



23rd, 2007 **"Islander"** - a peaceful cinematic retreat

In between the release of loud movies like "300" and "Wild Hogs" will be the local screening of "Islander," a quiet film with plenty of visual poetry. Director and co writer Ian McCrudden has created a rare drama that is not normally seen on the big screen anymore. Produced on a low budget, "Islander" contains breathtaking cinematography, the slow pace of a southern told tale and a narrative with a complete middle and end.

Eben Cole (Tom Hildreth, who is the other co writer) is married to Cheryl (Amy Jo Johnson - remember the Pink Ranger from the "Might Morphin Power Rangers" kiddie show?) and have a small girl. Eben is a proud lobster man who runs afoul corporate lobster men. Despite the protest of his father (Larry Pine) and Uncle (Philip Baker Hall), Eben decides to have a showdown with the corporate lobster men.

The results are tragically disastrous and Eben is sent to prison. After a five year sentence, Eben is shunned by his community, his ex wife and daughter. Things go from bad to worst when Eben is injured helping one of the few nice people on the island. Yet in his darkest moments, Eben finds grace in the most unlikely places.

As the title character, Tom Hildreth gives an understated performance Early in the film Eben suffers from youthful arrogance. After his tragic mistake, Eben becomes a stoic iceberg. His one emotional meltdown occurs when he must say "Goodbye" to his estranged daughter.

With the postcard presentation of the Maine coast, "Islander" contains performances based on conviction. Amy Jo Johnson jettisons her "Power Ranger powerpack with a mature performance. Of note is Amy Jo Johnson's use of vocal technique; as the

character becomes more embittered, her voice becomes more gravely and toadlike. Her Cheryl goes from a young mother to an embittered smoker. Johnson's transition is confident.

Given his stuffed shirt roles in "Seinfeld," "Zodiac," "The Insider" and "Magnolia," Philip Baker Hall gives a comfortable performance as an old salt. While his appearance is humble, the character is really the island power broker with a soul and states the best line in the movie;

"You find peace by the sacrifices you make."

Despite the fictional elements, "Islander" has the feel of a personal documentary. Many shots are devoted to the detail of pulling lobster traps from the briny deep and bait being cut. While the film is low budget, it does contain some of the best outdoor photography filmed on the open sea. Director of photography Dan Coplan should receive an award by the Maine tourist council. "Islander" is definitely a vacation from the ordinary motion pictures.