

# Star International Film Festival

# Review

## Sweetest Vacation

By: Ryan Stevens Harris

"Sweetest Vacation" takes viewers on an imaginative and whimsical journey through the mind, blending elements of dark comedy and fantasy. Directed by Ryan Stevens Harris, an award-winning filmmaker known for his creative vision, this short film showcases his talent for crafting unique and thought-provoking stories.

The film centers around an elder, portrayed by the skilled actor Phillip E. Walker, who embarks on an unexpected adventure after consuming cannabis-infused cakes. As the cannabis takes effect, the elder finds himself transported to a different world, where two girls sold him this cake now appear as enigmatic visitors to a hotel in his thoughts. What follows is a series of encounters with people he recognizes from his own life, but with altered roles and identities.

The blend of fantasy and reality in "Sweetest Vacation" is captivating, as the elder attempts to navigate this new world while grappling with his own fears and uncertainties. Harris skillfully creates a sense of unease and mystery, as the elder seeks solace in the hotel lobby, engaging in a profound conversation with himself. The line between perception and hallucination becomes increasingly blurred, adding depth to the narrative and keeping the audience guessing.

One of the film's highlights is the portrayal of the sneaky salesgirls who orchestrated the elder's hallucinatory experience. With enthusiasm and mischief, they watch his reactions and invite other unsuspecting individuals to indulge in their pastries. This adds a layer of dark humor to the story, contrasting the elder's apprehension with the delight of those under the influence.

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Harris's expertise in both filmmaking and editing shines through in "Sweetest Vacation." Having studied filmmaking in London and at the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts, his passion and artistic sensibility are evident in every frame. His previous works, including an animated music video featured at the SXSW Film Festival and collaborations with major studios like Lionsgate and Netflix, showcase his versatility and talent.

The film's visual aesthetics are particularly noteworthy, with Harris opting to shoot on 35mm film stock with vintage lenses for a lush and immersive experience. This choice adds a timeless quality to the visuals, enhancing the dreamlike nature of the story and allowing the audience to fully immerse themselves in the elder's journey.

In conclusion, "Sweetest Vacation" is a mind-bending and captivating short film that explores the intersection of fantasy and reality. With Ryan Stevens Harris at the helm, this dark comedy fantasy takes viewers on a thought-provoking romp through the mind, challenging perceptions and leaving a lasting impression.

From the expertly crafted visuals to the nuanced performances, this film is a testament to Harris's talent as a filmmaker and storyteller. "Sweetest Vacation" is a must-watch for those seeking a unique and memorable cinematic experience.



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Festival Director



2023

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Date