



## DAILY SCREENS

# AFF Review: *Fugitive Dreams*

Haunting and unorthodox road trip drifts with its protagonists

BY STEVE DAVIS, 11:00AM, TUE. OCT. 27, 2020



The unorthodox *Fugitive Dreams* taps into the wounded psyches of two drifters with primal bravery. From the start, you know this is not an objective reality, but rather one filtered through the subconscious minds of an oddly coupled pair.

Mary (April Matthis) is a hardened pragmatist in a housedress, while John (Robbie Tann) is a sickly young man prone to incessant rambling. Their initial meeting in the restroom of a deserted gas station is both fortuitous and destined. As Mary stands before the mirror, poised to slit her wrists with a shard of glass, John comically

stumbles through the unlocked door with an urgent need to urinate, unaware of her presence. After this bizarre introduction inadvertently aborts the suicide attempt, the two strangers begin a dream-like journey together as they cross dried-up cornfields, walk along ghostly roads, and ride rumbling boxcars. Nicely shot in both black-and-white and color by Austinite Peter Simonite, it's a pilgrimage through a vaguely familiar American landscape, haunted by memories bursting with the promise of terrible violence.

The film's non-linear narrative is challenging; it won't be everyone's cup of tea. But while events may seem to occur randomly, debut director Neulander (founder and former artistic director of Austin's groundbreaking Salvage Vanguard Theatre) and dramatist Caridad Svich's screenplay, based on the latter's play, isn't haphazard at all. Certain images (a beautiful field of red poppies, a large belt with a nasty buckle) gain power as they repeat, while stealth themes of addiction, physical abuse, and mental illness emerge in the guise of the film's damaged characters. Arguably, there's a compassionate humanism at work here, but what you ultimately make of *Fugitive Dreams* - if anything — is up to you.

## Fugitive Dreams - official teaser



## Fugitive Dreams

Texas Independents, U.S. Premiere

Don't miss our interview with Jason Neulander about adapting the play for the screen, "[How \*Fugitive Pieces\* Became \*Fugitive Dreams\*](#)," Oct. 16.

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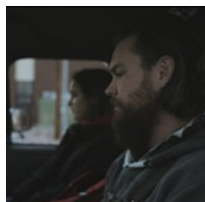
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Austin Film Festival, Austin Film Festival 2020, Fugitive Dreams, Jason Neulander, April Matthis, Robbie Tann, Peter Simonite

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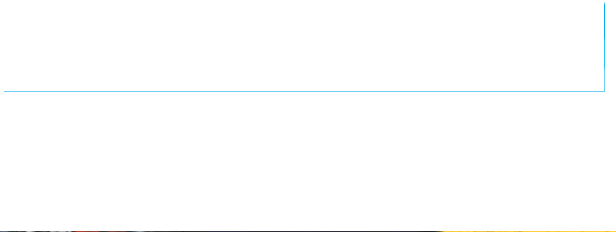
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