

News > Shoreline

Madison has starring role in homegrown indie film

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MADISON — A West Wharf sunset, the town's traditional July 4th parade and the more than 60-year-old coffee shop downtown are among the elements that give Madison character.

They are also images that help establish the town as a central character in "Harvest," an independent film shot and set in Madison, and slated for a "home state screening" Sunday at the Connecticut Film Festival.

Marc Meyers, the film's writer, director and producer, attended Camp Laurelwood as a child and had family in the area. He said Madison is "really a character in the film," and was the perfect backdrop for his story that centers on the relationship between a college student and his grandfather, a World War II veteran in failing health.

"There's a classic Main Street that gathers a cross-section of people at the local coffee shop, movie house and post office. It's the original town square, where a man's legacy, especially a WWII veteran, does not go unnoticed," Meyers wrote of his decision to select Madison.

One of the most prominent images from the film, used in much of the movie's promotional material, shows Academy Award-nominated actor Robert Loggia riding a bicycle along Island Avenue.

A handful of local residents may also grace the big screen — Meyers filmed members of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars post during the Fourth of July parade.

He also filmed at a home near the Boston Post Road, and inside The Madison Coffee Shop, where at least one waitress and local extras may be on screen.

"It was pretty neat to see how the film industry works," said Wayne Martin, owner of the Madison Coffee Shop, who donated his space for the movie. "To do a five-minute scene, it took all night in here."

The bulk of "Harvest" was filmed in Madison during autumn 2008, with scenes also shot in Guilford and at Tweed New Haven Regional Airport in New Haven.

"I think the town was really warm and receptive and enthusiastic; there were a lot of people in the community that were very helpful," Meyers said of Madison.

"Harvest" is the second recent film set in Madison, First Selectman Fillmore McPherson said. "Once More with Feeling," an independent film released last year, also referenced the town in the script, he said.

"I think it's wonderful that Hollywood has discovered what a great town this is, and maybe some people will come visit and see

what they saw in the movie,” he said.

Meyers, a New York filmmaker whose first film, “Approaching Union Square,” has been shown on the Sundance Channel, said “Harvest” has “bigger potential” because of its well-known actors and relatable themes.

The Ibid Filmworks movie was recently shown at a preview screening at the Cleveland International Film Center, where it was awarded Best American Independent Film in March.

The film will be shown at 4 p.m. Sunday at the Palace Theatre in Danbury; a question and answer session with the film crew will follow the screening.

For more information, visit www.ctfilmfest.com.

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