



'Pearl Diver' offers excellent story, visuals

Film focuses on sisters, raises questions about forgiveness, sacrifice, family loyalty and personal dreams.

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HICKORY - To director Sidney King, a good story is one that doesn't give you all the answers.

King's first feature film, "Pearl Diver," is an open-ended examination of family tragedy.

The movie, playing at the Carolina Theatre in Hickory, is a thoughtful story that raises questions about forgiveness, sacrifice, family loyalty and personal dreams.

"Pearl Diver" tells the story of two sisters who grew up in a tight-knit farming community in Goshen, Ind.

Hannah (Joey Honsa) left the small town to pursue a writing career in Chicago. Marian (Amy Jean Johnson) stays to inherit the family farm, simple ways and Mennonite religion of their parents.

Hannah and Marian, inseparable when they were young, were torn apart by their mother's murder. The 20-year-old tragedy, and the different ways the sisters coped with it, continues to define their relationship.

When Marian's daughter Rebecca is hurt in a farming accident, Hannah returns home to help.

While dealing with the current family crisis, the sisters must confront their past and relive the night their mother was killed. Conflicts arise over how to pay for young Rebecca's hospital bills, especially when Hannah reveals her plans to publish a memoir about their mother's murder.

The film is well acted. Honsa gives us a bright, energetic modern heroine whose eyes hide a deep sorrow, while Johnson portrays the traditionalist Miriam with a quiet intensity.

The cinematography, by Morganton native John Rotan, is gorgeous visual poetry. We see long, beautiful shots of sweeping cornfields that seem, as one character says, "like a paradise." Sense of place is important to King, and it shows. Goshen and its lush farmland are major characters in the film.

Throughout the movie, King's sense of storytelling is subtle and keen, and what isn't said between characters is often as important as the dialogue.