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Maine Festival features highly ambitious films

The Maine International Film Festival begins Friday and runs through July 23 at various locations around the Waterville area.

By Marty Meltz

Maine International Film Festival feature some 80 entries and includes many highly ambitious films. I chose from what appeared to be the most promising, rewarding and diverse in genre. I was very satisfied. [Maine International Film Festival weekend schedule](#)

"Islander"

Director: Ian McCrudden

Screenplay: Ian McCrudden, Thomas Hildreth.

Cast: Thomas Hildreth, Judy Prescott, Philip Baker Hall, Larry Pine, Mark Kiely

Time: 1 hr., 37 min.

In terms of breathing the essence of life of a Maine island or coastal community into a motion picture film, "Islander" is the very best I've seen. Based on a real life happening, its stunning sensitivity to the human and natural moods by way of singularly adept camera coverage on land and water and a canny balance of story elements make this film special.

In this, young Vinalhaven lobsterman Eben (Maine native Thomas Hildreth), enraged by the encroachment of mainland lobstermen into the ancestral fishing waters of the island, confronts one such man on his boat. When one of Eben's warning shots from his firearm accidentally causes a major tragedy, he's sentenced to five years. His bereft and

beloved wife Cheryl (Amy Jo Johnson) and his daughter, during that time having taken up with his old friend, lobsterman Jimmy (Mark Kiely), are in a different chapter of life when Eben is released. Harboring ingrained anger and resentment against Eben for his hot-headed action of long ago, Cheryl, having now divorced him, tells him to stay away from his daughter. The islanders lay a range of feelings on him from cruel rejection to mild forgiveness. Perhaps the flirtations of attractive young Emily (Judy Prescott), the doctor "from away," will resolve Eben's loneliness. And the old timers, more ingrained with the necessities of forgiveness amidst the unforgiving sea, will have counsel.

Director Ian McCrudden's film is an exemplary, unembellished portrayal of an ever fascinating and little known American community. The performances are from top pro to awkward amateur but generally functional. His peppy-paced momentum of right-to-the-point shots charges up the occasionally unenergetic drama. In visual mood, lacking only the dreamy metaphorical profundity of a Maine fog in the choice of settings (a tough item to order), Dan Coplan's cinematography choices and Daniel Boxer's production design, in dusk and in dawn, create striking textures. McCrudden's plot just lets life go on without a defined ending. Maybe just a bell or gong buoy lonely and forlornly pealing in the fog would have punctuated it. But still, it works.