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Experience LSD by Watching Director Jeffery Lando's 'Lissa's Trip'

AI Enabled to Create a World Like None Other
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By Rick Mellerup



FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Director Jeffery Lando has horror films to his credit. He used AI to simulate a hallucinatory experience for the viewer. (Photo by Rick Mellerup)

When I read the Lighthouse International Film Festival's publicity blurb about the Canadian film "Lissa's Trip," I knew I had to see it.

A struggling actress named Lissa, wonderfully played by Sofia Vassilieva, has to take a trip across Los Angeles for a potentially career-saving audition. But her trip turns into an altogether different kind of trip when she accidentally ingests a copious dose of liquid LSD before leaving for the audition. She's warned not to go, but, a la "A Chorus Line," "I need this job, oh God, I need this show," especially because her stage mother from hell is pushing, pushing, pushing her.

I am a child of the 1960s and early '70s, so I couldn't wait to see how director Jeffery Lando would depict an acid trip on film.

I was kind of worrying there would be plenty of flashing lights set to the songs of the psychedelic era, especially Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit." That has been done in so, so many movies and TV shows.

But Lando's LA was one hell of a scary place. He used AI to create a monstrous environment, with gargoyles – I think they were gargoyles; the scenes were so filled with incredible images,

it was difficult to differentiate them – filling every building's niches.

Faces melted or distorted. And there was one scene that had me clutching my seat arms, worried that Lissa would never be able to safely navigate her way through the crowds of people, many with bird-like claws for feet. She was going down a long escalator. Lando has directed full-length horror movies in the past, so he certainly knows how to create suspense.

In a Q&A after the screening, Lando freely admitted he had dropped a lot of acid in his 20s and LSD has changed his life and outlook.

However, it was Lando's use of AI, along with not creating a script but rather letting his actors improvise, that made the movie so fantastical. He is a huge proponent of AI in a time when Hollywood is becoming wary of it, so much so that one of the major demands Hollywood scriptwriters are making during their ongoing strike is to limit the use of AI in the writing process.

Lando told the audience that in the future – the near future – AI could be used to create films on a computer. Cameras wouldn't be needed, actors could be created, filmmaking would totally change, making every person with basic tech skills a director.

Sure, he said, jobs would be lost because of AI. Lawyers, he said, would be hit especially hard. AI could root out just about any precedent in the world and present a case that would overwhelm any judge or jury. There's a little bit of Shakespeare in Lando – "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers."

Yes, Lando told the crowd, AI will make many jobs obsolete. But billions of people across the globe will see their lives improved.

Lando's "trip" most definitely is a work in progress. —R.M.

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