

MOVIES

AUSTIN FILM FESTIVAL 2020: ‘Fugitive Dreams’

10/24/2020 - by Kate Sánchez

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Some films sit with you long after the credits roll. Whether it's out of confusion, impact, beauty, or performance, the movies you keep trying to unpack once they finish hold a special place when it comes to critiquing them. Even if the credits roll and you're unsure what you just watched, the fact that they can't be shaken is a testament to their strength. *Fugitive Dreams* is a film directed and written by [Jason Neulander](#) and based on a play by Caridad Svich. A mix of black and white and color, this film feels like a fever dream and a strong commentary on justice set to a moving and ephemeral score from Nathan Hamilton. The film stars April Matthis, Robbie Tann, Scott Shepherd, O-Lan Jones, and David Patrick [Kelly](#).

Fugitive Dreams, in simplest terms, is a road movie. But while it's about travel and transformation along the way, it also touches on themes of homelessness, mental health, and addiction. The film focuses on two people, Mary and John, who embark on a journey across [America](#). Weary, abused, and alone, the pair's travels feel more like dreams than reality, and this is due in large part to the mythic characters they meet along the way. Their journey is dark and strange and forces them to

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Mary, played by [April Matthis](#), is a homeless drifter, filled with anger and a deep depression. John, played by [Robbie Tann](#), is also a drifter who inadvertently thwarts her suicide attempt. The two quickly form an unlikely partnership across the American Midwest. John brings an element of naivete to their relationship, while Mary brings a cynicism necessary for survival. Mary's [destination](#) is "anywhere but here." And John's is a place that only exists in his imagination. They don't belong together, they are on different ends of the spectrum when it comes to their expectations and yet, they are in the same situation. Both running, and both near the end of stopping their fight. While these two complement each other with their oppositions, their pain, and prospects show two sides that meet as the layers of their pasts begin to expose themselves.



Louis Weisdorf Ceiling Turbo By Lyfa, Denma

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While on the road, they meet a series of figures that embody different [archetypes](#) of people the

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that offers little solace for those living the most precarious of lives. The irony of their wanderings

brings them to the place of John’s dreams where the gray of the real world melts into color. The film is strung together with its beauty but it jumps back and forth between perspectives that left me reeling, especially after more visceral scenes.

Fugitive Dreams is more about the atmosphere the score and cinematography create than any linear story. It comes together in pieces propelled by the actors and bolstered by the emotive quality of the somber spaces they inhabit. We’re supposed to feel their love, live in it, and work with them through their pain. We see their jealousy and frustrations. Over the course of their story, John and Mary come to understand that the home they seek is not a particular place but each other. And while there are elements that leave me questioning the healthiness of this pairing, given the toxicity it sprung from and the ways in which the two are diametrically opposed, I can’t help but be moved by the film and the concept that sometimes home is other people.

That said, *Fugitive Dreams*, upon your initial watch hits you with its beauty and artistry while offering a slightly confusing narrative that is easy to get lost in. As an adaptation of a play, this can be its strength when it comes to letting its actors shine but it also means that this isn’t a film for everyone. The ephemeral quality of the narrative makes it akin to films like *Tree of Life*, while not as long. While I’m not that particular audience, I can appreciate the pure beauty and weight the film carries, even if the **aesthetics overtake the narrative**.

Fugitive Dreams had its United States premiere during Austin Film Festival 2020.

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Fugitive Dreams

Rating - 7/10

TL;DR

Fugitive Dreams, upon your initial watch hits you with its beauty and artistry while offering a slightly confusing narrative that is easy to get lost in. As an adaptation of a play, this can be its strength when it comes to letting its actors shine but it also

7/10

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Kate is co-founder, EIC, and CCO of BWT. She’s also a Certified Rotten Tomatoes Critic, host, and creator of our flagship podcast, [But Why Tho?](#) and [Did You Have To?](#). She also manages all PR relationships for comics, manga, film, TV, and anime. She has an MA in Cultural [Anthropology](#) and Religious Studies focusing on how pop culture impacts society.



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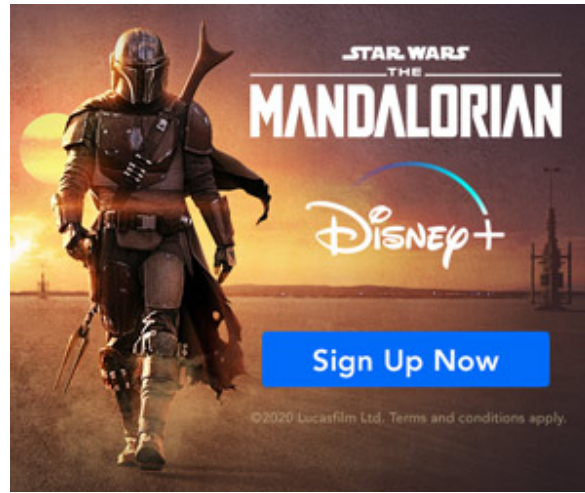
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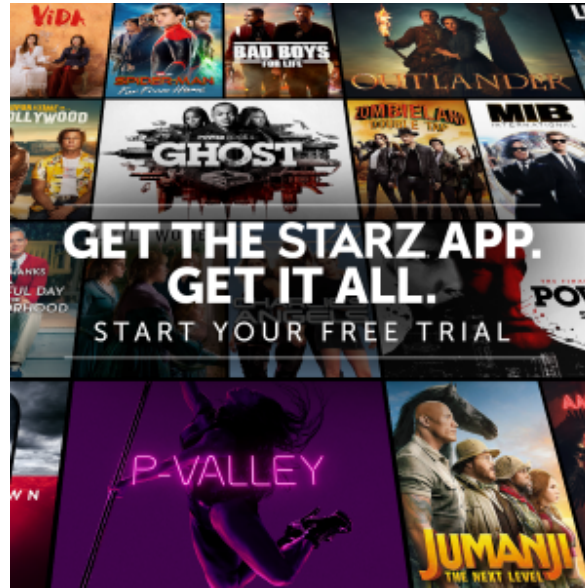


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