





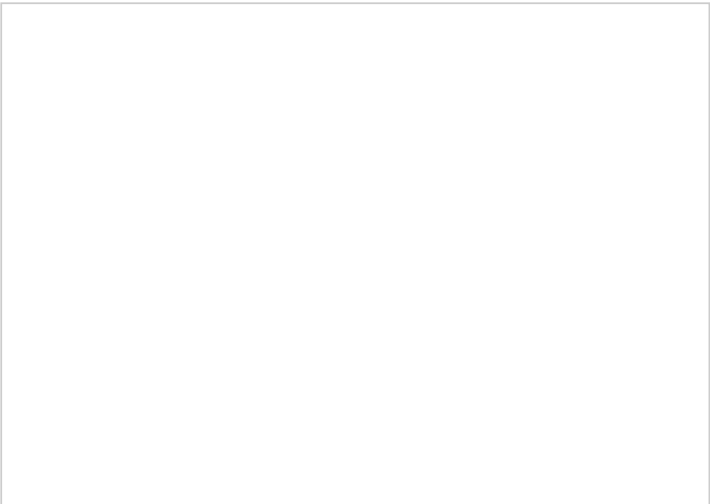


MOVIE REVIEWSMOVIESREVIEWS

REVIEW: Filmmaker searches for lost story behind 1940s documentary in ‘Finding Kukan’

 November 20, 2016  John Soltes  0 Comment  Finding Kukan, Kukan, Li Ling-Ai, Rey Scott, Robin Lung

Director Robin Lung needs a hearty round of applause for her herculean efforts to locate, restore and screen the lost Oscar-winning documentary known as *Kukan*.





Warm up your affordable health care

Get your FREE 

or call us today at (800)547-2000



Follow Us

Recent Comments

- Wendy Flock on [INTERVIEW: Bear trainer tries to release grizzlies from captivity on new TV show](#)
- Stacy on [INTERVIEW: Dan Riskin investigates ‘Monsters Inside Me’ on Animal Planet](#)
- Anthony F arena on [‘GHOST MINE’ INTERVIEW: Patrick Doyle on the shadow figure of his youth](#)
- Marge Ruggles on [INTERVIEW: Kristen Luman of Syfy’s ‘Ghost Mine’ discusses her paranormal experiences](#)
- JoeR on [INTERVIEW: Jeremy Keller finds his home on the ‘Edge of](#)

The film from 1941 depicts vivid images of Chinese resistance to Japanese military aggression at the height of World War II. It went on to win the Academy Award, but prints of the film are few and far between. Those that do survive are badly damaged and not salvageable.



Li Ling-Ai and Rey Scott, subjects of the new documentary *Finding Kukan*, pose for a picture. Photo courtesy of Nested Egg Productions.

These difficult realities about an early documentary showcasing life in China do not dissuade Lung from trying for many years to find the reels and restore them. However, that's only part of the story.

Finding Kukan, which recently played the DOC NYC film festival, explores the life and legacy of Li Ling-Ai, a Chinese-American Hawaiian woman who supported the film and helped produce it with cameraman Rey Scott. She was a remarkable woman, someone who broke barriers at a time when the United States discriminated against Chinese communities. However, the tragedy of her life is that her involvement in making *Kukan* was lost. Scott took home the Oscar, and Ling-Ai was relegated to a simple "technical adviser" role in the credits.

By all accounts, Ling-Ai was instrumental in *Kukan's* success. She helped fund the film and set Scott up with contacts in China. She handled pre- and post-production, and she was probably the film's best promoter.

To find *Kukan's* missing reels and discover how involved Ling-Ai was in the production, Lung travels across the globe, deep into film archives and into the homes of Ling-Ai and Scott's surviving family members. Even though *Finding Kukan* only runs 75 minutes, the director is able to cover a lot of material and find some important cinematic treasures. Lung is obviously a researcher of the highest caliber, combing through old newspaper articles, letters, film reels, movie programs, TV footage and books. She never gives up.

One of the goldmines is a taped archival interview with Ling-Ai when she was in her 90s. It's obvious when watching this footage that this Renaissance woman who championed the "true" China had a great sense of humor and big heart. She talks about the making of the documentary and the many opportunities,

Alaska'

Angel Soto on [INTERVIEW: Creator of 'Channel Zero' on Syfy wants to scare you this Halloween](#)

Helen on [INTERVIEW: Sister Sparrow says hello to new fans, goodbye to guitarist](#)

Jazmine on [INTERVIEW: Sister Sparrow says hello to new fans, goodbye to guitarist](#)

Dennis Labbe on [INTERVIEW: Sister Sparrow says hello to new fans, goodbye to guitarist](#)

Sean on [INTERVIEW: Sister Sparrow says hello to new fans, goodbye to guitarist](#)

Share

both realized and lost, that came from its success. It's astounding how many tendrils emanate from *Kukan*. There's a segment on the reaction of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. There's a segment on Robert Ripley and his burgeoning empire of world artifacts (Ling-Ai actually worked for the man behind Ripley's Believe It or Not). There are interviews with Ling-Ai's niece, grandniece and friends. Ditto for Scott's children, one of whom has a special gift for Lung.

As the director peels back the layers of *Kukan* and Ling-Ai's story, so much is learned about WWII, the treatment of Chinese Americans and the history of this profoundly engaging woman. Lung has done a great service to the history of world cinema and the legacy of this pioneering producer.

Finding Kukan makes a strong case that Ling-Ai and her legacy should be reconsidered for an honorary Academy Award because it's difficult to divorce her influence from the documentary that came out in the 1940s. If it weren't for Lung's efforts, Ling-Ai's work and proper credit could have been lost forever.

By John Soltes / Publisher / John@HollywoodSoapbox.com

Finding Kukan, directed by Robin Lung, recently played DOC NYC. **Rating:** ★★
★★ Click [here](#) for more information on DOC NYC and [here](#) for more information on the movie.

← INTERVIEW: Bear trainer tries to release grizzlies from captivity on new TV show

INTERVIEW: Ian Neville talks new music, NYC Thanksgiving gig with Dumpstaphunk →



John Soltes

John Soltes is an award-winning journalist. His articles have appeared in The New York Times, The Hollywood Reporter, New Jersey Monthly and at Time.com, among other publications. E-mail him at john@hollywoodsoapbox.com

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Warm up to
affordable
health care.

Get Your FREE Quote

or call us today:
(800)547-2008



^{1,2}Disclosure

Archives

December 2016

M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3
5	6	7	8	9	10
12	13	14	15	16	17
19	20	21	22	23	24
26	27	28	29	30	31
« Nov					