netherlands recording studio. "Just beautiful," says the actor.

to Europe to learn about his heritage. Have any photographs had that kind of impact on your own life?

I was in my first real relationship when I was 16—total puppy love, romantic, beautiful. We had letters and e-mails and pictures between the two of us. And for whatever reason, I decided when the relationship was over to get rid of it all. It's one of the most foolish things I've ever done, because it was the first relationship of any significance in my life.

Why did you do it?

I don't know. Maybe I felt like that's what I was supposed to do. Or the fact that I was unhappy with the way things ended, and it was like the last bit of finality to the relationship. Then years passed, I started talking about it with somebody, and I was like, "Why'd I do that?" It made me really sad. All evidence of that relationship had died. Shortly thereafter, for the first time in two years, I contacted that girl.

What did you say?

I told her, "I don't have anything anymore." She said she had kept everything. I vowed that moment to never, ever do that again. It was comforting to know that someone had a record of what happened. ■

SHOOTING STARS

Some celebrities run from the cameras. Others embrace them. Here, four famous faces with a passion for photography share images of their weekend, either shot exclusively for LIFE or selected from their personal photo albums. "I'm not looking to impress anyone," says Kyle MacLachlan of his camera work. "I just want to tell a little story."



Matthew Modine, author of the photo book *Full Metal Jacket Diary*

SATURDAY SPLASH

"I shot this photo on one of those days when the pavement in Greenwich Village is soft from all the heat. While we all do our best to preserve water, sometimes you've got to get the hose out and start playing."

FOREVER SUNDAY

"This is my mom, Dolores, on a Sunday morning on the beach in Chula Vista, California. She has an expression on her face that's neither here nor there. About 15 years ago, she began to . . . not disappear but fade. Where had she gone? A ministroke? Dementia? Early Alzheimer's? Maybe she'd just had enough of life's frustrations and decided to take an early retirement into a world all her own. I'll never know."

Adam Goldberg

costar of Fox's *Head Cases*

UNDER THE PIER

"Sunday has a nostalgic, bittersweet quality for me. I don't know if it goes back to being in school—that idea that Sunday is still the weekend, but in a sense it's over. This photograph feels drowsy and melancholic. I've always been a fan of multiple images, so using a digital camera, I shot the underneath of the Santa Monica Pier. And I shot my girlfriend, Christina [Ricci], in a diner and superimposed her, phantomlike, over the pier. I love the aesthetic of the pier. I find it to be a very moving place."



ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY JOSH YOUNG



Elijah Wood

PARTYING IN L.A.

"This was taken at a bar where my friends used to hang out every weekend. I didn't want faces. I wanted to get hands, legs, bottles—a sense of friends hanging out."

DO NOT DISTURB

"Everybody can relate to sleeping in. Here, I put the camera on a two-second timer and held it at various angles. I didn't want to get too much of the room."



Kyle MacLachlan

costar of ABC's upcoming *In Justice*

RED WINE

"I took a glass, held it up in my kitchen, and poured a Dunham Cellars Syrah into it. I like pictures that give you a feeling of 'I'm looking at this from a different angle.'"

THE CAPPUCCINO

"I find it difficult to try to capture *everything*, so I look for something that's a tiny piece of an experience. [In this photo,] morning means cappuccino to me. I really like mine in a glass, not a mug."