

PAGEANT
THEATER

MAIDEN

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REEL WORLD



Race for equality

The all-female crew that challenged the establishment and sailed around the world

Alex Holmes' *Maiden* is yet another outstanding addition to an exceptionally rich season for feature-length documentaries. Like *The Rolling Thunder Revue*, *Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am*, *Echo in the Canyon*, etc., Holmes' film is not only strong in subject matter, but also richly engaging in movie terms.

by
Juan-Carlos Selznick



Maiden
Opens Friday (Aug. 16). Directed by Alex Holmes. Pageant Theatre. Rated PG.

Edwards' story is indeed central to the entire film, but with straight-up biography taking a backseat to a steadily fascinating account of the 1989 Round the World Race, before, during and after. And both the racing drama and the biography gain a good deal from the on-camera reflections of Edwards' crew, three decades after the fact.

Those retrospective on-camera reflections play into some observations about photographic portrayals of women. Such issues arise during the 1989 voyage as media attention to the all-female crew takes off, and they carry over into the latter-day interviews and reminiscences and, just as importantly, into the distinctive manner by which Holmes and cinematographer Chris Openshaw make the present-day

talking-head close-ups into subtle moments of vivid portraiture.

The film's emerging portrait of Edwards is a study in the paradoxes personality—a kind of feminist heroine growing out of the grassroots rebellion of an angry young woman. She's the central character in all this, and yet she's also the most mysterious. Much to the film's point, she's the one we learn the most about, but she's also the least likely to be understood in any conveniently conventional way.

The film's then-and-now portraits of Edwards and her crew add richness of character all around. Jo Gooding, a friend of Edwards' since childhood, and Marie-Claude Heys, an experienced sailor whose rivalry with Edwards cut short her tenure on the crew, both make particularly striking contributions. Crewmates Sally Creaser, Nancy Hill, Jeni Mundy, Claire Russell, Dawn Riley and Tanja Visser have brief but vivid moments as well.

The title is the name of the second-hand racing yacht that Edwards and her crew whipped into shape for the race in 1989. As such, that refurbished sailing vessel is a distinctive character of sorts in the parts of *Maiden* that are also a very lively sporting story. With each leg of the race, Holmes builds a fresh sense of immediacy and suspense via limited POV and the use of footage shot by the crew in 1989. □



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