



JUSTINE KRAEMER

2023 imagineNative: “Vaychiletik” Review

Vaychiletik is a quietly poignant portrait of a community whose existence is a form of resistance. It is a meditation on the power of dreams and identity. This movie is also the definition of a vibes-only experience. The immersiveness never distracts from the characters, nor from the sense of community that they create. Ultimately, this is a sweet story about identity and coming of age no matter what stage of life one is in.

The [movie](#) tells the story of a Mayan community in the Chiapas Highlands. The story centres around José, who receives dreams from the gods. As a musician, he holds the responsibility of keeping sacred musical traditions alive within the community. In a way, this is the story of a reluctant hero. He must consider his essential role in his community and what his dreams mean to all.

Immediately, what stands out about this movie is its tone. It's so subtle that it's easy to get lost in it from the beginning. This enables viewers to engage with the art behind this movie. It is easy to get lost in the music itself against the backdrop of dreams. One major strength of the story is how much is left to interpretation through the dreams and music of one man as he gets deeper in touch with his identity.

Vaychiletik is, at its core, a toned-down work of art. The quiet nature of this story makes it all the more captivating. While there is a human story at the centre, the underlying cosmic themes are what keep the movie dynamic. The use of colour, sound, and visuals really captures the nature of dreams. This speaks to a universal human experience. Watching José really embrace his humanity in this cosmic way makes him all the more relatable.

Relatedly, while José is an engaging protagonist, it is the right choice to showcase him in the context of his community. His struggle makes sense as he faces the conflict of wanting to do right by himself, but also his family is a deeply human one. The fact that, even at his age, he questions his own role within his family and culture makes him so easy to empathize with. It's always nice to see a coming-of-age story that involves someone with a little more life experience.

Finally, this story does an excellent job of showcasing the resiliency of community. While the commentary on the accuracy of this representation should be left to the Indigenous communities portrayed here, this is a very solid portrayal of how these people are not just myths of the past. Indigenous communities continue to survive and thrive and keep their cultures alive. Through the eyes of one man, the story shows the resiliency of an entire group.

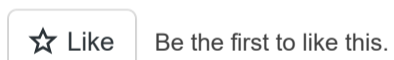
Vaychiletik knows exactly the kind of movie it needs to be. This is a terrific example of a story that showcases minimal action in favour of deep meditation. In lesser hands, it could have felt very difficult to get through. Instead, the movie feels like it is over all too soon. This is a sweet and earnest showcase of a lovable fictional character against a real-world backdrop. It is a journey worth taking.

Vaychiletik was featured at the [2023 imagineNATIVE Festival](#).

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