

It Runs in the Family

Rated PG-13

"It Runs in the Family" is a poignant and touching movie of three generations of Grombergs' played by three generations of Douglas' (Kirk and Diana Douglas, playing Mitchell and Evelyn Gromberg; Michael and his son Cameron Douglas, who play Alex and Asher Gromberg). This is the first time Michael and his father Kirk are in a movie together, and it is even more special that Michael's mother and son play major roles as well. It makes you wonder, how much of the movie is acting? Other stars include Bernadette Peters who plays Rebecca Gromberg and Rory Culkin who plays the youngest son, Eli.

This movie has several genealogical stories within the story. Initially it is of a son (Alex) who has not figured out or resolved the wounds from his father, while making many of the same mistakes in his own parenting. Michael (Alex) is very bitter towards his father (Mitchell) over his never having said he loved him, not being around to be a father, and never measuring up to his father's expectations. There is marital strife between Alex and Rebecca, as Alex is almost drawn into an affair but realizes that "guilt is stronger than lust." In addition, his two boys who are rather adrift, struggle with their own identity and life issues. The movie emphasizes how families stop communicating to each other because it is too easy to become absorbed "in their own little world" and stop relating and being open with each other.

The children (Eli and Asher) are a big part of the story. Eli is not connected with his parents, does not tell his parents anything (which his big brother Asher does not really do as well). To Eli parents are the things that feed them: "Who are you taking about? Oh, them. You mean I have to talk to them? Are you nuts our something?" However, his grandfather is a big part of his life and is like a father to him. His grandfather teaches him how to fight; his mother is there to root for him at his karate matches. When his mother tries to reconnect him to the family by saying he can ask her anything and she wont get mad, he asks the all important question of "Do you and dad ever 69?" There also is the runaway at school. She was once a classmate of his but she ran away with this older guy and did not come back until a couple years later. She is a rebel, gothic and smokes, but Eli has a major crush on her and protects her from the guy she ran away with. I think he was going to beat her up. They end up having a lot in common in the dysfunctional family category.

Asher is the older son, but definitely not the wiser; he is 21 and is selling and smoking pot. His life is messed up, he is does poorly in school, is caught for having pot but let go, the whole deal. He has a good relationship with is grandmother, who dies through the course of the movie and makes life even more confusing for the 21 year old. He is caught for having pot - again, but the police did not have a search warrant so he was let go - again. When he is caught, his girlfriend with him gets in trouble too. He is really upset about causing her grief, more than he is for himself. He is further shamed by the fact that his little brother saved his girlfriend and he got her in major trouble.

By *Curt and Natalie Levang*