



Chiasso, Cinema EXCELSIOR

18.15

Friday, 1st February 2019

THE FLORIDA PROJECT

2017

111 minutes

Directed by **Sean Baker**Starring: **Brooklynn Prince, Bria Vinaite, Willem Dafoe**

Moonee (Brooklynn Prince) is six. She lives in the shadow of *Disney World*, in a stretch of central Florida dominated amusements. Home is a room in a motel called the Magic Castle, one of many painted stucco-clad palaces.

This is an unmagical kingdom, a zone of strip clubs and strip malls, souvenir shops and soft-serve ice cream shacks. But for Moonee the Magic Castle and its surroundings are a land of endless enchantment and nonstop adventure. She spends most of her summer days unsupervised with her motel-resident friends Scooty and Dicky,

Moonee's mother, Halley (Bria Vinaite), is a dancer and chancer who makes ends meet any way she can – hawking wholesale perfume to rich resort customers, stealing theme park-entry passes from wide-eyed tourists. She also offers her services online as a prostitute, closing Moonee in the bathroom when she has a client. Bobby, the motel manager, (Willem Dafoe) notices the activity and applies restrictions on unregistered guests in her motel room. When she steals a client's Disney resort passes to sell them, the man returns to demand them back; Bobby sees him off but warns Halley that he will evict her if the prostitution continues

The Magic Castle motel is the kind of place most people don't even notice as they speed past it on their way to the Magic Kingdom. On a strip of cheap motels, gun stores, tourist traps, and various other establishments, this motel houses all kinds, from the tourists looking for something cheap (or, in one of the movie's funniest scenes, booking the wrong hotel) to the working class who have basically turned it into permanent lodging.

Critics' comments:

A child's sense of wonder is at the heart of Sean Baker's joyful story of people living on the impoverished fringes of Florida's tourist traps. (*The Guardian*)

A hysterically rude, visually stunning cinematic theme park. (*The Telegraph*)

You feel as if you've slipped inside of Moonee's enchanted world, while at the same time seeing the harsh reality of Halley's. That contrast is devastating, right up to a final sequence that's sure to break your heart in two. (*The Seattle Times*)

The talented American director Sean Baker made his name in 2015 with *Tangerine*, a seamy portrait of transgender prostitutes on the streets of Hollywood. Baker's vibrant new film is another freewheeling story set in the shadow of a sunny glamour spot, in this case Walt Disney World in Florida. (*The Times*)

